



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.03 p.m. – 7.53 p.m.

Gibraltar, Wednesday, 19th March 2025

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 3.03 p.m.

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

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: P A Borge McCarthy Esq *in attendance*]

PRAYER

Madam Speaker

Order of the Day

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Wednesday 19th of March 2025.

Order of Proceedings: (i) Oath of Allegiance. (ii) Confirmation of Minutes. - the minutes of the
5 Fourteenth meeting of the Fifteenth Parliament, which was held on the 24th, 27th and 28th of
February 2025.

Madam Speaker: May I sign the minutes as correct?

10 **Members:** Aye.

Madam Speaker signed the Minutes.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

Death of Judge J E Alcantara

Clerk: (iii) Communications from the Chair.

20 **Madam Speaker:** Before we get down to the business of Parliament today, I want to take this
opportunity to pay tribute to a great Gibraltarian and one who holds a special place in my heart.
As you will know, Judge John Alcantara recently passed at the age of 99. It does not surprise me
that he lived to such an age as he was truly a formidable force of a man.

25 I first got to know him when I was a young barrister and began appearing before him in
the Supreme Court. I remember him as a firm, practical and fair man with a mischievous sense of
humour. I remember appearing before him when I was very shiny and new and making detailed
submissions, cross-referencing cases with all the energy that comes with a newly qualified lawyer.

I was delighted to see that he was taking copious notes. But as soon as I finished and sat down, he gave me that half-smile, almost imperceptible grin, and began reading out his reasons, which he had been writing as I spoke. I think my cause that day had been hopeless and in his practical way, he had dealt with the case before him very efficiently.

I remember on another occasion, I asked him for a reference for a position and he said to me, absolutely, you write it. And I said to him, well, I cannot do that. And he said, well, if you cannot own your own strengths and you can't be proud of them, then how do you hope to convince anybody else?

So I wrote the reference, sent him the draft, and then, of course, he redrafted it appropriately. But the valuable lesson was learnt and not forgotten. I am honoured to follow in his footsteps from judiciary to Speaker.

And in his time as Speaker, I know from staff, past Ministers and Members how respected and valued he was. He made Parliament better. He served Parliament faithfully and professionally with his intellect, practicality and strength.

Kevin Balban, who you will all know from the back office and who has served in Parliament for 26 years, remembers him fondly and describes him as a great man with a wonderful dry sense of humour. I would endorse that. May he rest in peace and my condolences go to his family.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, can I rise to associate the Government and no doubt all Members of this House with those comments and take issue only with one thing that you said, which is that you described John as being close to your heart. And I think John is somebody who is close to all our hearts and in particular to the heart of democracy in Gibraltar, this place which he served with such distinction in the years that he was Speaker. But his contribution did not start here because he chose to take the road of the judiciary and the bench, having tinkered with politics when he was a young man.

And in that world in which he inhabited, the world of the 1960s and 70s, when leaving Gibraltar was not an easy thing, he picked up his family and he went to Belize in order to become the first Gibraltarian Puisne judge to go through all of the stages in the development of his career that he had to go through in order to achieve that. And in doing so, Madam Speaker, he broke the glass ceiling for other Gibraltarians who were then to follow him to the bench, just as Felix Pizzarello followed him to the bench, the Hon. Mr Justice Dudley, yourself Madam Speaker, and Mr. Rastano and Mr. Yates, and no doubt others in the future. But it took him to break that glass ceiling, which in those days was not a glass ceiling, which just, just to use a word improperly, prevented some of a particular gender getting through it.

It prevented some from a particular birthplace getting through it. And John Alcantara had the intellect and ability about him to break that glass ceiling. And he did it with, as ever, the usual distinction, the fairness that he displayed on the bench, both here and abroad, and the mischief that also characterised him.

Madam Speaker, I will forever remember reading one of his judgments when I was a young law student. I was not even then a barrister. And I saw reflected in his ratio that which had been set out in English law as the concept of reasonableness based on the view of the man who gets on the Clapham omnibus, translated by John Alcantara as the man who buys his chronicle at the piazza every morning.

So that is the measure of reasonableness and the reasonable man set out for Gibraltar by John Alcantara. I remember also, apart from appearing before him in court and appearing before him here, I cannot remember which was more fearful. He had a way about himself in this place, as you can imagine.

I remember going to his house after he had retired because he refused to turn up to the ceremony in which he was going to be bestowed the Gibraltar Medallion of Distinction. And as John would not come to the mountain, the mountain decided to go to John. And I had to persuade him to accept the Gibraltar Medallion of Honour.

He said, I do not like these things. I do not like honours and awards. That is not who I am.

80 But I persuaded him that he represented a particular style and type of Gibraltarian achievement that had to be recognised and he had to allow us to recognise him in order to ensure that others that came after him might also be able to enjoy those distinctions. He said, well, OK, you've persuaded me. Leave the medal.

85 I left the medal after being given a very good lunch by him, too. Madam Speaker, I will forever remember that ostensibly stern face and that mischievous twinkling eye as I addressed him here and elsewhere that seemed to say, come on, Picardo, bring it on. He always had an answer for everything in court and in this place.

No doubt, wherever he is now, they are going to have to deal with him.

90 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, I also would like to associate myself with your comments and the comments of the Chief Minister on the passing of John Alcantara, who was a great Gibraltarian. He started in politics and ended his career in politics with a long, long sojourn in the law and a lifelong of service in the law. His career was marked, certainly in my experience, as a young lawyer, always with a sense of justice.

95 That was what marked John Alcantara's time on the bench, both in the Magistrate's Court and indeed in the Supreme Court. As the Chief Minister says, he trailblazed in Belize as a Supreme Court judge at a time when it was difficult to, it is always difficult, but perhaps more difficult in the 1950s, 60s, 70s to break through establishment practises, which perhaps did not allow Gibraltarians to occupy certain posts. He did it the long way, which is to go to Belize first and then become a Supreme Court judge here.

100 When he was a judge here, his hallmark, as I say, was about justice. I remember a similar experience, I confess, to Madam Speaker, appearing as a young lawyer trying to present an appeal from the Magistrate's Court for someone who had been accused of robbery. I was making what I thought were quite good submissions on the mens rea specific intent.

105 I could see that he was taking notes and he was going, yeah, yeah, yeah, several times during my submissions to the point that I was getting quite excited I was there. As soon as he said the last yeah, I sat down and he said, immediately, no, appeal dismissed. Probably he was right, actually, but that was the hallmark of the man who could see the issues.

110 There were other cases, civil cases, that he dealt with where he was a supporter of the underdog, a supporter of the Gibraltarian, which he felt in his heart. I also experienced him here as Speaker after the 1996 Election where he used to quip with his sense of irony that he was on borrowed time as Speaker, but he was an illustrious Gibraltarian, both in the capacity he sat in as Supreme Court Judge and as Speaker of this House. We will miss him, we will remember him fondly, and I associate myself with the remarks so far.

115 **Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia):** Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to pay tribute also to the late John Alcantara, known in this place, obviously, as a Speaker of the House and also as a judge. But perhaps his political activities in the 1950s are less known. He was elected to the Legislative Council in 1953, and I recall when conducting some research about politics and constitutions in Gibraltar in those years, that the UK establishment, the UK colonial establishment, had singled him out as somebody who was very staunchly pro-Gibraltarian in those days.

120 And he had, it is true, a wonderful sense of humour and an incredible wit, and I had the privilege to witness that on several occasions. I remember once, without going into the detail of what he said, standing in Trafalgar Cemetery in the pouring rain, during the Trafalgar Day ceremony, and the rain and the solemnity of the occasion combined with his wit to make it an incredible occasion. But Madam Speaker, he was, as has been said, a great Gibraltarian.

125 I think he will go down in history in that way. And I want to simply express my most sincere condolences to his family.

130 **Madam Speaker:** Yes.

Minister for Inward Investment and the Gibraltar Savings Bank (Hon. Sir J J Bossano): Madam Speaker, I also want to have the opportunity to associate myself with what has been said about Judge Alcantara. He was, in fact, in Parliament, the initiator of limiting the supplementaries to questions, something which went down very badly with us because we were on that side of the House at the time. I think he took a firm line when it was needed, and he tended to be, you know, receptive to the Opposition benches when they felt they were not being given as much leeway to pursue what is the duty of the Opposition in this place, which is to make clear that if things are not sufficiently explained, that their job is to try and get further explanation.

And as some members who might have been in the former Government may remember, those sometimes led to very tense situations more than once in this House. And he was able to bring the temperature down quite effectively by being firm, but still being with that hidden sense of humour that was obvious to us. Of course, he is something that is important in Gibraltar's history.

He is a figure of what we Gibraltarians have been able to do. You know, we as a people come from a place that is practically a dot of the planet, and we produce a level of ability, I think, within our own confines, and by exporting much of our talent elsewhere, that shows that not only are we one single people, which is one single family, but it is a family that we can all be proud of, irrespective of our political ideology. My condolences to all his family, and I share the sense of pride for all his achievements.

Madam Speaker: All right, I would like for us to observe a minute's silence now.

PAPERS TO BE LAID

Clerk: (iv) Petitions, (v) announcements, (vi) papers to be laid - the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to lay on the table the Mental Health Board Gibraltar Annual Inspection Report 2024.

Madam Speaker: Ordered to lie.

Questions for Oral Answer

INWARD INVESTMENT AND THE GIBRALTAR SAVINGS BANK

Q285/2025

**Government Economic Plan –
Revenue**

Q286/2025

**Inward investment –
Money spent directly or indirectly**

Clerk: (vii) Reports of committees, (viii) answers to oral questions. Questions to the Hon. the Minister for Inward Investment and the Savings Bank. Question 285, the Hon. C Sacarello.

Hon. C Sacarello: Good afternoon. How much revenue has been brought in this year that can be directly attributable to the Government's economic plan?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Inward Investment and the Savings Bank.

Minister for Inward Investment and the Gibraltar Savings Bank (Hon. Sir J J Bossano): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 286.

Clerk: Question 286, the Hon. C Sacarello.

Hon. C Sacarello: How much money has directly or indirectly been spent on encouraging inward investment in the last 12 months, and what are the returns on this investment?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Inward Investment and the Savings Bank.

Minister for Inward Investment and the Gibraltar Savings Bank (Hon. Sir J J Bossano): Madam Speaker, the Government's national economic plan is about supporting activity in the private sector and is therefore not directly connected to Government revenues. As I have explained on a number of occasions, although there is a link from economic activity to Government revenue, it is not necessarily immediate. For example, construction increases will generally result in higher PAYE, but company profits will usually be delayed since start-up new businesses may take several years to show profits.

There is no specific amount of money budgeted for incoming inward investment.

Hon. C Sacarello: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the distinguished gentleman for his reply. My question, I was aware of the mechanisms of Governments. What I wanted to do was, in this generic Question on 285, Madam Speaker, is allow the Hon. Minister the latitude to describe where the Government's focus presently allows business to develop.

So perhaps in the spirit of trying to assist the House and the wider public, would the Hon. Minister be able to say, apart from the stalwarts like gambling and finance, which areas you could identify as new areas of growth according to the economic plan?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Yes, Madam Speaker. The policy is to attract people that have businesses to open a business in Gibraltar, but not necessarily to trade within Gibraltar, but to trade from Gibraltar to other areas. That is fundamentally what we have with insurance companies, what we have with banks that have got the ability to passport into the UK.

I mean, UK, as the hon. Member knows, is our principal market for services, and our economy is a service economy. So therefore, when we promote Gibraltar, we promote Gibraltar as a place which has got finite resources of land and manpower, and therefore is ideally the place from which to have a headquarters operation, from which you can either consider reinvesting from the Gibraltar base south into Africa or north into the UK because of our access to the UK market. That fundamentally is the basis of what we sell as the model for investment.

The bulk of the inward investment that comes, comes to us without us having to spend any money. That is to say, it is not that we go to other countries promoting Gibraltar. It is that people come to Gibraltar to find out more about what we do, and in fact, the level of interest in the last 12 months or slightly more has been quite high.

However, sometimes these things do not finally come to fruition. That is to say, I meet people. Sometimes they ask me to go to the countries from which they come, and therefore the main cost is the cost that the Department of Economic Development has, and that cost is not related to the volume of enquiries that we have.

We help when people come that are coming in to invest in Gibraltar. What we do is we provide support with the human resources that we have got, and in that sense, the expenditure

225 of the Department, which is small and a very small part of the total budget, is there to support people who come and want to invest in Gibraltar, to help them get registered, to help them with accommodation, to help them with getting licencing. This is the kind of work... But there is not a specific budget to do that, because it is the use of people which we provide free.

230 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Minister for his lengthy and detailed answer, and move on to the next supplementary to the next question, that being 286, which he touched upon. Madam Speaker, I am surprised to hear that there is no budget as such for Foreign Direct Investment, (FDI) which is something most countries do have established.

235 Established economies tend to be between 0.1% and 1%, and emerging ones a little bit higher, up to 3%. I am surprised that there is not part of our budget dedicated to this. Would the Minister initially be able to confirm that there is no money spent for this at all, even though it is not budgeted as such?

240 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** I do not think we can compare ourselves with the economies that are trying to create physical investment. Look, we have had an occasion when somebody came and wanted to have a car factory in Gibraltar. I mean, we did not spend any money bringing him, but the idea of having a car factory in Gibraltar, I mean, when we haven't got enough land to produce enough houses for our people, would be absurd.

245 So, the intellectual work of services is where the strength of our economy lies. And in effect, what Gibraltar has always been, has been as a trading nation, a nation which exists by purchasing and reselling. I mean, if the hon. Member takes into account that the GDP of Gibraltar is just under 3 billion pounds, which is very high by comparison with other places, certainly in the Mediterranean, and that in fact, our international trade, even though we do not have a budget for inward investment, our international trade, that is to say, the sale and the purchase that we
250 make, is five times our GDP, which makes, in that particular economic metric, makes us number one in the world. The second entity after us is Singapore, which has an international trade of services primarily, as we have, but they are three times our GDP. We are five times the GDP of Gibraltar, 15 billion.

255 And of that 15 billion, half of it is the trade with the UK, and we, in fact, in this area, in the context of, say, the countries around us, Portugal, Spain and Morocco and Gibraltar, we are the ones that have a deficit with the UK Government, so with the UK economy. So in fact, we actually help the UK economy because we buy more from them than we sell to them. And our trade with the UK is three times the trade between the UK and Morocco.

260 So all those factors show that, in fact, what we have is an economy that does a great deal of activity and produces a huge volume of income with very small percentages. And it does it with a comparatively small workforce in relation to those numbers. And that is a model that has worked well, and I think that is a model of the future.

265 The hon. Member opposite may not necessarily be aware of this, but in fact, in 2019, as a result of the changes that are taking place already in the global economy and the fact that we had left the European Union, the focus of the national economic plan shifted. And we set out to aim not for increase in GDP, but for increase in labour productivity. So that since 2019, what we have tried to do is ensure that the growth of the output is greater than the growth of the input.

270 Because, Madam Speaker, it is obvious that if you have got two different time frames, and you have in the first time frame 20 people working and producing X, and then 40 people working and producing 2X, the output, in fact, is related to the input and you gain nothing. You are not actually better off by doubling the size of the economy if you double all the inputs into the economy. What we have done since 2019, which is a much more difficult exercise, an exercise that has not been achieved by the United Kingdom, that has a practically non-existent record in terms of increasing productivity, they are trying to do it now.

275 And what we have done is to, when we measure, which I reflect when I do the analysis of the economy in the budget speech, is that the amount of increase in the economy should be higher

than the amount of the increase in the workforce. And therefore, in essence, the more that we produce with less people, the better off Gibraltar is and the more we have per capita to be able to spend either in things that needed to be done or in improving the minimum wage or in other areas of the economy. As long as we are able to do that, then Gibraltar can progress.

Hon. C Sacarello: Madam Speaker, I am extremely grateful for the long and substantial answer that the Hon. Minister has just given. It still puzzles me slightly that we do not have a budget allocated for inward investment, although I am sure the Minister would agree that money is spent in the sense of business trips where you bump into people, as you mentioned, and they can come up with ideas or further down the line they notify someone of your email address and they send you an email which leads to business coming into Gibraltar.

Does the Government have some form of measuring the metrics in terms of the return on investment from an inward investment point of view, such as job growth, such as economic growth, such as the multiplier effects with supply chains? Do they have any form of capturing that type of data which would lead us to derive what the exact benefits are of this type of investment? The reason I ask, Madam Speaker, is because it is well known that there are certain sectors in the economy that are fickle in terms of, we rely on them heavily, but external forces could act so as to damage the chances of them staying here long term.

So it is with a focus on diversifying and strengthening the economy that I put that in that context.

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Well, I certainly agree with his last comment, Madam Speaker, that we need to do what we can to diversify the economy. To have a one crop economy is not a good idea because if the crop fails, the whole economy fails. Even in economies that are not in the dangerous exposed position that ours is.

We do not want to import inward investment that requires more labour. We do not want to create more jobs. We've got a situation already where we've got 15,000 people crossing the frontier to come into Gibraltar and that is a situation that makes us vulnerable.

So it is also a situation which eliminates the secondary effect of any investment. Because economically, when we had a close frontier, the situation was, for example, during the days of the MOD, that the MOD was the foundation stone of the economy because, of course, all the money that all the workers in the MOD earned was spent within the economy and that meant that the support for the private sector came from the expenditure of the workers in the MOD and in the Gibraltar Government. And indeed, when we had parity, we were able to demonstrate how the income that resulted from the huge increase that took place when we doubled the wages in the MOD was, in fact, capable of sustaining, through the taxation of the MOD workers, doing the same for the Government workers and indeed, because of the huge spending power that then entered into the private sector, the private sector was able to raise wages. When we have an open economy and an economy that, in fact, has got competition on the other side from comparatively very low labour costs and low costs of land and low costs of property and low costs of commodities because of the advantages of volume, it is almost impossible for a business in Gibraltar to compete with a business in the hinterland because all the inputs of that business are more expensive on the other side.

So, bringing more people in would put more pressure on our services and on our public costs without the compensating volume of profits that could, in fact, make it more profitable for us. If you've got a business that comes in that has to use a lot of land or has to use a lot of labour, the labour can only come from one place. And then, if the earnings of the workers do not have the secondary effect of being spent here because they are spent in the hinterland, then, in fact, we could find that there is inward investment that, instead of creating more wealth for Gibraltar, creates, comparatively speaking, more costs to Gibraltar.

So we have to be selective in what we want. I mean, there are, at the moment, some potentially very big investments coming in which could be a dramatic impact on our costs. If they

actually materialise, which one can never be sure of in these things, I think this is probably one of the best inward investments we will have had in the history of Gibraltar.

These things are all privately funded and we have to respect that it is the people that are putting their money in their pocket who have to decide what is made public and when it should be made public. But it is not that there is nothing in the pipeline, but everything in the pipeline is something that we cannot guarantee. I can tell the hon. Member that there is a clear analysis of what is beneficial and not beneficial and we have to take into consideration the limitations of Gibraltar and what can and does work in other places which are much bigger than us.

If you have got a situation where you've got a lot of unemployment, then anything that comes in, however little else it may contribute, that contributes to eliminating the unemployment is of benefit. It is a no-brainer. If you have got a situation where you have got already a lot of competition for limited labour resources and then you have got a situation where you are dependent on resources from a neighbour that may decide to use that as a weapon, and then on top of that, the lot of the money that is not then spent in the private sector in Gibraltar, then continuing to increase that would be a serious mistake from an economic point of view.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q287/2025
General Sinking Fund –
Balance at 1st February 2025

Q288/2025
Public debt –
Figures at 1st February 2025

Clerk: Question 287, the Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Can the Government advise the balance on the General Sinking Fund on the following dates, being 1 February 2025?

Minister for Inward Investment and the Gibraltar Savings Bank (Hon. Sir J J Bossano): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question with Question 288.

Clerk: Question 288, the Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Can the Government please provide the total gross debt, aggregate debts after application of sinking fund to gross debt, cash reserves and net debt figures for public debts for the following dates, being 1 February 2025?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. Minister for Inward Investment and the Savings Bank.

Minister for Inward Investment and the Gibraltar Savings Bank (Hon. Sir J J Bossano): Madam Speaker, the balance on the General Sinking Fund on the requested date is as previously stated. The gross public debt and the aggregate debt after the application of the sinking fund to gross debt, cash reserves and net debt figures are as follows for the 1st of February. Gross public debt 872.7 million, aggregate debt 854, cash reserves 56 million, net debt 798 million.

Hon. R M Clinton: I thank the Minister for his answer. My calculations, Madam Speaker, would appear that a net debt of 798 million is probably, by the looks of it, close to the highest we have

375 ever recorded since I have been asking these questions of the Minister. Does that Minister have any view as to whether the net debt is likely to go down in the near future?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Madam Speaker, I have not done the check that the Hon. Mr. Clinton has done, so I do not know whether it is the case that it is the highest ever it has been. I assume that
380 if he is telling me that, he has come to that conclusion. Look, the policy of the Government is to bring it down.

As he knows, the money does not come into the Government regularly. The expenditure tends to be a regular thing, or rather, more regular than the income. But income fluctuates quite a lot from one month to another.

385 Certainly, we hope that when we close the year, the position will be that our debt would not be any bigger than it was a year ago.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

390

DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

Q398/2025

**Cross of Sacrifice site –
Development space**

Q399-400/2025

**Monumental Plaza development/project –
Premium paid; Calculation of premium and planning gains**

Clerk: Questions to the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister. Question 398, the Hon. D J Bossino.

395

Madam Speaker: The Hon. D J Bossino is not in the Chamber. Will the Leader of the Opposition pose the question for him?

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Yes, Madam Speaker. I would be glad to. I am sure he is coming in now.

400

We were not aware these were being taken out of order, as it were. He is just here, so I am going to give way to my learned friend.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, I do apologise to the House. I was relieving my bladder.

405

Madam Speaker: Too much information.

Hon D J Bossino: A previous Chief Minister used exactly those words.

Madam Speaker: I would have said exactly the same thing to them.

410

Hon. D J Bossino: When addressing the individual that we were so eulogising earlier. Madam Speaker, what is the question number?

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: 398.

415

Hon. D J Bossino: Ah. A jump of astronomical proportions. 398.

Yes. Is more development space to be given to the developer at the Cross of Sacrifice site?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister.

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Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with questions 399 and 400.

Clerk: Question 399. The Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, what premium has been agreed in respect of the Monumental Plaza development and has it been paid?

Clerk: Question 400, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: How is the premium on the Monumental Plaza project calculated and what planning gains were secured as part of the assessment of the premium?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister.

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Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia): Madam Speaker, the premium in respect of Monument Plaza was arrived at after a public expression of interest process. The planning gain secured as part of the development is a new Gibraltar College. The developers of Monument Plaza agreed an original premium of £11.5 million. A deposit of £1.5 million has been paid. However, the Government are currently in discussions with the developer and reviewing the overall commercial package following the decision to relocate the Gibraltar College to another site. The developer of Monument Plaza has requested more land to the rear of the Cross of Sacrifice which has not encroached on the demise of the War Graves Commission.

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The Government has not yet taken a view as to whether or not it is prepared to make this land available.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, can I just ask on the premium then? The Deputy Chief Minister indicates there is going to be a new commercial discussion, negotiation I assume, in terms of the premium specifically. So I am on 399 really.

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But in some ways there is an overlap. Let me just ask on that, although my question is linked to 400 if I may. The premium of £11.5 million was assessed on the basis of the delivery of a new college. Is the college still to be delivered as a planning gain despite the college going somewhere else?

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Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, the college will be provided somewhere else with the premium paid by the developer. So it is the same relationship between the delivery of the planning gain and the use of the premium.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Let me ask it more specifically to see if I have understood the question... The Government were going to receive a premium of £11.5 million and over and above that, that premium, the developer was going to deliver a college. Is that correct or not?

Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: No, Madam Speaker. The £11.5 million included the delivery of the college which was valued at £8 million and £3.5 million paid in cash.

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Hon Dr K Azopardi: I see. So is it right that whatever the cost of the College is at the alternative site will be paid by this developer?

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Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: That is correct, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I see. And then, am I right also in understanding, therefore, that the negotiation as to the premium is because the developer has now got more land as a result of the college not going in the site where it was originally intended that it could use for the development. Hence, the desire of the Government to renegotiate the premium. Is that correct?

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Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, there are more questions on the order paper relating to the college element of it which are being dealt with by my hon. Friend, the Minister for Education. My original answer was that the developer has requested more land but the Government has not yet taken a decision as to whether to make that land available or not.

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Madam Speaker: Any other supplementary? The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition. Yes.

Hon. D J Bossino: It dovetails nicely with the last remark that the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister has provided to this House where he said that the extra land, in his initial reply, that the Government was considering granting to the developer was behind, I think he said, the Cross of Sacrifice. In that context, is the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister able to tell us what precise, perhaps not even precise, more or less, what area, what surface area we are talking about? Is he able to provide that information whilst I understand fully and appreciate fully that he is currently in negotiations with the developer?

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Is he able to provide that information?

Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member may recall that the original development planned on the site included an area behind the Cross of Sacrifice as well and there the provision was for the college and for office space which the developer would then make use of. So this was part of that development. Once the decision was taken to move the College somewhere else, we are reviewing that element which may result in a further negotiation in relation to the premium.

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Hon. D J Bossino: The Hon. Deputy Chief Minister, I appreciate and fully understand that he is maybe bordering on those, may not, will not wish to cross that particular line so that he does not reveal certain things which are, by their nature, confidential at this stage. But he does provide us with a mini word salad in providing what seems like an answer but not really able to take matters further. From that, if I can put it in these terms, is it the case that the extra space that is going to be made available to the developer is as a result of the departure from that site of the Gibraltar College?

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Is that the case or are we talking potentially of more area?

Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, that is the case. So the departure of the College may make more land available which can or cannot be used for this particular purpose. Remember there is land there for which the War Graves Commission has a 999-year lease.

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So this obviously would not encroach on that land.

Hon. D J Bossino: The Hon. Deputy Chief Minister reminds me of that very good comedy, Yes Minister, and he in this case is the Civil Servant. Is the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister able to say, and again he alluded to it as part of his response, able to say whether, because as I understand it, when the expressions of interest first came out for this particular plot, it was exclusively for commercial space. But he is shaking his head, so I give him the opportunity as a reply to correct the assertion that I have made.

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In this context is he able to say whether the area which he is now negotiating, I think he may have said it, but I will give him again the opportunity to confirm it or otherwise. Whether it is likely to be, is it a mixed use, commercial and residential, is it going to be exclusively one or is it

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going to be exclusively the other, insofar as the extra space which is the subject currently of negotiations.

525 **Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker the original development provided for a mixed use development, so there was commercial office space, there was residential, and there was a college provided as well as part of that. The discussion now is essentially on the principle of whether the land is made available or not, without going into the detail of the use of that particular plot of land.

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Hon. D J Bossino: The Hon. Deputy Chief Minister also provides an answer where he makes a reference to the extra land not encroaching on the concerns, sensitivities of the War Graves Commission. May I ask him, is that the only reason, and if there are others I would invite him to express what those are, why the development as it was originally planned was described, I think
535 by their own spokesman in response to Chronicle questions, as a complex site?

Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, my hon. Friend the Minister for Education tells me there is a very similar question on the Order Paper already.

540 **Hon. D J Bossino:** And that may be the case, it is probably my question, I did not recall it immediately, so it may not be my question, but can I offer my invitation to the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister to provide a response still stands, and I would welcome it unless he confidently is saying that his hon. Colleague will be providing that answer.

545 **Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, this was a complex site as a result of the presence of the Cross of Sacrifice and the land held by the War Graves Commission and the Government took the view that it wanted to deliver the college quickly, then it was better to move it somewhere else.

550 **Hon. D J Bossino:** May I, therefore, draw from that an in effect confirmatory response when I offered it to him as part of my invitation to a reply that the only reason why this became a complex site for the development was this issue in respect of the War Commission's concerns?

Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, after so many years in this House, I have learnt not
555 to speak in absolutes, so I would not say it was the only reason, but it was certainly the main reason.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. R M Clinton, no, there have been six supplementaries on this one question. The Hon. R M Clinton had a question, or the Hon. Mr Bossino can take the question, I
560 do not mind, but there is one more.

Hon. R M Clinton: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wonder if the Minister could enlighten the House as to the site, and he may correct me if I am wrong. I recall that the site as the College was to be built was on top of a multi-storey car park, and then there was going to be land allocated next
565 door for the Monument Place, as all one complex development. If the College is not going to be built there, is it then that the building on top of the multi-storey car park will not go ahead, or will that be something the developer would seek to be doing?

Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, the original expression of interest included both
570 sites, so the development site on top of the multi-storey car park, which remains, and then there was a second site behind the Cross of Sacrifice, which is where we have now moved the College from, although that was included as part of the original expression of interest as well. So, the answer is that originally it included both sites, and that it is possible still the site on top of the car

575 park is very likely to go ahead, regardless of whether the second plot is included or not. I do
not want to mislead the House or to elaborate too much, because parts of this is still a subject of
negotiation.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, CIVIL CONTINGENCIES AND SPORT

Q289/2025

Government manifesto commitment – Paddle courts at Bayside Sports Centre

Clerk: Questions to the Hon. Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport.
Question 289, the Hon. E J Reyes.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, what progress has been made with the Government's manifesto
pledge to add two new paddle courts at the Bayside Sports Centre?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport.

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Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport (Hon. L M Bruzon): Madam
Speaker, progress is being made, and an announcement will be made as soon as we are ready.

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, in respect to the progress being made, can the Minister provide
information of where exactly, what site within the Bayside Sports Centre has been earmarked for
these additional two paddled courts?

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Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, the site is very restricted in size and shape, so it has to be
where the paddle courts are at the moment, and moving things around. There is not any more
space to expand into.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, the reason I am asking is because I know you know perhaps the
Minister's statement, but from those involved directly in that sport, I hear that there are studies
whether to do away with the actual tennis court and provide the paddled courts there, or to do
away with what is called the MUGA, the multi-use games area, where I think once upon a time,
we or the Government had sort of earmarked that as a possible site for development of netball
facilities. There is a child's play area that, although not ideal, could even be considered without.
So geographically, what is the location that seems to be in favour nowadays?

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Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, as I said, the area is the area we have. There was a proposal
at one point to move the paddled courts into what is now the covered MUGA area, which would
allow for five paddled courts, covered paddle courts, and then build a new structure where the
paddled courts are now in order to house the netball area. With regards, Madam Speaker, I think
it is very important to note this with regards to the tennis courts.

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If the tennis court is removed, we will make sure before we do that we provide alternative
tennis courts somewhere else because this is the only public tennis court that we have at the
moment.

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Hon. E J Reyes: I am very grateful for that explanation. First of all, I wholeheartedly agree with the Minister that we need to re-provide that tennis court. There used to be another public one, which is in the corner, where Bishop Fitzgerald School is nowadays.

We had inherited that, I think, from the MOD. Is the Minister at this stage able to confirm that we are looking at perhaps the possibility of whatever paddle facilities are provided, that it be year-round, all-purpose, weatherproof facilities for example, we have covered roofing because unfortunately we experience weather like we have had in the last few days. The bookings are there, but the players are not able to use the facilities.

I think this sporting fraternity will very much welcome a covered area. Is that in Government's plans?

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, my aim is to have the paddled courts covered so that they can be used all year round but obviously there are other elements such as costs which need to be considered.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

HOUSING AND THE UNIVERSITY OF GIBRALTAR

Q290/2025

Housing allocation scheme – Amended rules

Clerk: Questions to the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University. Question 290, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, will the Government provide the opposition the amended rules of the housing allocation scheme?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and to the Gibraltar University.

Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University (Hon. P A Orfila): Madam Speaker, yes, as soon as the amendments are finalised.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I see. I thought that they were finalised. That is the reason for the question. And that they would in due course be published. The Minister has given that indication publicly before. Can she give me an idea of when the amendments would be finalised so that we would get a copy of the rules, of the eligibility criteria?

Hon. P A Orfila: Madam Speaker, they will get it as soon as it is ready. It is almost there now. Just a couple of tweaks.

We must remember that patience is bitter but its fruits will be sweet.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Well, I could say something about patience. I think people know that I am patient. Here I am, still.

Can I just ask the Minister, would we, the Opposition, get a copy of this before the Government announces it in case we have views on the criteria that we might want to share with her confidentially?

Hon. P A Orfila: Madam Speaker, that has always been my intention.

665 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

EMPLOYMENT, EQUALITY, CULTURE AND TOURISM

Q291/2025

**Trainee Youth Support workers –
Complement**

Q292/2025

**Youth Support workers –
Complement**

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Clerk: Questions to the Hon. the Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism. Question 291, the Hon. G Origo.

675 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, can the Government confirm how many trainee youth support workers are currently employed in Gibraltar?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Employment, Equality, Culture and Tourism.

680 **Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 292.

Clerk: Question 292, the Hon. G Origo.

685 **Hon. G Origo:** Can the Government confirm how many youth support workers are currently employed in Gibraltar?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Employment, Equality, Culture and Tourism.

690 **Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos):** Madam Speaker, there are two trainee youth support workers and 31 youth support workers currently employed in Gibraltar.

695 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, if I may put to the Hon. Minister that having looked up the, with respect to Madam Speaker, if I may, supplementaries to 291, I am taking first on trainee support workers. I see on the website that there are training opportunities and two routes offered, one assessed and one non-assessed, but the net effect is that they are given a certificate for introduction to understanding youth work skills. Can I ask the Minister to confirm whether these certifications allow these individuals to enrol as youth and community support workers?

700 Because I noticed whilst the website said to indicate otherwise, I was a bit unsure if this was the case. I would be grateful for his clarity on that.

Hon. C P Santos: I am a bit confused as to what the hon. Member is asking. Am I to understand that the hon. Member is asking whether the completion of the understanding youth work skills course gives them the opportunity to go from training into youth support workers?

705 Well, youth and community support workers is essentially the same, it is just a change in title. There were youth support, the job titles within the youth support workers role have changed, and they were trainees, what happened before is that we used to train them before, do the course for six to nine months, then they used to volunteer during the year for the youth service, and then

at the end they'd have to apply for a job. But because of the turnover and the wait and the volunteering opportunities, not everyone wanted to do it.

So this is the trainee youth support worker role is you train on the job in an apprenticeship format, but the title is youth support worker.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, if I may assist the hon. Member, I believe that the previous title, youth and community support workers, my understanding from the website, were JNC qualified youth support workers, and my question was whether this trainee certificate, which is given in-house, gives that kind of progression to these JNC qualified roles. Maybe that will help assist the hon. Member.

Hon. C P Santos: This course doesn't make you a JNC worker, it is just there is two different titles as JNC workers, professional youth worker and youth support worker. But these roles are support, but not JNC qualified.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, so may I ask the Hon. Minister why have these home-grown courses then done in the first place if there is clearly no progression as a prospective youth employee when having done a trainee course you then become a fully qualified youth support personnel. As I understand it from the website, these are also part-time roles, and perhaps this is why we may have a lack of youth workers overall, given that the progression is limited to just part-time work. Can I ask why the position is taken to do these courses if these people are limited in how they can career progress in that nature?

Hon. C P Santos: Madam Speaker, these positions are just part-time available to support the youth service during eight to ten, twelve hours during the week. They're not full-time positions. There are full-time positions within the Government complement and these are for JNC workers.

Now a JNC qualification is a Level 6 or Level 7 which takes a minimum of three to four years to qualify. This is just for people who want to help, people who in the past have volunteered, but we felt that that was not really something that was working with regards to safeguarding, and there are skills that you need to learn when working with young people. We have not found that there is a huge interest in anyone wanting to progress.

This is something that people do as a second job or something part-time, but if they want to go into a career, they can go and do the Level 6, which is a degree course essentially, or a Master's.

Hon. G Origo: Final question on 291. Can the Hon. Minister confirm whether these trainee support workers, these apprentices, get paid the same hourly rate as the fully qualified youth support workers?

Hon. C P Santos: Okay, we need to differentiate fully qualified. We have the fully qualified JNC workers who are youth and community workers and they are the ones in complement within the youth service. Then we have youth support workers who finish the initial year's training course and then get employed and they do not get paid the same hourly rate.

The trainees do not get paid the same hourly rate as the qualified youth support workers.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, if I may take now some supplementaries on 292 because the Hon. Minister did take the two questions together. Madam Speaker, the Hon. Minister did say that there were 31 youth support workers, but my understanding is that some of these workers do this role on a volunteer basis and others are paid as he said and confirmed earlier. Does he have a distinction of how many of the 31 are volunteers and how many are ones that are fully paid?

760 **Hon. C P Santos:** My understanding is that I have 31 youth support workers registered as youth support workers. The volunteers are registered as volunteers. They are not youth support workers as far as I am aware.

I think that I am quite sure that the information I have been given are those that are within the complement of support workers.

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Hon. G Origo: May I ask Madam Speaker, can the Hon. Minister please provide details as to the type of work these youth support workers carry out as my understanding is having looked at the relevant youth clubs, most of them are open on three days a week for an average of 2 hours yet he did say earlier that they have an employment range which can go from 3 to 15 hours a week and out of the 6 hours that they do engage with young people there clearly is about another 9 which they're not really engaged with young people. So can you provide details as to the type of work that they're engaged in if they're not dealing with youths?

775 **Hon. C P Santos:** The hours as I said can vary between 2, 4, 6 according to whatever the shifts are needed according to the numbers and the ratios that are required. So not every youth support worker works the same amount of hours and then there is a fourth day an opportunity for a fourth day, this is something that will be relevant in another one of the questions the hon. Member has asked me. There are days where they will have outings they will have retreats or they will have different types of activities that may require them to work either a weekend or an extra day during the weekend or maybe a few hours on a Saturday so that is why there is a range of hours that they will work. So according to how many sessions they do some clubs do open 4 times a week some do open 3 and that is where the irregularity with the hours comes.

785 **Hon. G Origo:** And then finally Madam Speaker if I may, the Hon. Minister did say that they do sometimes engage with outings and extracurricular weekend work but he may clarify me if I am wrong my understanding is that these weekend outings and events are not quite fixed is it the case that these are just done on an ad hoc basis? Is that correct?

790 **Hon. C P Santos:** Yes Madam Speaker, the outings and events are done as and when required according to the needs of the users so they happen as regularly as they are necessary.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

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Q293/2025

Joint Negotiating Committee JNC qualified Youth and Community workers – Complement

Clerk: Question 293, the Hon. G Origo.

800 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker can the Government confirm how many Joint Negotiating Committee JNC qualified youth and community workers are currently employed in Gibraltar?

Clerk: Answer the Hon. Minister for Employment, Equality, Culture and Tourism.

805 **Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos):** Madam Speaker there are currently 8 full-time and two non-permanent Joint Negotiating Committee qualified youth and community support workers employed in Gibraltar.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker if I may, similarly to my previous question, my understanding that these fully qualified JNC workers are of a full-time role and are engaged for a 37 hour work week but as I highlighted these clubs are on average open for 6 hours a week. Can I ask the Hon. Minister what type of work these JNC qualified employees do given that for 6 out of the 37 hours they are engaged with young people but for the other 31 they appear not to be. So can you provide details on what they are actually doing?

Hon. C P Santos: Madam Speaker I must say that as Shadow Minister for Youth I think it would serve you to have this information at hand because the Youth Service is much more than the youth clubs. We have the Youth Service that provides a service at the youth clubs. They provide a service throughout the schools. They have to run the youth clubs the actual, not just the kids but the buildings themselves. They have outreach programmes within the schools.

They have outreach programmes within the drugs advisory councils and all councils. They're part of the safeguarding committees, part of the child protection committees. They are involved in a lot of different projects that the careers fair was co-organised by them. They work together with the schools in future pathways. They are involved in the Education Department. There is a lot of work that they do that is not just open in the youth clubs.

So they're involved for a lot of that time and that is why we need youth support workers as well to support them with the extra work handling young people. Also doing a lot of like The Zone which we will get many questions on. They work in parts.

The Youth Service we are very fortunate provides a very well-rounded holistic service to young people in Gibraltar not exclusive to opening youth clubs.

Hon. G Origo: Speaker, I am grateful for the Hon. Minister confirming that there is a real need for these JNC qualified youth workers. Not least we also think that these are important roles in Gibraltar. But as highlighted before, given the lack of progression in these career paths from the trainee to the fully qualified youth workers to then JNC qualified, would it not be a consideration for the Government to consider to adopt some kind of home-grown course as we did with nurses so we can then fully qualify trainee and youth support workers to become JNC workers given the need that he has so expressed there is in Gibraltar? Not least given the uptake of the number of youths that we seem to be having attending our youth clubs. Is that something in the Government's plans or considerations or is it still the view that these people need to go to the UK and take University courses to get this JNC recognised qualification?

Hon. C P Santos: This is something that is actually already happened. Two of our youth JNC workers did it on the job. There was a vacancy that came up and they did the training via Gibraltar.

The Education Department supported them and paid for the training like a scholarship so they didn't need to go to the UK. But becoming a JNC worker requires the time and the studies in the same way as any other degree. It is a degree course.

It is a level 6 degree course. A lot of them are doing the level 7. A lot of them have masters.

So I repeat, if we have, there is currently another student that is in the UK who is starting to become a JNC worker but we have not found that there is a huge interest from the youth support workers that are doing it as a part-time option. If there was more interest, we would look at ways as well. But this is like any other job in Gibraltar or anywhere else in the world.

There needs to be a vacancy for it. Currently we have got a full complement. A complement that we ourselves increased in 2013 because we used to have 5 workers, 1 team leader and 4 community workers and now we have 8.

So if we see that there is a need for an increase, we will reconsider it. But as I already said, there is the facility to do it here in Gibraltar as it is a very hands-on training.

Hon. G Origo: And finally, if I may speak, the Hon. Minister just said that there were at least 2 that were trained here locally and supported by the relevant departments. But to the tail end of his

860 answer, he did say that this JNC qualification is a level 6 type qualification that requires a University degree. So is it the case that they're actually being done here in Gibraltar, which was the first question I posed?

865 Or, is it as my understanding, that they still have to get the University degree? And what he has trying to say is that the Government are supporting them in these courses by way of financing.

Hon. C P Santos: There are some types of degree, like the PGCE, where a lot of it is actually on-the-job training. So they had to go to the UK for short periods of time, but they were employed in view of them completing the qualification. So they were here, and at times they had to go to the UK to do some parts of the course. And that is how that worked.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

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Q294/2025
New Youth Club –
Plans

Q295/2025
Youth Centre –
Rook site

Clerk: Question 294, the Hon. G Origo.

880 **Hon. G Origo:** Further to Question number W15 of 2024, can the Government confirm whether it has now developed plans for the establishment of a new youth club located near the Moorish Castle Estate in the Upper Town area?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Employment, Equality, Culture and Tourism.

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Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 295.

Clerk: Question 295, the Hon. G Origo.

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Hon. G Origo: Can the Government confirm whether it still has plans for the creation of a youth centre at the Rook Development Site?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Employment, Equality, Culture and Tourism.

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Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): Madam Speaker, the Government still has plans for the development of a youth club at Moorish Castle Estate utilising Plater Youth Club as the dedicated home. We are still planning a youth centre at the Rook Development Site and are in discussions with the developer of the site.

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, I am firstly going to take some supplementary questions on 294. If I may, in answers to previous questions, namely W15 of 2024, and I quote, the answer given by the Hon. Minister at the time was, as per our manifesto commitments, we are committed to establishing a new youth club in the Moorish Castle Estate and we are in talks about this already. He now says that the Government still has plans to develop the youth club there.

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Can you give a bit more detail as to how these plans have developed? Not least, that answer is the same answer which he gave last year in January 2024.

Hon. C P Santos: The answer I gave in 2024 was to the question in 2024 which was, when does the Government expect the development of the new Moorish Castle Estate Youth Club at the Plater building to commence, and how long would such a refurbishment take to complete, and as I said, we are still committed to it. This time, we've used the terminology plans because the question was, can the Government confirm whether it still has plans, now-developed plans, and that is why the change in terminology. Yes, we still have plans.

We are looking at different options. There is nothing concrete at the moment. As I said, we are still looking at the Plater Youth Club to form part of that development, and it will still be housed in the same place.

We are just looking at different variables of how we can build on around and how designs can work, but we are still in that stage.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, and if I may, can I put to the Hon. Minister whether in fact this promise is actually going to materialise, not least because on the one hand we are told that we are in talks, on the other hand we are told in discussions and now he says that we are still developing plans, and in the previous answer he said we are committing to establishing them. The only thing that is evident here is that he has sharing the same thesaurus as his hon. Friend sitting next to him, and I would invite him to invest in an Oxford Dictionary and perhaps look at the word promise to understand the definition of that word. So can I put it to him, does he think they will actually fulfil on this promise?

Hon. C P Santos: Madam Speaker, what it seems to me is that there is a lot pre-written and not really listening to what I am saying and he has come with this pre-written paragraph about promises and all these little research that he has done before in prep of what I would answer. It is a manifesto commitment, we are looking at plans, we need to discuss and plan and that is how projects happen. They do not just magically wave a wand and these things appear.

So, we are currently with the project manager working to see and develop how the plans can work. I wish it was easier than that, I wish for my knowledge on construction, before that, I could just build it like you build a Lego in four and a half days, but things do not work like that. So, this is not an empty promise, this is a manifesto commitment.

So, I do not need to check what the definition of promise is, I do not use my colleagues' thesaurus and I love these little planned attacks that do not really ever land.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, if I may, in response to the answers given today, we can see that the Hon. Minister is still planning and still in discussions. Last year, 12 months ago, we were still in discussion and in talks and planning. One of the questions I have asked him is, how developed are these plans?

And he has not given me an answer in that respect. Details which I would expect, for instance, does he have a developer in mind? Do we know what the cost is going to be and when we can expect this development to build?

Does he have any of those such details? Not least, he has already spent 12 months planning all this.

Hon. C P Santos: Well, of course I have spent the last 12 months planning, not just this, but many other projects and that is why it takes long, because we need to make sure that the plans are working. We do not have a developer.

We do not have the costs, because we are still looking to see how a lot of the projects are going to work, how we can make them all work. We have someone that works for us from a

development perspective in my ministry, so we are looking at a lot of different projects. We are seeing how we are going to make them all work.

960 So I am not going to give you details on any of the projects that I do not have, but I wish that I could plan something in a week and get it going. That is how my mind worked before I got into these types of big projects, but sadly they don't. They work at the speed that they work, and we need to make sure that they work as positively as we can possibly make them happen.

965 **Hon. G Origo:** Clearly we are not planning fast enough, Madam Speaker. If I might take the conversation elsewhere, and I refer to the GSLP manifesto just for a brief moment. In page 95, where this commitment was contained, one of the latter lines read that the Plater building was going to be repurposed as a hub for youth activities, offering educational support, sports, arts and community engagement. Can I ask the Minister what he meant by repurposing?

970 My understanding is that these facilities and activities are all already provided by these youth clubs.

Hon. C P Santos: It also says in the manifesto just before that, we pledge to establish a new youth club in the Moorish Crossland Estate, utilising the Plater building as its dedicated home. We have the Plater youth club already in existence. It is an older building.

975 It has an extra floor that is not used, so that is what we mean by repurposing. We need to look at what areas we can use and what we are going to use them for. Youth facilities for young people are changing all the time.

980 If we look back 20 years ago, what the youth centres needed to offer is not what they need to offer now. So, for us, the youth centres already offer activities, informal education and all different types of activities, so we just need to make sure that we can continue to develop in that area, and this is where I am at with the plans, because we need to make sure that the building is adequate for the needs that we have. Do we need to build more, or do we just repurpose what it is?

985 The home will still be the Plater Youth Club. That is a great area with a great building, so we are either going to repurpose it, and that is why we have to make sure that we can repurpose some of the areas or build, and that is where we are at the moment.

Hon. G Origo: I believe I am going to take some supplementaries to 295, and I believe my hon. Colleague, I think, has one question to take on 294, if Madam Speaker will allow it.

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Madam Speaker: The Hon. C Sacarello has a question on 294?

995 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Just a quick one. Would the Hon. Minister be able to elaborate, given the fact that 12 months has passed since, or more, since the last question and the planning stage?

Who the planning involves, in other words, sorry, the Hon. Minister is unable to mention the developer, but at this stage there surely must be other individuals, civic engagement and companies involved. Would the Hon. Minister be able to elaborate as to who those are at this stage?

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1005 **Hon. C P Santos:** I am working on many different projects, if you email me, I will be able to give you more information on that. I do not have it offhand on this particular project because I have got about 11, 12 different projects that we are looking at. I am working closely with my Head of Development, who works for us in the Government, and he has overseeing all the different projects.

Hon. C Sacarello: Thank you very much. I will take you up on that offer to email. Quickly, would the Hon. Minister be able to say what the target date is given the state of that particular youth state?

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Hon. C P Santos: Within the life of this Parliament.

Madam Speaker: Yes, any supplementaries on 295?

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Hon. G Origo: Yes, Madam Speaker, I am grateful. If I recall the answer given by the Hon. Minister, he said that they were still going to go ahead with the development site, and this was still under discussion. However, if I recall correctly, having researched the DPC planning application submitted by the developer, one which was submitted on two different occasions, I was not able to find any references to the youth centre within those plans.

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So can I ask the Hon. Minister, how is it the case that the youth centre is still going ahead when it did not form part of the filing applications of the developer? Can you please elaborate?

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Hon. C P Santos: I would need to check with the developer, but my last meetings with them, I gave them what my requirements were space-wise, and they were going to get back to me what the space that was available for us to use was. So I am not sure whether they've been specific in the development plan, whether they said this is going to be used for a youth club or not. So I can get back to them on that and find out.

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Hon. G Origo: I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for saying and clarifying that he has going to get back to me, not least because in the manifesto commitment when this youth centre was described, it was described as a hub that would serve all of Gibraltar's youth. And as we've known from previous answers, there is at least almost 300 young people using our youth centres. So one would have expected that such a massive youth centre would have formed part of a plan.

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So I would be grateful if the Hon. Minister does indeed, when clarified, confirm to me why it is the case that these youth centre plans were not forming part of the DPC application at the time.

Hon. C P Santos: As I said, I will get more information and when requested, I will get back to you.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q296/2025
Youth Clubs –
Weekend opening times

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Clerk: Question 296, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Can the Government confirm whether youth clubs in Gibraltar have fixed opening times on weekends?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. Minister for Employment, Equality, Culture and Tourism.

Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): Madam Speaker, youth clubs run by the Gibraltar Youth Service do not have fixed opening times at weekends.

1055 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, if I may, can I ask the Hon. Minister why it is the case or the position taken by Government that these youth clubs are not open on weekends? Not least, one would think that it is a time where youth have most free time available to them to develop themselves. So I put it to him why it is the view taken by the Government that these youth clubs should only be open on weekdays.

1060 **Hon. C P Santos:** Madam Speaker, these were opened quite a few years ago by my predecessor. It was something that was always questioned and we started opening up on Saturdays and the usage was hardly any. It was just negligible. So, we decided to use our resources in a better way. So now we use the resources and the staff whenever it is required.

1065 So, we do open them in specific organised events and projects where we know that young people are going to attend for trips, residential. The approach of the youth service is to tailor the programme to the interests and requirements of the members. So as opposed to having a drop-in centre, which maybe three, four decades ago was what young people used to do, it didn't work in this day and age.

1070 **Hon. G Origo:** I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for clarifying that in this instance it is a matter of uptake and not one of resources preventing youth clubs from being opened on the weekend. Can I ask the Hon. Minister what is an acceptable number in terms of uptake to him to justify the opening of these youth centres on weekends? If I recall correctly, in previous answers to my hon. Colleagues to The Zone, Step Up and Thrive, he did say something to the effect that as long as one member turned up to his door he would stand here and justify it.

1075 Why is the position taken differently with Youth Centres is it his view that these are not so important?

1080 **Hon. C P Santos:** That is not really what I am saying at all. For me, as long as we provide a service, if it helps one person but when we have a service that has no uptake or very little uptake on a regular basis, then we have to make sure that the resources and the financial backing of these projects are, you know, they work according to the projects. We can't sit here in a parliament where we have been asked to spend less and then when we try and make the best of the money, expect to have youth workers and youth clubs open for very little attendance.

1085 So it is not about youth clubs not being as important, it is a difference between saying shall we open on a Saturday, waiting for someone to maybe drop in, or shall we open on a Saturday and organise an event that is going to have 30 to 40 young people involved in an activity. So I think it is about looking for a more holistic and flexible approach to how we run the Youth Service.

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Madam Speaker: Yes, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

1095 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Can I just clarify on the last thing he said in relation to the hon. Member, in relation to something that, in his original answer, which is that they have no fixed opening times. I think he has clarified now in his last answer that they have ad hoc opening times. Can I ask, is that across the board, in other words, when he says that they have no fixed opening times, does he mean that unless there is a special event, all youth clubs are closed on the weekends, or is it that some are open and some are not, because of particular uptakes in different areas in Gibraltar?

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1105 **Hon. C P Santos:** Before when we used to open the youth clubs on Saturdays, when we started reopening because they closed for a long time during weekends because there was no uptake, they restarted opening, then we found that there was no uptake, so there was only one youth club open on a Saturday rotating per area, so that we could maximise the use of our staff and our resources during the week. We realised there was still no uptake, so when I came into Office, I decided that we were going to use those extra hours, instead of providing four hours or three or

two hours or whatever was provided during the weekend, always as a drop-in, we would use it whenever needed throughout the week. So sometimes we have the standard three-day opening during the weeks, and then one club will open an extra day on a Friday, or will open on a Monday. We will still use those hours, but we try and use them when we know that there is going to be uptake.

So, we do an extra activity, you do a movie night, you do a day out, you do something that is organised so that the timing is used in a more beneficial manner.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q297/2025
London Marathon –
Proposed Upper Rock Trail event

Clerk: Question 297, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, has the Government finalised its discussions with London Marathon on the proposed Upper Rock Trail event, and if so, does it now have a proposed date on when it expects this event to be held?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Employment, Equality, Culture and Tourism.

Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): Madam Speaker, we are committed to producing an endurance race in Gibraltar, and we are looking at all collaborative options available with different organisations to find the right fit for our requirements, climate and terrain. We are finalising the details and will advise on dates as soon as we are ready to launch the event.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, and if I may also briefly refer to some hands-on extracts from the past. In answers to the previous time this question was posed, the Hon. Minister did allude then that they were in discussions at the time with London Marathon, but no date had been confirmed. Then he also advised that the idea was for the Upper Rock Trail event to take place, and experts came to Gibraltar to have a look at this. Does he have with him, by way of supplementary information, what the cost of these experts were to Gibraltar, or if not cost, what expenses were incurred in order to develop these plans to hold this event?

Hon. C P Santos: Madam Speaker, in my time, from my conversations with them, there was no money spent by the Government. I can find out before my time, but I know that from the moment I have taken office, any conversations I have had with both London Marathon and these Organisations, there has been no money invested by the Government. These may be conversations that I am sure must have happened before my time, and I can try and find out.

Hon. G Origo: I am grateful, Madam Speaker, to the Hon. Minister's answers, but this could not possibly have been before his time because this question was posed last year directly to him. But I will leave that to one side for a moment. Referring to page 62 on the manifesto, this Upper Rock Trail event was quoted as big business for Gibraltar.

So may I put to the Hon. Minister, can he answer us what, in his mind, big business means, or what does that mean for Gibraltar?

1155 **Hon. C P Santos:** To answer something that he has already said, if it is during my time, there has been no money spent to bring any experts over, so no expense to the Government.

Big business to Gibraltar is, for me, it is about bringing people into Gibraltar to invest. This type of event is something like endurance races are very popular around the world, and it is something that is quite a niche market. So, we find that from attending other running shows, 1160 we've found that those interested in this type of races will make an event out of it. I won't say holiday, but they will come for a few days. And these types of events, it is not just one race.

It usually takes up to three days. There are usually two or three different races. And then runners, endurance runners, will decide whether they do all three, or whether they do one, or whether they do two. So, we are hoping that this type of event will bring a lot of tourism, event- 1165 led tourism, which is part of our manifesto.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, if I may. The Hon. Minister, on the one hand, asserts that this type of running event is big business for Gibraltar, but in answer to his previous questions, has told us that these plans are still in discussions. If indeed these were big business opportunities for 1170 Gibraltar, one would think that we would have done strides to host these events already.

How does he reconcile these two positions? One being that he claims this is big business, and on the other, 17 months on, we still do not have a date, and we are still in the discussion and negotiating period. Is it then the case that he is actually committed and can confirm that this is a promise he intends to carry out in the lifetime of his parliament, not least as he quotes, this is big 1175 business for Gibraltar?

Hon. C P Santos: Actually, I more or less already know the date. I am just not ready to launch because we still need to sign on the dotted line and this will be announced very soon.

I am just not going to announce it here in Parliament. I will launch the event as and when 1180 it is completed and signed. But it will be much sooner than the hon. Member expects.

It does take a while to organise an event of that magnitude. And it is not like we have not done any events or anything to bring business to Gibraltar, as I am aware, and as I am sure that he has aware, as the hon. Member keeps on asking me about all these conferences I bring over, the Eurafrica Trail happens, we've had the Literary Festival. We have all these events that keep 1185 happening, and these are just new and additional events.

Today, we just announced a huge event as a prelude to the Literary Festival. It is something that we are looking as well as part of our tourism-led events. We are bringing in a big author, a very famous name.

1190 So that will hopefully bring people from up the Coast as well. We are constantly working on this. So, it is not 17 months of twiddling my thumbs, but 17 months of hard work, which I get constantly questioned about.

I am wondering why the hon. Member doesn't feel that we've been actually actively doing something. But with regards to this one, the dates will be announced actually very soon.

1195 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q298/2025
Employment Tribunal –
Appointment of Chairperson

1200 **Clerk:** Question 298, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: How many claims filed with the Employment Tribunal are awaiting the appointment of a chairperson as of March 2025, and when were those claims first filed?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Employment, Equality, Culture and Tourism.

Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): Madam Speaker, the total number of claims filed with the Employment Tribunal awaiting the appointment of a chairperson stands at 29, broken down as follows. Year 2023, February 1, June 3, July 1, August 2, September 1, October 1, November 2, December 7. For the year 2024, February 1, March 2, April 2, July 1, August 1, September 1, October 3.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the updated information. Unfortunately, I note we haven't progressed from a year ago because the statistics provided across the floor of this House in March 2024, there were 27 claims awaiting the appointment of a chairperson, some dating as far back as 2022. From today's information, we now have 29, so we are going up slowly, but we are going up rather than down.

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The Minister has given me statistics for 2023 and 2024. So can I add in that supplementary question, can he therefore confirm that the 11 that were pending a year ago that had been first filed in 2022, that all those have now been satisfactorily settled one way or another?

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Hon. C P Santos: Madam Speaker, the number last year, which was 27 in 24th of March, and the number this year is not the same. We've gone up. It is not like the numbers remained.

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There are three different stages, which are seven different stages divided into three different groupings. So it is not that it is the same 27 from last year, plus two. Since September 2024, when the numbers went back up, actually, the hon. Member wasn't here at that time, it went back up to 61.

We've had a total number of 37 claims that were appointed a chairperson with these claims now undergoing directions. One from 2019, 24 from 2022, and 10 from 2023, and two from 2024. What happens is that the numbers in six months time, they may go up or they may go down according to the stages that are moved.

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Remember, we need to go from receiving a claim then we are waiting for mediation. So it doesn't mean that the same 27 are the ones from last year. The ones from last year may have already, some have moved.

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If we look at last, there is none from 2019 or 2022. There were four in June and we've only got, and we have, where are they? If we look at the numbers, the numbers are changing, for example, when they come.

Sorry, I am looking at the wrong list. So there is none from January, for example, from 2023. These were last year, we had some from January, now we don't.

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So it is not that the numbers, that they keep on moving as we go along. So the numbers are not necessarily comparative to the same number of people. The person may not be the same, is what I am trying to say.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I have tried hard to understand what you're trying to put across. So, we have 29 cases awaiting the appointment of the chairperson.

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I know the Minister is able to look at his notes and has lots of details there. May I ask, in case he does have it available, the total number of active cases, because he has explained that these are awaiting the appointment, but there are different stages and so on. So how many actively, sort of, on the files there that haven't completed the whole process of the interview?

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Does he have those figures? If he doesn't, I can obviously pose it the next time round.

Hon. C P Santos: The number of cases resolved or actually going through the stages? I would need some notice of that question.

1255 **Hon. D J Bossino:** The Hon. Minister seems to be very satisfied with these numbers, presumably
because he has advising the House that he has seeing an improvement. Is it the case that there
are now, because this is from memory and I understand that he said that the Hon. Minister was
going to be appointing new chairpersons? Has that happened and is the reduction in numbers as
1260 a result of the assumed fact that there is a greater pool of individuals from which to appoint in
that role?

Hon. C P Santos: We haven't appointed anyone new yet. We've just received, we received
applications for mediators and new chairpersons, but currently we have one chairperson is
working full-time. So this person has taken on a larger load.
1265 So because of extending the hours of some of our chairpersons who are either part-time
or in less hours, the numbers have gone down due to that.

Hon. D J Bossino: Is there a definitive number that the Hon. Minister is seeking to employ in that
role? If so, is he able to provide the number across the floor of the House?
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Hon. C P Santos: There is no definitive ideal number because they work according to cases. The
more people who have the more cases we can hand out. So we need to make sure that the people
that apply and the people that we get are appropriate.
1275 So it is not about filling in numbers, but finding people who can appropriately go through
the process.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

JUSTICE, TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Q299/2025

Failure to have MOT certificates – Fines

1280 **Clerk:** Questions to the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry. Question 299, the Hon.
G Origo.

1285 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, how many fines have been issued for failure to have MOT
certificates on foreign registered motor vehicles in 2024?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

1290 **Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham):** Madam Speaker, I am advised that no
fines were issued to foreign registered motor vehicles in 2024 for failure to have a valid MOT
certificate.

1295 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, can I ask the Hon. Minister what process is carried out by the RDP
to ensure that vehicles travelling on our roads have valid MOT certificates, not least because when
I asked this question last month with respect to vehicles generally registered in Gibraltar, we noted
that in the last three years we had about 30,000 MOT certificates registered, but at least 40,000
vehicles registered in Gibraltar. The numbers of fines were quite nominal.

1300 Given his answers now that there is been zero fines issued to foreign registered vehicles
and they come across the board in the tens of thousands, I find it quite surprising that no fines
have been issued in this respect. So can you please give a bit more detail to behalf of them with

respect to the processes engaged in order to ensure that vehicles on a road are compliant with the law and therefore that our roads are essentially safe?

Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, I am happy to do so. When I discussed the question with the Commissioner of Police and his team when the question was tabled last week, I must say that initially I found the position confusing. It took me a number of days to really understand what was behind the reason why no fines have been issued last year.

Let me say that it is a legacy issue as well. In other words, this is not an issue that is confined to last year. I am told that the position is similar for as long as people can remember, and I have actually been told that it could go back 20 years.

If you look at the relevant legislation, Madam Speaker, it requires foreign vehicles to be covered by a valid roadworthiness certificate, which has been issued by the relevant authority in the State. In other words, that is a requirement. So to the extent that an offence is committed, there is a requirement to satisfy that in any court proceedings.

I have been told, Madam Speaker, that there are practical challenges in actually getting verification from the relevant state, as the section requires, because when a foreign registered motor vehicle, is stopped in Gibraltar, and let's take the hypothetical case scenario that the RGP officer, using his discretion, asks for a copy of the MOT certificate issued in the relevant State, whatever that relevant State might be, and I also hasten to add, Madam Speaker, that this is an implementation of EU law and that we are now in a post-Brexit scenario, but in that case example that I have given, if the driver were to say, I do not have the certificate with me, and the Officer were to issue a fine, then under the relevant legislation, he is required to pay the fine within 14 days, I think it is 14 days, and should he wish to challenge the imposition of the fine, he then says, I dispute the fine, and therefore he has required to go to court, and all the driver or the individual needs to do is that when he goes to court, the burden is on the prosecution or the police in this state, the DPP, to prove that a valid certificate has not been issued for which a valid confirmation is required from the relevant authority. I am told that that confirmation has to come from the UK, in other words, this is a State-to-State matter, and that therefore the process is, should a fine be issued, that the relevant authorities here would ask the UK to please obtain confirmation from the relevant State, whatever that relevant State might be, as to the validity or otherwise of a roadworthiness certificate.

The UK has not done that and is not doing that, so to the extent that the UK is declining to do it, for reasons which perhaps I can explain in a minute, it means that the RGP is not in a position to be able to verify whether, to quote the relevant section, a valid road-worthiness certificate has been issued by the relevant state. To that extent, Madam Speaker, if the matter were to go to court, then the RGP would be put in a position where it would not be able to offer evidence in support of the relevant proceedings, and that therefore a fine would not be imposed according to the laws of Gibraltar. That is the position as I understand it to be.

I have also been told, Madam Speaker, that it seems to be the case, based on the research that we've done, that in the UK, if a foreign registered vehicle were to enter the UK, say as a tourist, there is no legal requirement in the UK that requires a person to produce as a matter of law, in other words, reflecting the Gibraltar law position, the holding of a valid MOT certificate in the relevant State. That as a matter of English law, and I express no view on English law, but this is the way that it has been explained to me, the driver will be required to produce insurance and indeed a valid driving licence.

To that extent, because it is not a requirement in the UK, the UK authorities are not assisting with the process that will be required as a matter of Gibraltar law in order to be able to enforce fines in Gibraltar. The hon. Member has asked also what steps the RGP will take in terms of verifying the road worthiness of a vehicle that enters into Gibraltar. Obviously, if the vehicle is not roadworthy, because the vehicle is in a state of disrepair, then other laws of Gibraltar would apply those circumstances and there are powers under the relevant traffic law, traffic offences for that vehicle to be impounded.

But in most cases, Madam Speaker, when a foreign vehicle is stopped in Gibraltar, they are stopped because other traffic offences are committed. So if somebody skips a red light or dangerous driving or the like.

Hon. G Origo: If I may, Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for his comprehensive answer and for elaborating as to why the UK, in this instance, does not wish to assist us to enforce a law which is imposed on locals but not on foreign persons coming to Gibraltar, which I consider we, I think in this House, would consider as quite unfair. But moving that to a side and looking back at processes, my understanding that the position in the UK is that there is a digital system where MOT certificates are logged when people pass this MOT certification and therefore it becomes much easier for the RGP by taking screenshots of your number plate to be able to go on this database and then confirm whether you have valid motor worthiness cover on your car.

Is this something that the Hon. Minister is considering doing for? I will repeat for the Hon. Minister, in the UK they have a digital system and they have a database when you pass your MOT in the DVLD, they register your licence plates with your MOT date expiry. Sometimes it is two years, sometimes it is five for new cars. Then the RGP have a memorandum of understanding with the DVLD in which they can take your number plate and then verify instantaneously whether you have cover or not.

Is this something that the Hon. Minister would like to take into consideration and maybe adopt by way of the RGP given that the process as he has confirmed seems to be quite archaic, not least because they are supposed to, as he says, stop and search you for speeding or jumping a red light or some other traffic offence before they'll be able to uncover that your vehicle is not fit to drive on the road.

Hon. N Feetham: Speaker, in answer to the question that is not something that certainly the Government has considered and it is a matter that I intend to raise in cabinet. In other words, certainly having legislation in Gibraltar that cannot be enforced raises the question as to whether the legislation is fit for purpose and in what shape and form perhaps the legislation requires to be reviewed. But as the Hon. Chief Minister reminded me from a sedentary position, this has, and I think I mentioned it when I answered the original question, this is a state of the circumstances that we've highlighted as being problematic in terms of enforcement have existed for very many years and certainly predates 2011.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q300-302/2025
MAPPA –
Copy of disclosure policy; Guidelines;

Clerk: Question 300, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Can the Government disclose a copy of the multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) disclosure policy?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 301 and 302.

Clerk: Question 301, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Where can members of the public find guidelines as to the local Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) disclosure policy?

1405 **Clerk:** Question 302, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: What are the differences between the UK's child sex offender disclosure scheme, otherwise known as Sarah's Law, and Gibraltar's Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) disclosure policy?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham): Madam Speaker, the Royal Gibraltar Police have publicly confirmed that our MAPPA arrangements include a scheme similar to Sarah's Law, tailored to local needs. Of course, the operation of Sarah's Law is for the UK Government, not for the Government of Gibraltar. I am advised by the Commissioner of Police that an operational decision was made over many years for the MAPPA policy not to be made public.

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I am further advised that a review of the policy is underway. Following this, His Majesty's Government of Gibraltar intends to recommend to the Commissioner of Police the publication of the MAPPA policy and accompanying guidance. Naturally, we will take the Commissioner of Police's views into account, particularly where operational matters are concerned.

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Given this, the RGP advises, and we agree, that dedicating the Public Protection Unit is resources to a detailed comparison with Sarah's Law, a UK-specific scheme, is not justified at present. Doing so could divert officers from critical investigative work in this important area. The RGP's focus remains on refining Gibraltar's arrangements, and we welcome Parliamentary questions on their local operation once updated.

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Madam Speaker, I recently visited the Public Protection Unit, and I spent two hours with the team, gaining a deeper understanding of their vital work. I want to publicly thank them for their dedication and professionalism in handling some of the most challenging of cases.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, I ask the question, why have that policy been in place since 2015? I think it was that the RGP stated it had been in place. Was it not widely available to the public, or knowledge of it available to the public until recently, when questions were asked and the public decided to scrutinise?

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Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, I do not think I understood the question, to be honest. Can you repeat the question?

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, the point is, if the public is not aware of such a policy, which they didn't seem to be until recently, when questions were asked and the public began scrutinising, what the policy is, and to this day we still do not know exactly what the policy is, then how do the public, how are the public supposed to turn to that policy in order to put it into use?

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Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, the question is phrased in terms of a policy. In the UK, it is guidance. So that is as near as you get to a policy.

My understanding is that the document itself in Gibraltar is a manual. It is an operational manual for the RGP and for all relevant Agencies. I also understand that there is sensitive information that relates to operational matters that should not be put in the public domain.

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When I discussed this as a result of the question that has been asked in this House today with the Commissioner of Police, I did suggest that it may well be that once the RGP does a review of the MAPPA manual, we may want or they may want to recommend to the Government a publication of a redacted document that relates exclusively to such information as the public ought to be aware of. I also remind this House, Madam Speaker, that in relation to the specifics

of the Sarah's law equivalent in Gibraltar, the RGP issued a press release and indeed there were interviews both in the Gibraltar Chronicle and in GBC as well, where the RGP made public details of contact and the contact details, telephone numbers in particular, for anyone that was concerned about the closeness of third parties to a child so that they could contact the RGP in order to be able to obtain whatever information is available under the Sarah's law equivalent in Gibraltar.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, could the Hon. Minister confirm the reason for the review? Is it that the policy as it stands and as it has stood, as we understand it, since 2015 is not fit for purpose?

Hon. N Feetham: Absolutely not, Madam Speaker. The document is certainly fit for purpose but like all documents, Madam Speaker, it is a live document. Whenever regulators, for example, have an internal document in the light of experiences and in the light of cases and in the light of other circumstances, the document is reviewed from time to time and, therefore, the review which is taking place is indeed to review improvements within the structure and the processes that are in place. But that document I can categorically state that in my view is fit for purpose.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Does the Hon. Minister have information as to when the last review took place?

Hon. N Feetham: I don't, Madam Speaker.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Is it information perhaps that the Hon. Minister would be willing to share if we come back to the question?

Hon. N Feetham: Very happy to do so, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes, the Hon., the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, I am just trying to understand the reluctance of telling us an answer on 302, which is the differences between the UK's scheme and Sarah's law and the scheme operated by the RGP. I understand from the Minister's answer that there might be a reluctance to publish a manual. I get that.

I understand that. And if that is going to be reviewed and improvements made, it may be put into a document that is for publication. That is for the future.

What is the reluctance about giving us a sense of what the differences are between the UK Sarah's law scheme and the scheme operated by the RGP? For example, if you just go on the Metropolitan Police website, you will see an outline of how the Metropolitan Police work the Sarah's law scheme, how you can apply online and so on. It is a summary of how it works.

So what is it that would be different in our scheme operated by the police? That is what I am trying to understand.

Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, the answer is very simple. It is a resourcing issue. The Public Protection Unit at the moment, and all you have to do is look at the news every other week, is involved in many cases.

Therefore, as I have said, in answer to the question, it is an issue of whether you deploy resources for the purposes of doing this exercise or doing the sterling work, which the RGP and indeed this particular unit does in Gibraltar. The work is being done, but I am not in a position today to actually set it out in the terms in which the question is phrased but the work is being done, Madam Speaker.

1505 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Sorry, Madam Speaker, I do not understand. So let me ask again in a different way, perhaps. The answer the Minister indicated is to the effect that the police have been operating a scheme analogous to the Sarah's Law scheme for some time, albeit with differences.

For someone to come up with a local scheme, they must have known what Sarah's Law scheme is. And it is operated with differences because you've arrived at the conclusion that has enabled you in this House to say that there are differences. So someone must be able to advise the Minister that there are differences.

And what we are asking is, what are the differences? That is all.

1515 **Hon. N Feetham:** Madam Speaker, I refer the hon. Member to my previous answer.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, how is the hon. Member able, therefore, to come to this House to say that there are differences and that he has been advised that there are differences and not tell us what those differences are?

1520 **Hon. N Feetham:** Madam Speaker, I refer the hon. Member to the previous answer.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

1525

Q303/2025
Abu Dhabi Police College –
Four-month police academy course

Clerk: Question 303, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

1530 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Why was the Abu Dhabi Police College chosen for two Royal Gibraltar police officers to complete a four-month Police Academy course? And what was the total cost of the training courses, travel and accommodation?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

1535 **Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham):** Madam Speaker, the Commissioner of Police is a member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, which is the world's largest and most influential professional association for police officers. The IACP, in partnership with the United Arab Emirates Ministry of the Interior, invited members of the association to apply for positions at a Police Academy Exchange Programme, which took place in Abu Dhabi. The Royal Gibraltar Police was subsequently one of the international police forces invited to attend.

1540 The two RGP officers were selected to undertake the four-month course where they were given leadership experience. All travel, accommodation and academy costs were met by the United Arab Emirates Ministry of the Interior. The RGP only provided each officer with a personal allowance of £1,270 to cover the four-month period, resulting in a total cost to the exchequer of £2,540.

1545 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** I am grateful, Madam Speaker, and of course, I ask the question only just to know the information. I congratulate the officers for having completed the course and for the initiative in applying for it. But I ask, we've heard that there was an exchange.

1550 Does that mean that Gibraltar received officers from the United Arab Emirates in exchange for training here?

Hon. N Feetham: I do not have the answer to that question.

Hon. C Sacarello: Next question.

1555

Q304/2025
Royal Gibraltar Post Office –
Parcel post delays

Clerk: Question 304, the Hon. C Sacarello.

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Hon. C Sacarello: Following complaints received regarding post office parcel post delays, can the Hon. Minister please clarify whether or not there are issues with staffing levels, or is there another reason for such delays?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham): Madam Speaker, I am advised that there are currently no postal delays.

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Hon. C Sacarello: Amazing. Thank you. That is good to hear.

Will the Hon. Minister please provide information as to whether any surveys on customer satisfaction have been conducted, and if so, when?

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Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, I wasn't expecting that supplementary question. Therefore, I do not have the answer to that question. But let me say, let me say perhaps and share this with the House, if I may.

1580

I personally went to the Postal Services Office myself two weeks ago, because I had received information that perhaps there were delays. And I wanted to ensure that I understood whether those delays or alleged delays were impacting customer care in Gibraltar. So I turned up there with my Principal Secretary.

There were five customers, five Gibraltarian citizens there waiting for their parcel. And I asked each of each one of them, how, you know, have you got your parcel? Is there an issue?

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Four of them said, not a problem. We've just had it, not an issue. One of the customers informed me that he had come to the post office on a previous occasion because he hadn't been able to collect his parcel, and that, therefore, that raised the question in his mind whether there were delays.

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So, I invited him to join me in going upstairs to the Senior Manager's office. We both sat down there, and we asked him, can we trace this parcel? And the answer that was given, demonstrably so, was that on this occasion, there had been no delays on the part of the post office, that whatever delay had been caused in the parcel not being in Gibraltar had been caused in the UK.

So, to that extent, I got myself involved in seeing whether or not the delays were impacting customer care more broadly in Gibraltar, at least on that occasion, Madam Speaker.

1595

Hon. C Sacarello: Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister for his recounting that snapshot in time experience, but my recommendation would be to, if they haven't conducted so, is to conduct some, because I think you may find that other people's experiences are different to what he mentioned there. Does the Hon. Minister have any statistics on the time taken, first of all, from the UK for first class delivery, say from the UK to Gibraltar?

1600

Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, I do not have that information, but the reason why I actually went to the post office myself was because I had received a concern from a citizen as to alleged

delays with regards to a particular parcel that that person had bought. And I took that matter directly with the Director of Postal Services. And again, in that occasion, I was told that the delay, demonstrably so, I mean, he was able to demonstrate to me that whatever delay happened was happening in the UK and not in Gibraltar.

So certainly in the two instances where I have taken up somebody's, if you like, dissatisfaction or somebody's questions with regards to whether or not a parcel was taking longer than what it should, on both occasions, it was able to be demonstrated that the delays were not coming from Gibraltar, Madam Speaker. That is not to say that there haven't been delays. I imagine that there have been delays and that is one of the reasons why I have been having these conversations with the post office, Madam Speaker.

Hon. C Sacarello: Thank you once again, Madam Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister, similarly for Gibraltar, once the parcel or the letters are landed, are there any KPIs or targets where standards have to be met for minimum time between arrival and distribution?

Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, if the hon. Member tables a question before Parliament, I will seek the information for him.

Madam Speaker: Yes, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, I would like to impart personal experience, recent personal experience and then ask a question based on that. I have been ordering various parcels because my daughter does her First Holy Communion tomorrow and on a few occasions I have had a panic in that the platform where I ordered from was telling me that the parcel had arrived in Gibraltar, yet I was receiving no notification that that was the case.

So does the Hon. the Minister, have any information as to the reason for the lag once the parcel has landed in Gibraltar, which is actually confirmed by the platform from which you bought the product? And that notification happening, what's with that delay?

Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, in the occasion where the gentleman came with me to the senior manager's office in the Postal Service building, the app was saying that the parcel was in Gibraltar. To my recollection, we were able to demonstrate that the parcel was actually not in Gibraltar. So the point was made to me emphatically by the management that these apps are not necessarily always accurate, but in fact, more often than not, they are not accurate.

Can I also say, Madam Speaker, that if she has any concerns with regards to personal parcels, can you reach out to me? And I am more than happy to put it before the Postal Director, as I do with every other concerned citizen.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q305/2025

European Commission – New delegated regulation/proposal

Clerk: Question 305, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, has the Government received information this month or confirmed whether the European Commission is delaying any attempts at presenting a new delegated regulation or proposal to remove Gibraltar from the EU list of third countries with AML-CFT deficiencies?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham): Madam Speaker, the Government notes the reports made in the Spanish press in recent weeks regarding supposed developments in the amending of the EU's list of so-called high-risk third parties for AML-CFT purposes. I can confirm that the Government has not received any notification from the European Commission to indicate that the removal of Gibraltar from its AML-CFT list will be delayed further than what it already is, nor raised any concern that Gibraltar is the cause of any such delay. The Commission has continued to make it abundantly clear to the Government, as well as in recent statements to the Gibraltar Chronicle, that it intends to adopt a decision on amending the list as soon as possible and that the removal of Gibraltar will be part of that decision.

Gibraltar is in the best possible position, Madam Speaker, with regards to the technical merits of its delisting and all other commentary solely motivated by political reasoning, is not relevant at this stage.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, well that is a good start, can I say. Obviously, as I said to the hon. Member last time, he has the support of Members on this side. We see the importance of getting us off the list for obvious reasons. The hon. Member says he has not had any information but can I just ask because last time he explained that he'd received correspondence and that he was kind enough to give me a copy of that confidentially, which I am grateful for and I acknowledged across the floor of the House that I have received that letter. That letter does indicate that a certain intent of the European Commission, which would be favourable in terms of that delisting, he has not received information, but has he reached out to the European Commission, has the Government reached out, or is he aware of those continuing efforts of the European Commission himself?

Hon. N Feetham: Madam Speaker, we are aware that the European Commission continues to have its own engagement with the European Parliament.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

EDUCATION, THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Q306/2025

Traffic Act 2005 – Amendment of provisions

Clerk: Questions to the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change. Question 306, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, further to the answers provided to Question 84 of 2025, does the Government now intend to amend the provisions of the Traffic Act 2005?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, the Government is reviewing the legislation. As part of the process, the Chief Examiner is in discussions with representatives of the medical profession on how best to assess these drivers. If I may just add, Madam Speaker, that this is relevant also to the answer that my hon.

Friend, the Minister for Justice, gave in relation to 299, because we are looking at the whole of the licencing legislation with a view to updating it.

1700 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, if I may, I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for confirming that they are reviewing the Traffic Act in its entirety and holistically, but can I get his confirmation on whether in particular reference to the questions that were posed last time in this House is Section 36, which was, I think, the subject matter of the conversations across the floor that the Hon. Minister is confirming that the Government is going to look at and review.

Is that the position taken?

1705

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker, that is being looked into.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

1710

Q307/2025
Average speed cameras –
Deployment areas

Clerk: Question 307, the Hon. G. Origo.

1715 **Hon. G Origo:** By when does the Government expect that it will be in a position to deploy average speed cameras, and can it disclose what areas it is considering deploying them?

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

1720 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the Government is exploring the feasibility of average speed cameras in Kingsway Tunnel, with technical studies ongoing and preliminary costings for the project being produced. These are very expensive pieces of equipment and therefore their procurement needs to be very carefully considered.

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1730 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, can I ask the hon. Member on how it is decided what locations they're going to be installed, because I understand that they vary in terms of where you can position them. It is a piece of technology which can be put on curved roads, in long distances, short distances, and I understand that these average speed cameras serve a long way, and studies have supported that these cameras are conducive to reducing environmental emissions and also reducing the frequency of severe accidents. So can I ask the Hon. Minister how and who's decided on what locations to put them? because it is only confirmed that they're looking at the Kingsway Tunnel.

1735 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, my transport team assesses this and advises me. I think it is clear that the reason for Kingsway Tunnel, it is an area which is in a way secluded and I think there is great temptation on the part of some people perhaps to speed in these locations, and that is why that is the area which we are considering. They can be useful in other areas, if there are areas where specifically there tends to be a lot of speeding, but they are expensive.

1740 They come at around £200,000 per set, and therefore it is not something that we can deploy absolutely everywhere, and we have to carry out an assessment as to whether the value we will get out of the effects of having these average speed cameras will justify the considerable expense. But my advisors tell me that if we are going to put it anywhere, that Kingsway Tunnel is the place.

1745 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, if I may just seek clarification, is it the position then that the Hon. Minister is taking that in light of the cost, it is either going to go in Kingsway Tunnel or nowhere at all? Is that the position that is being taken?

1750 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** That is not what I said, Madam Speaker. I said that it is likely that we would put the first one there, but we have to assess other areas and carry out a discussion and a consideration as to whether the cost is something that we feel we have to carry, depending on the value that we think the average speed camera will serve in any particular location.

Madam Speaker: Next question.
1755

Q308/2025
Comcen Tunnel –
Transport link

Clerk: Question 308, the Hon. G Origo.
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Hon. G Origo: Can the Government confirm whether it still has plans to introduce a transport link from east to west via the Comcen Tunnel?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.
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Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, the matter continues to be under consideration.

1770 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, if I may, and I am also going to briefly refer to a Hansard extract dated Monday, 24th of June, 2024, when I originally posed this question. When I first asked, the answer given by the Hon. Minister was that they were still in the preliminary stages and looking at the options and couldn't comment any further. When pressed by the Leader of the Opposition on whether this would go up to tender, the answer was it was too early to commit and the Government did not really know how viable this project is.

1775 The manifesto of the GSLP Government stated that the Government was in advanced talks. So can I ask you, Hon. Minister, how do we go from advanced talks to preliminary stages to considering whether this is a viable project? Can you please share some data on that?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, none of those are mutually exclusive.
1780
Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q309/2025
Public transport vehicles –
HVO fuel

1785 **Clerk:** Question 309, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Has the Government been able to finalise its report on the results on the use of HVO fuel for public transport vehicles?

1790 **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 am expecting the full report within the next few weeks.

1795 **Hon. G Origo:** And will the Hon. Minister be happy to share the results across the floor of the House?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I would be delighted. The initial report back I have is that the, I think I mentioned last time, that the trials are successful and I would be very, very pleased to share that.

1800 **Hon. G Origo:** And if I may, Madam Speaker, I am grateful that it is confirmed he has happy to share that. And I do recall the last time in giving his answers, he did allude to the initial reports which served to show that there was an initial reduction in the emissions. I think he quoted 50% and this could range from 50 to 90.

1805 He did say that this fuel was significantly cleaner, but also more expensive. So is it the Government's position once this report comes out that they're going to roll out this HVO fuel on the remainder of the Government fleet? Because that is what he alluded to in his previous answers.

1810 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, we will consider it. We are in discussions with the providers, the suppliers. And if we are able to guarantee a certain amount of consumption of purchase, then the cost will come down considerably.

1815 And the suppliers are also looking at reducing other costs. So it is possible that we will be able to extend the use of HVO beyond the buses and to more of the Government fleet, which will make a considerable contribution to reducing carbon emissions. But we await the full report and the financial considerations.

1820 **Hon. G Origo:** And if I may, Madam Speaker, can I put to the Hon. Minister whether, given that he has confirmed that this conversion to HVO fuel will come to a cost, is this in any way going to deter or detract Government from the big picture, that was in its manifesto to electrify and go greener with respect to the public transport vehicles? Is this going to delay or deter that in any way?

1825 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker. There are vehicles for which there are clear electrical alternatives, and there are vehicles for which there are not. If there are vehicles for which there are not yet clear electrical alternatives that will work in Gibraltar, then HVO is an interim if they are diesel.

1830 But the plans for continuing to reduce emissions from vehicles through electrification continue, but this is another tool in the repertoire of measures that we can take to reduce carbon emissions.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

1835

Q310/2025
Storm drainage systems –
Review and maintenance work

Clerk: Question 310, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: What sort of programme of regular review and maintenance work is in place, if any, of our main storm drainage systems?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, our public stormwater system is a multifaceted network with many assets working in harmony. So, to better answer this question, I need to break it down to separate items, and I apologise for the length of my reply. I usually have at least one long one in my 30 or 40.

First of all, road gullies and the collection system cleansing. Over recent years, the Technical Services Department, which I may refer to as TSD, has shifted its method of cleansing away from mechanically operated cleansing units and reverted to manual cleaning. Whilst this may seem counterintuitive, they found that they are able to cover much larger areas in specific timeframes.

They're also able to tackle areas which may have restricted access to mechanical units, in particular, narrower streets and pedestrianised areas. Depending on severity of risk, areas are attended up to four times a year under the regular cleansing programme. In addition, high-risk areas are inspected and cleaned, if necessary, prior to and during any forecast inclement weather.

It must be noted that this is to remove and reduce the risk of these becoming blocked by debris and vegetation carried to them by surface water. In relation to road gullies collection system implementation. TSD has begun reviewing areas and adding collection systems to reduce the amount of surface runoff which may collect at lower-lying areas.

They've also added security measures in areas which were particularly prone to flooding, with secondary and tertiary collection points to add resilience. A prominent example is located at the northern end of Main Street, which had a long history of flooding, not only due to an inefficiency of the water collection system at a quick enough rate, but also due to the blocking of gratings by floating debris. This area now has a four-stage system in place to mitigate these issues, and we are expanding this practise into other areas.

Then there is the piped network. In recent years, steps have been taken to move to a more holistic approach to the network. TSD has looked at historically problematic areas and targeted ways to improve them through the integration of new networks which add resilience.

They work hand-in-hand with developers and look at the wider impact that their developments may have on the wider network, and when and where possible, integrate improvements during construction to reduce future disruption to the public. One such example, which was recently completed, was the introduction of a new large capacity network between the schools along Europort Avenue and Chatham Views. The design and integration of this not only specifically targeted removing the loadings of these areas from existing networks, reducing the strain on the existing ones, but also dramatically increased the resilience of the area through an increase of retention during severe weather events.

What was in place had the volumetric capacity to hold approximately 11,000 litres of water. What has been integrated can now hold approximately 320,000 litres, with sufficient capacity to not only cope with much larger volumes feeding into it, but also to retain and combat against tidal influence. This same approach was integrated into Hassan Centenary Terraces and is currently underway in the area of Bayside.

The aim is to move away from the historical tendency to tie older networks into each other or connect directly to existing networks with limited capacity towards a sustainable and resilient network, which will stand the test of time.

Hon. G Origo: A very comprehensive answer indeed, and I thank the Hon. Minister for differentiating, I think, the two or even three systems I think he explored in the volume of his answer. May I ask, on the basis of the recent events which have taken over the past couple of weeks, where Gibraltar has endured quite a heavy amount of rainfall, and the end result is that

we've had lots of flooding in lots of particular areas around Gibraltar. Is the Government satisfied with the level of regular maintenance and review which has been carried out, not least because every time that we seem to have a little bit of heavy rainfall Gibraltar seems to be engaging in mass flooding.

1895 Is he satisfied with the level of work being carried out?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: No, indeed. Madam Speaker, I disagree with the assessment. My memory goes back probably to my eighth birthday, which is 60 years ago, looking out the window because nobody was coming to my party because Irish town was totally flooded.

1900 That doesn't happen anymore. I am talking about a long time ago, but even more recently there have been floods in Wellington Front, there have been floods in Queensway. Most of these no longer occur, precisely because of the fact that not only is there regular maintenance, but the holding capacity of the system has increased, in one example, from 11,000 litres to 320,000 litres, and therefore we cannot expect the number of floods.

1905 It could be that in specific areas there are drains that are blocked, it could be that the rain comes so quickly and so heavily that there is a lag between the clearing of any particular area, but I am satisfied that we are much better off than we ever were and that there is continuing work. I think one of the important points that I have made is that technical services will now work with developers in any major development to not simply just connect the drainage to existing systems, but to increase the capacity of the system so any further flow of water will not lead to flooding. So, I am satisfied, as I always say, I am never absolutely satisfied, I never say that we cannot do more, we can do more, but we are doing a lot and things are much better now.

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Hon. G Origo: And if I may, Madam Speaker, one of the areas which I do not think have been touched upon was, I believe, that of the Ocean Village, and in his previous answer you did confirm that there are some types of drainage systems which run, I think, adjacent to other systems, maybe for instance sewer piping, for example, and then what I am of the understanding is that often when it rains very heavily that most of this drainage system, when it seems to overflow, seeps into other areas, and what happens is that there is a strong smell of sewage in this particular area, and I highlight this because it is very popular by way of a tourist hotspot. So has the Government had any information on what is being done in these particular areas, not least because we do always want to market Gibraltar as a great tourist destination, and in a tourist hotspot such as Ocean Village, there always seems to be seeping of sewage every time we endure heavy rain. Has that been looked into?

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1925 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, we must remember that some of the areas, for example, Ocean Village, where this problem may exist, are private areas, and they are the responsibility of the entity managing the area. There are some areas which are not private areas where sometimes, because the systems are not yet completely separate, that problem may arise, but Ocean Village and other similar locations need to assume responsibility. However, they can come to technical services who will offer advice and support if they need any technical advice, but it is their responsibility to resolve these problems.

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, and if I may, I was merely using Ocean Village as an example. Another one would be around the city walls, for instance, in Wellington Front, where we have heavy rainfall, and what often happens is that there is sewage seeping out of the walls. So in respect to other areas which do fall under the Government's remit and responsibility, what is the Government or the Minister getting his department to do in order to address these problems?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I specifically answered that question last time round. I am very happy to repeat the answer. The issue in Wellington Front is not so much the water.

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1945 The issue in Wellington Front at the moment is that there are still wars going on behind
the Mackintosh Hall in order to clear and reline that sewer, and I mentioned last time the build-
up of wipes, which is absolutely incredible, and I will publish those photographs for the community
to see, which blocks the flow and therefore it backs up and overflows into the Wellington Front
area. At this point in time, because the main sewer is disconnected because of the works that are
still ongoing, and it is diverted to a narrow pipe, clearly there is not the capacity, so when it does
rain there is backup, which is causing this again. But hopefully with the relining that is going to be
finished within the next couple of weeks, that problem should disappear. I did explain this last
1950 time.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q311/2025
Rainfall data loggers –
Procurement and installation

1955 **Clerk:** Question 311, the Hon. G. Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Can the Government confirm whether it has already acquired rainfall data loggers?
Alternatively, when does it expect to be in a position to fund and install them?

1960 **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 Department of the Environment has not acquired new rainfall data loggers yet. The
Department is presently reviewing this element of its monitoring programme.

1965 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, and if I may, can I ask the Hon. Minister if you can clarify what he
meant by the Department is reviewing this programme, not least because in its manifesto there
was a clear commitment which read, if elected, rainfall data loggers will be funded and installed.
1970 So, can I ask the Hon. Minister what the elements of consideration are?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker, we've had data loggers in the past, and one of the
problems was that they required a great deal of maintenance, and then again you had to balance
whether the cost of replacing them to the cost of maintaining and whether we needed them
specifically given the quality, the good quality of rainfall information that is available for them
from the meteorological office. So my team is looking at whether adding our own data loggers,
which we have had till around 2022, but suffered from maintenance needs and so on, and would
need replacing. The Department is considering whether this would add value to the monitoring
that we do, and then they will come back to me with a recommendation.

1975 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, if I may, I appreciate that maintenance perhaps is not the
Government's forte, but may I ask with respect to cost, does the Minister have any indication as
to what the proposed costs for these data loggers are? Because it was a clear commitment in the
manifesto that they would be done, but appears that they're now reconsidering the same in light
1980 of maintenance issues, but I just wanted to understand what the actual costing of these pieces of
equipment are.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I do not have that information.

1990 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q312/2025
25-year Environmental Plan –
Final draft

Clerk: Question 312, the Hon. G Origo.

1995

Hon. G Origo: Given the consultation period for the 25-year environmental plan closed on the 24th day of January 2025, can the Government confirm when it expects to release the final draft?

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

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Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, the Department is currently reviewing the feedback received, and we expect to be able to publish in the coming months.

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, can the Hon. Minister confirm whether this publication is being done in-house, or is it being done privately? And if it is being done privately, does he have indication as to the costs?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, it is being done in-house, and it will be published essentially online, and there is not going to be any additional costs to the Departmental running costs.

2015

Hon. G Origo: May I ask the Hon. Minister, when the Government do finally publish this 25-year plan, is it the Government's intention to subscribe to its own plan? And I say in the following context, not least when I asked questions last month with respect to the replacement and adding of public service vehicles and the composition of those vehicles, the answers given in Parliament were of 21 cars, one was electric, one was hybrid, and the other 19 were petrol. So, I understand as part of this plan, one of the aims is to reduce carbon emissions in the transport sector, but what it appears to be is the Government on the one hand is prescribing something on the general public, but then not leading by example.

2020

So, wcan I put to the Hon. Minister, on this occasion, is the Government going to subscribe to its own policy initiatives?

2025

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. Member is stretching the definition of supplementaries, but I am going to nevertheless answer. Some departments perform less well than others, and it is something that I again have mentioned here. We've carried out a full review of all Government departments, and we are, the Department of the Environment is approaching the different departments individually to get them to reassess their fleet and see what can and cannot be electrified.

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Some departments are virtually 100 per cent electric, like the Postal Service, others are not doing so well, but it is the intention to continue and to apply its plan to itself, absolutely.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

2035

Q313/2025

**School Lunch Assistants –
Paediatric first aid training**

Clerk: Question 313, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

2040 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Are school lunch assistants all provided with paediatric first aid training? If so, how often is this training undertaken, and is it compulsory?

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

2045 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I can confirm that all lunchtime supervisors and lunchtime attendants who substitute for the supervisor role on a regular basis have been provided with bespoke paediatric first aid training. This training last took place on Tuesday 14 January and Friday 17 January this year. The training at present is not compulsory.

2050 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** I am glad to hear that some training has taken place. How often is it refreshed? Are there any refresher courses?

2055 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I am not absolutely certain, I would assume that there are. Management does, even though the courses are not compulsory, management does ensure that the supervisors and those who regularly act as supervisors have got training. So there will be at least some attendance there with the bespoke training.

I am not aware of how often the refresher is done. I would need to seek information on that.

2060 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Given that these lunchtime assistants and supervisors spend a significant amount of time with young children on their own over lunch hours, obviously, and it increases the risks, for example, of choking, etc. Would the Hon. the Minister commit, perhaps, to making this a compulsory requirement moving forward?

2065 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I would very much like them all to be trained and I would very much like this to be a requirement. So the Department has been discussing this for some time. We are looking at some changes in the structure of the lunchtime attendance and this is something that is actually being considered as part of this restructure.

2070 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** In terms of the training that is delivered, does the Hon. the Minister have information as to whether how to apply an EpiPen is covered? Because my understanding is, obviously, that if a child has any allergies and they require, perhaps, the use of an EpiPen, it would be more likely to occur during lunch hour if they eat something. They'd be more likely to eat something, perhaps, that they're allergic to within the lunch hour.

2075 So is that something that is provided within the training?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, my hon. Friend the Minister for Health and Care has indicated that she will be answering a question later on which will refer to this issue. So I will defer to her.

2080 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q314/2025

**Counselling course –
Qualification criteria**

Clerk: Question 314, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

2085

Hon. J Ladislaus: How many practical hours do individuals undertaking the counselling course at the Gibraltar College need to undertake to fulfil the qualification criteria to become qualified counsellors?

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

2095

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, students undertaking the Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling course at the Gibraltar College must complete 600 guided learning hours over a four-year period while also maintaining a client record. This must include a minimum of 100 hours of one-to-one counselling with at least five different clients, a clinical supervision record and a personal counselling record, a minimum of 10 hours by the end of the course.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, are the minimum number of hours being adhered to before newly qualified counsellors are able to go off on their own and see service users?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, the only answer I can give is yes ma'am. The current course is a UK approved qualification which has received great praise and admiration from the relevant body in the UK and they would not have done that if we weren't fulfilling all the requirements. So the answer to that must be yes, Madam Speaker.

2105

There is no reason why we should even question the fact that that is the case.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

2110

Q315/2025

**Kingsway Tunnel –
Management by GUT Ltd**

Clerk: Question 315, the Hon. R M Clinton.

2115

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, can the Government advise why it is necessary to use GUT Limited to operate and manage the Kingsway Tunnel when the Tunnel Operator Service was awarded by a £1 million tender in January 2023 to Jebel Tarik Security Limited?

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

2120

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, GUT Limited is a Government-owned company that oversees the running of the whole of the Kingsway facility, which stretches from the Eastern Beach roundabout to the East Gate roundabout and includes both vehicle traffic boards, the pedestrian and cyclist subway, the Tunnel Control Room, the Tunnel Services Building and other associated areas and equipment. JT Security is contracted by the Government to operate the Tunnel Control Room on a 24-hour basis, and GUT Limited also make use of their services for some other functions, including the patrolling of the facility, traffic marshalling, coning the road when required, for example, when the third lane

2125

is in operation, and in response to incidents within the facility. They were awarded the tender in January 2023 for £1,041,912 on a three-year contract.

2130 GUT Limited oversees all of this, ensuring that both main subcontractors and all of the other specialist contractors, agencies, organisations and departments that are required to keep Kingsway operational are carrying out their functions. In addition, all of the liaison with the Emergency and Essential Services, Contingencies Department, Law Enforcement Agencies and the MOD is challenged through GUT Limited. All of the admin and finance aspects of the running

2135 facility are also performed by GUT Limited.

It must be noted that the design and build contract for Gibraltar Airport and Frontier Access Road, as it was known before it was named Kingsway, was fruit of the previous administration and the Government has simply adopted what was planned for the operational running of this facility.

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Hon. R M Clinton: I am grateful to the Minister for his comprehensive answer. If I ask why the need to have an entity like GUT Limited overseeing the tunnel, whereas could not this be under, I do not know, technical services, some other Departments of Government that manage our roads, but do not need to seem to have to have some sort of corporate vehicle to manage the operation

2145 or maintenance of our roads? Why is there a need or why was there a need to have this GUT Limited undertaking administration and other functions which do not seem to really add any value?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Well, Speaker, I do not have that information personally. This is a system that I have inherited and as I said in my closing remarks in answer to this question, it may be that the model was actually predetermined when the original contract for the Gibraltar Airport and Frontier Access Road was modelled and was decided upon. I do not have the information.

I have inherited this. The system works well. JT provides a service under the supervision of GUT Limited, which I believe has a number of officers who carry out this supervision and liaise with the terminal, they liaise with my Ministry.

2155

The system works well. I do not have the historical information. If the hon. Member wants to write to me for me to investigate and look further, but I suspect it is something that is a model that had been predetermined when the whole tunnel business was decided.

2160 **Madam Speaker:** Next Question.

Q316/2025
Vocational and BTEC courses –
Enrolment

Clerk: Question 316, the Hon. E J Reyes.

2165

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government, sorry, can Government provide a detailed breakdown in respect to the number of students enrolled this academic year to follow vocational and BTEC courses, showing courses being followed and estimated completion rates?

2170 **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): Yes, Madam Speaker, I now hand over the schedule with the information requested.

2175

ANSWER TO QUESTION 316

Gibraltar College		
Title of Course	Number of students	Estimated Completion Date
Acting Performance Level 3 Year 2	4	June 2025
Applied Business Level 3 Year 2	21	June 2025
Engineering Level 2 (1 Year Course)	13	June 2025
Enterprising & Marketing Level 2 (1 Year Course)	19	June 2025
Esports Level 2 (1 Year Course)	2	June 2025
Health and Social Care Level 2 (1 Year Course)	46	June 2025
Health and Social Care Level 3 Year 2	37	June 2025
Information Technology Level 2 (1 Year Course)	15	June 2025
Information Technology Level 3 Year 2	8	June 2025
Music Performance Level 3 Year 2	2	June 2025
Sports Studies Level 2 (1 Year Course)	12	June 2025
Support Work for Schools and Colleges Level 2 (1 Year Course)	7	June 2025
Travel and Tourism Level 2 (1 Year Course)	19	June 2025
Travel and Tourism Level 3 Year 2	43	June 2025
Women's Hairdressing Level 3 Year 2	2	June 2025
Acting Performance Level 3 Year 1	1	June 2026
Applied Business Level 3 Year 1	26	June 2026
Health and Social Care Level 3 Year 1	53	June 2026
Information Technology Level 3 Year 1	4	June 2026
Music Performance Level 3 Year 1	6	June 2026
Travel and Tourism Level 3 Year 1	38	June 2026

Cont...

CONTINUED ANSWER TO QUESTION 316

Bayside		
Title of Course	Number of students	Estimated Completion Date
Applied Food Science Level 3 Year 2	6	July 2025
CoPE Level 2 Year 2	6	July 2025
Child Development Level 2 Year 2	27	July 2025
Design & Craft: Fashion Wear Level 2 Year 2	8	July 2025
Digital Technologies Level 2 Year 2	20	July 2025
Hair & Beauty Level 2 Year 2	2	July 2025
Applied Food Science Level 3 Year 1	10	July 2026
CoPE Level 2 Year 1	19	July 2026
Child Development Level 2 Year 1	34	July 2026
Construction Level 1 Year 1	9	July 2026
Design & Craft: Fashion Wear Level 2 Year 1	14	July 2026
Digital Technologies Level 2 Year 1	13	July 2026
Sports Studies Level 2 Year 1	26	July 2026

Cont...

CONTINUED ANSWER TO QUESTION 316

Westside		
Title of Course	Number of students	Estimated Completion Date
Child Development Level 2 Year 2	37	June 2025
Design & Craft: Fashion Wear Level 2 Year 2	8	June 2025
Digital Technologies Level 2 Year 2	11	June 2025
Hair & Beauty Level 2 Year 2	7	June 2025
Child Development Level 2 Year 1	58	June 2026
Design & Craft: Fashion Wear Level 2 Year 1	16	June 2026
Digital Technologies Level 2 Year 1	31	June 2026
Hair & Beauty Level 2 Year 1	16	June 2026
Sports Studies Level 2 Year 1	38	June 2026

2180 **Madam Speaker:** Right, we will move on to the next question and then come back to this for
supplementaries.

Q317/2025

**Hair and Beauty course 2023-24 –
Enrolment, completion of course, assessments and stroke examinations**

Clerk: Question 317, the Hon. E J Reyes.

2185 **Hon. E J Reyes:** What results or grades were obtained by students who followed the Hair and
Beauty course during the academic year 2023-24, indicating how many were originally enrolled
and how many completed the course and undertook assessments, stroke examinations?

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

2190 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam
Speaker, the Hair and Beauty Course is a level two course which is offered at Bayside and Westside
to pupils in year 10 and 11. It is a two-year City and Guilds technical course. Pupils who
commenced this course in 2023-24 will be completing the course this coming summer.

2195 Of the 12 who commenced the course in September 2023, eight have continued with the
course and are due to complete the qualification in June 2025, with the results being issued in
August 2025. Pupils who commence the course in September 2022 completed the second and
final year of the course in the academic year 23-24. These results were published in August 2024
and show that out of the 19 who commenced the course in September 2022, 18 pupils completed
the course.

2200 The results obtained by the cohort in the June exam session 2024 are as follows. Number
of pupils enrolled 19, number of pupils who completed the course 18. The results obtained were
one distinction, three merits, six passes, and eight ungraded.

2205 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I sadly note that the Minister has had to record it was
eight and ungraded. Does he have any clarification whether it is because the pupils did not turn
up for an examination because that often leads to a U-grade or is that the way the course or the
answers were provided ended up with a U-qualification?

2210 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker, I do not have that information. I can find out.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. A year ago, on a previous occasion, when I asked a
similar question, I know that from the pupils who undertook the examination in the academic year
22-23, some have actually re-sat the examination to get better grades and so on. Does the Minister
have in his notes available whether there have been any re-sits and therefore we may be able to
2215 get better results than those that the course has had to deliver, like, for example, eight U's?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I do not have that information because I think that that
referred to a different course, which was the Hairdressing course at the college. That is not the
Hair and Beauty course, which is what the question is about. Hair and Beauty is in Bayside and
2220 Westside.

Hairdressing is in the college. I believe there was a re-sit and that that person successfully
passed, but I would need notice of that item. It is a different course altogether in a different
institution.

2225 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q318/2025
Secondary schools –
Mechanics course

Clerk: Question 318, the Hon. E J Reyes.

2230

Hon. E J Reyes: Why is the mechanics course still not up and running at our secondary schools and for what purposes is the mechanics room at Westside School housing specialist machinery being used instead?

2235 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, we have not yet introduced a mechanics course at our secondary campus, principally because of the number of other vocational courses we have been introducing in a phased manner across our schools over the past few years. We are proposing to introduce the mechanics course within the next two years, paying close attention to the potential time frame, which would enable us to ensure it becomes a viable and successful pathway, which young people are interested in pursuing. At present, the mechanics workshop is used as one of the D&T suite of rooms with general use.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, I am glad to hear that it sort of hasn't been put away on a permanent basis but despite there being other sort of vocational type of courses, it does curtail the choice for students, you know, especially those who are more mechanically minded. So it is a pity to note that it will probably take another two years for this to get going.

2250 Is there any sort of practical or educational reason why, for example, it cannot commence in September 2025?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member, as a teacher himself, will know that you can't just suddenly decide we are going to do a course and here goes. There is a lot of preparatory work, getting the right course, getting the course accredited, getting the people to teach the course, and also significantly getting the children to want to take the course. I can share some information in that when we first offered the construction level one in Bayside and Westside, there were no takers.

2260 It seems that maybe parents or families feel that if you do construction in school, you're somehow not fulfilling your child's potential, which is a position that I totally do not agree with. But that takes time for people to become interested and want to do the course. So you have to have the course, have the lecturers in place, and then you have to see that you have the takers.

2265 Fortunately, construction, as the hon. Member will see from the answer that I gave to Question 316, construction now has a viable cohort. Certainly, there are nine in Bayside, but it does take time. We have struggled with obtaining the accredited teachers or lecturers for the mechanics course.

2270 We think we are making progress, but it has taken a bit of time, and the school has had to absorb and adapt to the range of vocational courses, which you can see in that annex, the schedule that I passed over, and none of these were being done just a few years ago. So I think we've got to give the school time to accommodate these. I am very keen on them.

We have excellent facilities, and I am encouraging all the time to get this going and we will see whether we can do this within the next two years. If we can do it sooner, then we certainly will.

2275 **Hon. E J Reyes:** First of all, I wish the Minister well and I have a personal wish that this course is up and running as soon as possible. In respect of the answer they gave me, the purposes of what the mechanics room is being used now, I am told by those within West Side School that that room has sort of become a dumping ground type of storeroom where anything that wants to be put away, not seen and blocking corridor areas, seems to be dumped into that room, which is a real pity since I believe an investment has already been made and specialist equipment is there. Has the Minister been able to see what that room is actually useful? I know he has a frequent visitor to the school.

It would be interesting if he managed to get that door opened and see for himself.

2285 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, clearly the hon. Member knew the answer to the question that he asked me. It is being used for general use. General use can include storage.

The expensive equipment there cannot be used until we have the course. I have already explained that we intend to have the course, but we are not able to have it yet. So, I think that that answers the question, Madam Speaker.

2290

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q319/2025

Alternative Learning Centre – Number of pupils catered for and criteria used for referral

2295

Clerk: Question 319, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide updated details in respect to the number of pupils currently being catered for at the Alternative Learning Centre, indicating the criteria used for referral to the Centre?

2300

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

2305 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, we currently have a total of 53 pupils being provided for through our Alternative Learning Centres, our ALCs. The Department of Education's Alternative Learning Centre policy, which dates from April 2024, lists the criteria used for referral to the Centre and the information is in the schedule that I have handed over. That is the copy of the ALC policy.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 319

Criteria for Entry into the ALC

The criteria for a pupil being assigned a placement in the ALC, whether full-time or part-time, has to be evidence-based. This means that teachers must have addressed the pupils' needs in the mainstream classroom and worked with parents/carers. Entry to the ALC has to be because the evidence suggests that the mainstream environment is not able, *at that moment in time*, to meet the pupil's needs.

The criteria is not comprised of a tick list which has to be met fully, but it will need to include, and not be limited to, some of the following:

- Form tutor provides evidence (using schools' behaviour management policy) that the pupil is not attending registration and/or school regularly. Their punctuality is poor and they are not accessing any pastoral support.
- Subject teachers provide evidence that the pupil is not attending their lessons despite being in school.
- Subject teachers provide evidence that the pupil is not engaging in any learning within the classroom or is experiencing significant distress. For example, they do not engage with the lesson and learning activities and/or they do not complete any of the learning tasks set.
- Form tutor and/or subject teacher provide evidence that the pupil's dysregulation is presenting a significant risk to self or others. This would include:
 - Persistent and extreme verbal aggression towards staff and other pupils.
 - Persistent and extreme use of sexually-explicit or foul language targeted at others.
 - Persistent and/or extreme threatening behaviour towards staff and pupils. For example, a pupil following or goading staff and/or pupils to elicit a response.
 - Persistent and/or extreme physically aggressive behaviour towards staff, other pupils and/or property
- The pupil is neuro-divergent and is experiencing significant distress and dysregulation that presents as:
 - Finding the curriculum difficult to engage with.
 - Anxiety triggered by the mainstream setting.
 - Any of the other behaviours described within the above criteria.
- The mainstream environment is triggering negative feelings in the pupil and causing or contributing towards school-avoidance and they would benefit from a smaller learning environment.
- The pupil is experiencing or has experienced adverse childhood experiences or traumas which are causing a great deal of anxiety/dysregulation and they require a smaller learning environment where their emotions are better regulated.

Cont...

CONTINUED ANSWER TO QUESTION 319

- The pupil requires a program of enhanced transition because in their previous setting the evidence has already suggested that a mainstream environment is challenging for them.

The evidence has to be clear and over a sustained period rather than after a single incident or series of incidents over a short period, and needs to demonstrate that all other reasonable adjustments have been put in place and their impact evaluated over time.

There needs to be evidence of:

- Form tutor involvement
- Subject teacher involvement
- Pastoral lead involvement
- SENCo involvement
- Senior teacher involvement
- Deputy head involvement
- Parental involvement

The involvement of all these parties may not be required for all children. However, there needs to be sustained involvement from individuals other than the form tutor or subject teacher.

A panel will review the evidence to assure due process has been followed. The panel will consist of the **Headteacher** and *one* of the following individuals: **Educational Psychologist** or **Education Advisor (Pupil Welfare)** or **Education Advisor (SEND)**.

2315 **Madam Speaker:** All right, we will come back to this question for supplementaries when the hon. Member has had a chance.

2320 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** If I may add, Madam Speaker, it is quite an extensive document and it is not simple. If the hon. Member wants, and he can ask me again, if the hon. Member wants at any time to sit down with me outside this House to discuss it, I would be very happy to do so, as well as answering questions here, of course. I am content with the Minister's offer.

2325 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, Madam Speaker, without doing away with my right to come back in a short while, perhaps if supplementaries arise for Question 316. In respect to this one, 319, you know, I take the Minister's word. I know he tends to keep to his commitments and if need be, we shall meet up and discuss this further and if anything arises out of that, it gives me in the future any particular question I may want to pose formally across the floor of this House.

2330 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Yes, Madam Speaker, I would be very happy to do that.

Madam Speaker: All right, then do I take it from the hon. Member that we do not need to come back to 319 today?

2335 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Correct.

Madam Speaker: All right, next question.

Q320-321/2025

Schools –

Number of pupils sent home for cooling off /suspended

2340

Clerk: Question 320, the Hon. E J Reyes.

2345

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide details in respect to the number of pupils with a breakdown of the number of incidents, together with generic reasons who have been sent home for cooling off from school during this current academic year, indicating the school sector where the pupil is or was enrolled at and the duration of the cooling off period?

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

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Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 321.

Clerk: Question 321, the Hon. E J Reyes.

2355

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide details in respect to the number of pupils with a breakdown of the number of incidents, together with generic reasons, who have been suspended from school during this current academic year, indicating the school sector where the pupil is or was enrolled at and the duration of suspension?

2360

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

2365

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Yes, Madam Speaker, first answer in relation to Question 320, which is in relation to cooling off. The terms cooling off or cool down period are sometimes used by schools as labels to categorise times when arrangements have been made with parents or carers for pupils to leave the school, usually for a very short period of time, typically not exceeding 24 hours, further to behaviour related incidents, when this is considered to be in the best interest of all the children concerned. The child will only go home if on balance it is considered in the best interest of the children.

2370

A breakdown of incidents that have occurred this academic year per sector with generic reasons is as follows. Lower primary, four incidents, three children, so that is four incidents only involving three children, no more than half a day. Reasons: children becoming overwhelmed, so it is not necessarily a disciplinary issue, they may be overwhelmed for other reasons, dysregulated, upset, unsettled and significantly upsetting other children.

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In upper primary, there have been five incidents with five separate children from half a day to two days. Reasons: dysregulation, overwhelmed and inability to ground, significant aggression towards staff. In secondary, there have been 46 incidents involving 35 children and the cooling down period has been from about half a day to one and a half days.

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The reasons: dysregulation, overwhelmed and inability to ground, aggression towards staff, defiance, rudeness, fighting, inappropriate language and behaviour. In answer to Question 321, there have been 20 incidents since the start of the academic year where pupils have been excluded temporarily from school. 15 pupils have been temporarily excluded from school since the start of the year, so 20 incidents, 15 pupils.

2385

Obviously, again, some pupils more than once. All pupils are from the secondary sector and generic reasons, serious disrespect, aggressive behaviour, damage to property, inappropriate use of sexualised language and insults and the suspensions have ranged from one and a half to five days.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In respect to Question 321, it is sad to note that there are 20 incidents of exclusion from pupils and like the Minister ended up saying, you know, the length of time of exclusion can vary a bit. Who ultimately takes the decision on the amount of time that should be excluded?

Does it have any connection with the amount of time it may take for those parents whom I suppose will be invited to come into the school to discuss the senior management team incident or is it a predetermined, let's call it, type of sentencing, you know, this merits half a day, two days or whatever. Can the Minister shed some light on how those exclusion times come about?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I wouldn't use the word sentencing. Having formerly been in the judiciary like yourself, although in another role, I wouldn't call it sentencing. But I know exactly what the hon. Member means.

The process is actually backed by the Education Act that we passed here, which we discussed at length in the previous legislature. The intention is always to deal with it as quickly as possible and always with the parents or carers involved straight away. I have no knowledge of any instance in which the parents have not responded immediately.

So I do not think it would be fair to say that it is because the parents have not been contactable or haven't been engaged. I do not know the specifics of every case and clearly, I couldn't present them here across the floor, because in Gibraltar, we know that it could be possible to identify individuals.

But I think I am convinced that the school deals with it or the schools, plural, deal with it in the quickest and most efficient manner possible, something that we do not want to see and this is primarily led by the headteachers with their own staff and obviously, they can call on the advisors in the Education Department should they need support.

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, I am grateful that I am checking all my notes on Question 321. The Minister said there were 15 pupils with temporary suspension. I think am I correct in saying that this related to pupils who are just from Bayside and Westside school and therefore, no other schools because in Question 320, he was able to, in a very general manner, able to identify whether they were lower primary or upper primary.

And 321, I am not certain that it certainly does not involve any student enrolled in the Gibraltar College.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, they're all from the secondary sector. I am not excluding necessarily the Gibraltar College, that is part of the secondary sector. I am willing to look at the detail and give the Hon. Member a breakdown behind the Speaker's Chair because if I identify that one or two cases in particular, Gibraltar being what it is, I would rather keep that between us. I am not saying that there is or there is not but it is the secondary sector which could, by its definition, include Westside, Bayside and the College.

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, I am happy with that, Madam Speaker. In fact, even the wording of my question because we have spoken in the past, I asked with generic reason to try to not be able to identify. If the Minister is happy to provide me with that information behind the Speaker's Chair, it would allow us to, in a confidential manner, to exchange better views and should I have any further requirements in the future, then we can come back to Madam Speaker and say how or why I need to pose a further question. I am grateful for that.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, the answer is yes, I would be delighted to discuss it in whatever detail and we can arrange perhaps to meet here at some time over the next couple of weeks.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q322/2025

**Secondary school pupils –
Number of pupils leaving before undertaking GCSE examinations**

2440

Clerk: Question 322, the Hon. E J Reyes.

2445

Hon. E J Reyes: Can the Government provide details as to how many secondary school pupils left full-time school education before undertaking GCSE exams or equivalent broken down by gender and academic year since the 1st of January 24 to date?

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

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Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, the Education and Training (Amendment) Act raised the school leaving age from 15 to 16. Pupils are required to be in full-time education until the end of the academic year during which they reach the age of 16. So, therefore, the pupils who have left full-time school education before GCSE or equivalent level since the Amendment Act was published have done so because they have relocated to another jurisdiction.

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They haven't left school and said they've left Gibraltar. So, the breakdown is for the academic year 23-24, 2 male, 5 female. For 24-25, 2 male and no girls.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, Madam Speaker, thank you. I can see based on previous figures because of the Government there, it is sort of implied there maybe the student left secondary school before undertaking GCSEs because they passed on to some other programme. For example, I know Minister Santos has been extremely active in his intakes at the training centres.

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So, perhaps from a technical point of view, the student has not left full-time, is in an approved apprenticeship type of programme but has not sat GCSE examinations. It may be a difficult question for the Minister to sort of find the answer now in his notes, but he may be aware that there was a movement of two or three students, for example, who wish to take up something.

It would be a very good question. There is a mechanical engineering course that has been offered at the training centre and the lack of mechanics in a secondary school could have prompted the student to move along.

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Which is one of the reasons why I want to introduce mechanics like the hon. Member wants me to do earlier on. They would wait till school-leaving age, which is 16, in which case they would be able to take the opportunity of the wonderful opportunities that my hon. Friend is providing the youth of Gibraltar through his incredible work in the Training Centre, for which we are all grateful.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q323/2025

**TLR Posts –
Review**

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Clerk: Question 323, the Hon. E J Reyes.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Has the Department of Education now completed its review of TLR posts at all schools and how many TLR posts are still not filled on a substantive basis?

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

2490 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, regrettably, the formal review of TLR posts has not been finalised. There are 28 vacant teaching TLR posts not yet filled on a substantive basis. Seven of these are in the process of being filled. The vacancies have been out and they are interviewed and so on proceeding.

2495 **Hon. E J Reyes:** I think in a previous answer, six months ago, there were 30 TLR posts that were not filled in. We are now down to 28. The Minister last time had additional information and was able to say that out of those 30, 29 were actually being filled on an acting basis.

Would he happen by chance to have that note with him today as, sorry, with today's updated information?

2500 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** My information is that of the 28 vacant, 27 are being filled on an capacity and one of them is the subject of a review as to how we are going to deal with that.

Hon. E J Reyes: And we are sort of, let's call it, halfway through for the second term. So we've got one and a half terms to go. How hopeful is the Minister that these TLR posts will be finally settled and so on by the end of the academic year?

2505 Will have a knock-on effect of any teacher that may sort of decide to retire and therefore we may have to start the whole process in September. But can we start from as low a figure as possible?

2510 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** I am very hopeful, Madam Speaker. I am very keen that these should be filled on a substantive basis. Some of them are the subject of review and discussion with the Union.

I have already discussed it very recently with the Director and her team and I actually will be meeting with the team within the next two weeks, probably just before the Easter break, in order to try and finalise these reviews. So that hopefully the next time the hon. Member asks me, which he no doubt will, I will be able to say that we've resolved it.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q324/2025

Teacher representatives – Requests to review issues in schools

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Clerk: Question 324, the Hon. E J Reyes.

2525 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government update this House in respect of the talks or discussions it has held with teachers' representatives so far in 2025 arising out of teachers' requests to review behaviour and discipline issues in schools?

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

2530 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the Government through the Department of Education and Industrial Relations continues to work collaboratively and positively with NASUWT, the Teachers' Union, concerning the matters the union has raised. In 2025, already three meetings have been held to date, on the 30th of January, the 5th of February and the 14th of March, just a few days ago. The meetings

have been detailed and constructive, with both negotiating parties engaging in open, frank and positive discussions.

Specific details have been thoroughly explored and progress has been made in addressing the concerns previously highlighted by NASUWT, the Teachers' Union. Future meeting dates will be pencilled in as momentum gathers in taking to fruition the work both the Government and the union have undertaken to date.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In previous answers to this type of questions, the Minister even explained that not only was he meeting the local-based teachers' representatives, but that there had been meetings, I do not know whether it was, you know, via links or in person with the representatives coming from the United Kingdom. Has that been the case in respect to the three meetings held so far in 2025?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: These negotiations are actually being led by head office, so it is NASUWT, the teachers' union, which is the full title, and most of these actual discussions are with the UK head office.

Hon. E J Reyes: And Madam Speaker, may I say in wishing the Minister all the best in trying to resolve this issue for the benefit not only of teachers, but also of pupils, is he hopeful that by the close of this current academic year we will have been able to put this matter into sort of the archives and it is not something that will roll on to further meetings come the start of the next academic year in September?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker, today is the 18th, is it? 19th. So, these last discussions are less than a week old, I was briefed today, and I think that progress is being made.

Hon. D J Bossino: May I ask the Hon. Minister, what are the issues of concern which are being raised by the teachers' Unions, which the Hon. Minister thinks he will be able to resolve as part of the negotiations? I mean, the question clearly is focused on a review of behaviour and discipline issues, but what are the concerns that are being put to the Government side in relation to this?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: I am going, Madam Speaker, by my recollection, because these concerns were raised some time ago and the discussions have been ongoing for some months now. I think that they were concerned about behaviour policy and the implementation of these policies at a fairly high level. The detail of the negotiations, as they are at the moment, I do not have with me, but we've discussed them publicly and they have been the subject even of press releases. I do not want to rely too much on my memory in case I mislead the House.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q325/2025
Department of Education –
Training: Teachers, LSAs and SNLAs

Clerk: Question 325, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Does the Department of Education have any plans to train further teachers, LSAs and SNLSAs, in order for them to obtain BDA level 4 and or level 5?

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, no ma'am.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, in the last session, the Minister was able to update us with the number of teachers and LSAs who have these level 4 and level 5 qualifications, given that, you know, these teachers and LSAs may be moved around schools or some may be off for retirement. Is there any particular reason why the Minister does not foresee in being able to invest, because we are already halfway for the next academic year, because there might be a further need for this type of communication, given that, unfortunately, the number of students requiring LSAs assistance seems to be increasing from the statistics he has given us in the past?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member and I are going to spend a lot of time together following this meeting, and I have no problem with that at all, as this House already knows. It is not that we do not feel that training is necessary, it is that the advice that I received from the educational psychologists and from the education advisors is that BDA is not the preferred body, because their scheme of work and their interpretation and their dealing with dyslexia is different to that of the British Psychological Society. My advice, and I said this at the last meeting, my advice from the educational psychologists is that they follow the advice and the guidelines of the British Psychological Society and not of the British Dyslexia Association.

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There are significant differences between the two approaches, and I have to go on the advice of my professionals, and we can't send confusing messages to children or to teachers as to how we deal with it. The reason why I say, Madam Speaker, that we are going to spend a lot of time together, because I am very happy to share with the hon. Member a comparison between the two approaches, which is what led to the educational psychologists believing that the British Psychological Society was the better option, and I am very happy to share that with the hon. Member, so that he can see the criteria that they're using.

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Further to that, as regards training, the Department believes, the staff to be suitably qualified to assess and has the assessment tools available to provide the required specification to diagnose, if that is not quite the correct word, children with dyslexia. So, there is a difference of approach between the British Psychological Society and the British Dyslexia Association, and that is why I have said that we are not specifically going to provide this training, but I am very happy to discuss in extensive detail with the hon. Member.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Very short supplementary, Minister, if I may, because I am happy that the Minister has, in the presence of Madam Speaker, committed himself to discuss this matter further with me and so on. I would be willing to sort of meet with him and discuss it further. Would he just at least, to that we have a record, whether we move from BDA to the British Psychological Society, can the Minister confirm if we have the same type of, or an equivalent level of qualifications, so that we are not dumbing down in what will be provided, and then the minor detail we can discuss when others can have a cup of coffee.

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I wouldn't be able to say whether it is a level four or level five, but certainly we are not going to be dumbing down, but I need to get that specific information, which I will share with him when we clearly are going to spend a few hours together, and again, I repeat, I have no problem with that whatsoever.

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Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I just wondered whether this might be a convenient moment. We've been going now for three and a half hours. For those who are unable to come in and out of the chamber with the ease that some of us are able to have a break, I am conscious that we have a new Clerk in position today, who is not used to having to sit around for as long, so we might have a 15-minute recess.

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2635 **Madam Speaker:** Yes, let's recess for 15 minutes.

The House recessed at 6.28 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 6.46 p.m.

2640 **Madam Speaker:** I think we are on Question 326.

Q326/2025
New Gibraltar College –
Location; New Site opening date; Cross of Sacrifice Site

2645 **Clerk:** Question 326, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can Government provide reasons why the new building of the Gibraltar College will no longer be located at the previously chosen site near the Cross of Sacrifice, and what arrangements will be made for students who need to move from our secondary schools to the new college location in order to attend classes?

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

2655 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with questions 327 to 329.

Clerk: Question 327, the Hon. D J Bossino.

2660 **Hon. D J Bossino:** When will the Gibraltar College at the new site, says Europa Point, be opened?

Clerk: Question 328, apologies, the Hon. D J Bossino.

2665 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Who or which entity is funding the construction of the Gibraltar College to be sited now at Europa Point?

Clerk: Question 329, the Hon. D J Bossino.

2670 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Please state the reasons why the Government has failed to deliver on its very clear and unequivocal electoral commitment to open the Gibraltar College at the site of the Cross of Sacrifice by September 2025.

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

2675 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, there will be some overlap with the questions answered by the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister, but I am going to read my prepared answer. Madam Speaker, the nature of the hon. Member's last question is amusing, if not surprising, coming from the representative of the GSD, given that they failed to open any new schools in the 16 years they were in office, and we have already succeeded in opening 10 new schools in 14 years. Failure on the lips of the GSD, therefore, needs to be a concept that we need to properly contextualise.

2680 Madam Speaker, the complex nature of the project at Devil's Tower Road was delaying progress and would have caused further delay to the project to place a new Gibraltar College at

the Cross of Sacrifice site. In order to progress this further and more quickly, the Government decided on a site that is already available and does not require acquisition or relocating of facilities, that being at Europa Point. It is not yet known whether students will need to move between sites on any particular day of the week.

The funding, as has already been mentioned, will be provided by the developers of Monument Plaza, or Monument Place, I think is that section, and the College is expected to open at its new site by no later than January 2027.

Madam Speaker: Any supplementaries?

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, I mean, why does the Hon. Minister seek to provoke me? Why? I asked a very simple question and he goes off on one and starts pointing in a very adversarial and, may I say, inelegant way, the finger at the GSD for historical reasons.

Does he not appreciate and realise that they have now been in office for almost 14 years and furthermore, , does he not accept and realise that what was indeed set out in the manifesto was a very specific and clear commitment which, in respect of which, they and he has failed to deliver? And would it not be remiss of him to apologise to the people of Gibraltar and to that portion of the electorate, in respect of which there was a very minuscule difference between them and us in the last Election, voted for them and may have voted for them precisely because they very specifically committed themselves not just to build a Gibraltar College anywhere in Gibraltar, but to build it in terms of location at the Cross of Sacrifice by North Front and to open it within a very specific date. So, for all these reasons, does he not agree with me that what he ought to be doing, instead of making barbed, politically adversarial comments on this very important issue, that he should be apologising to the people of Gibraltar?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, the simple answer would be no, ma'am, but I think I owe the hon. Member a little bit more expansion. Madam Speaker, the track record of this Government in education is absolute, it is well recognised, it is unequalled in the history of education in Gibraltar. So, I have nothing to apologise for.

And if we have failed to deliver this in the time that the hon. Member has referred to, there are many other things we didn't even promise in the manifesto that we have delivered. Madam Speaker, I am not allowed to ask the hon. Member questions, because otherwise I would ask him, has he spoken to the staff of the College? Is he not aware that they are over the moon, that they are going to be moving to a location which is next to the University campus, which will add value to the student atmosphere of the location, and which is a site that is available and is not restricted in the ways that the Devil's Tower site was, with all the complexities, particularly in relation to the Cross of Sacrifice.

Madam Speaker, I am not going to apologise. I am going to deliver an incredible College by the time specified, and Gibraltar will once again see how much we have done for education in these four years, and will once again vote for us.

Hon. D J Bossino: Does the Hon. Minister not appreciate that he has allowed himself to dig a bigger hole for himself? He is encouraging me and members on this side of the House to speak to that particular constituency, which he says, if I were to ask them, that they would be over the moon. It begs a fundamental and obvious question.

Surely he would have done the same thing, and asked these same people before the manifesto of 2023 was printed, and before they therefore made that electoral promise to the people of Gibraltar. And they must have said that the Cross of Sacrifice location was also brilliant. How can he use that to support what is very clearly yet another backtrack and U-turn by this Government?

He should be admonished for this, and he should be apologising to the people of Gibraltar. Can he not answer that point?

2735 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Mr Speaker, the College at the cost of sacrifice location would have worked. This one will be even better. I do not have to apologise for improving on a manifesto commitment.

Hon. D J Bossino: Well, I totally disagree when we are dealing with a very specifically and expressly set out manifesto commitment, as I have already said. But can I ask him this? In relation to
2740 Question 328, I think he said that the developer is going to be responsible for the funding of the new, at least new sighted, College at Europa Point.

Can he advise, and I think the answer may have been slightly provided by the Hon. Lieutenant Chief Minister in answer to my learned hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition's questions before. But can he provide an idea of the cost of this particular construction in this
2745 particular new site and whether, as a result of a change of location, the cost has gone up from where it was originally meant to have been sited, as electorally promised by the hon. Gentleman opposite?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I cannot give an accurate estimate yet, but it is not expected
2750 that the cost would be greater than the Cross of Sacrifice.

Hon. D J Bossino: Is the Hon. Minister therefore committing himself to, in effect, saying that it will be the same or less than was originally envisaged when the College was going to be sited at the Cross of Sacrifice? And it will not, under any circumstances, be greater than that.
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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, that question is probably impossible to answer because we never got a specific estimate of cost as far as I can recall. The Hon. Deputy Chief Minister may well correct me, but I do not recall having been given a precise separation of cost between the College exactly and the rest of it. But the indication was that it would be the £11 million that the Hon.
2760 Deputy Chief Minister has been referring to.

And the indication that I have is that it would not be more than it was expected it would cost at the cost of sacrifice site.

Madam Speaker: Yes, the Hon.
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Hon. D J Bossino: If I may, as I am confirming with my learned friend, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, as I understand it, a precise figure was indeed offered in answers to questions by the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister. And, as I understand it, it was a figure of £8.5 million. So can we therefore be agreed across the floor of the House that the change will not result in a greater price tag than £8.5 million? Can we at least agree that that is the position?.
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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Without getting the estimates of the design which is being developed now, I cannot give that answer That is certainly our aim is to keep it within the amount provided by this developer, but I cannot give him the cost now. Moreover, I have to be, and this has happened
2775 here before Madam Speaker, this would then go for a competitive tender and therefore giving a price up front is not something which would be conducive to a proper process. Therefore, when the whole costings are provided, I am sure the hon. Member will ask again, and at the appropriate time, that will be provided.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. R M Clinton.
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Hon. R M Clinton: Thank you, Madam Speaker. If the Minister will bear with me, I just want to unpack the answer to Question 328 in respect of the question my friend to my right asked about who or which entity is funding the construction of Gibraltar College beside the Europa Point. If I
2785 heard the Minister correctly, I think he just said it will be going out to competitive tender.

So I imagine the tender will be issued by the Government. So what I am trying to understand is how this will work. So we are not looking, I have asked the Minister to consider this, are we looking at a construction funding model as was used with Bishop Fitzgerald School where TNG Global Foundation or whatever they were called effectively undertook to build the school at their expense and deliver it to the Government?

Or is it that the premium which will be received from the Cross of Sacrifice site, whatever amount it is, 11 million, will go into the Improvement Development Fund and then that money will then be allocated by the Government, internally, towards the building of the school? And in which case, my final question would be in terms of the building of the school, we have seen a Government company called GEP Limited in the past get involved in construction, for example, Bayside, where I think they signed the contracts for the building of the school. Is it then the Government's intention effectively to fund this by using money that they received and then either directly putting it out to tender and the Government then using the Improvement Development Fund to build the school, as I would expect them to do normally, or are they going to use the model they used for Bayside and GEP will somehow get a loan from someone and they'll somehow get built again? But of course, we will never see it in the estimates book.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Speaker, as the Deputy Chief Minister alluded to earlier, the intention is to use the sum of the premium to pay for it through whatever mechanism the Financial Secretary will determine in discussion that hasn't been determined yet, but it would be done in that manner. The funds would be provided to the project and it would be those funds that are paid as a premium. That is what the Deputy Chief Minister explained and I am just confirming that.

Hon. R M Clinton: Yes, I am sorry, Minister, what you haven't explained to me is exactly which model you're going to use. Are you going to put this through the Improvement Development Fund or are you going to use GEP Limited?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, as I said, we haven't decided the exact mechanism. We decided that those are the funds that are going to be used, but not the exact mechanism yet.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In respect to my specific question, which was 326, when I asked the Minister what arrangements would be made for students who need to move, the Minister, I think, answered saying that he didn't envisage that there was a need for movement. Does that mean we are doing away from the current practise of offering, especially Level 3, A-Level students, a consortium whereby a student can be, you know, following one particular subject in one institution and then for another?

How are we going to cope? You know, how are we going to cater for those students who may wish to follow a Level 3 particular subject where it is primarily taught at the College? If they do not have to move, is it then by deduction saying that it'd be the teaching staff who are moving?

Can I have some clarification on that?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, the consortium will continue and be enriched by this new facility. The College will, in fact, the consortium will attempt to timetable it in such a way that different days will be in different sites and there won't be a need to move between sites on any particular day. That is what they're already looking at for the future.

Hon. E J Reyes: And, if from the Minister's own admission that is the possibility, can the Minister say why that has not been done before? Because we currently have students, as we did last academic year and so on, who are finishing a lesson at, say, Bayside and within a five-minute window are expected to be at the site of the present College to be able to attend the next lesson,

causing great stress, shall we use that word, you know, to the student having to move or families having to act as taxi drivers. You know, that movement, that commuting required by students could be implemented even before this new College building is completed.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, there is never a five-minute window and Gibraltar is smaller than some campuses, so I do not accept that that is a legitimate concern.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can I ask the Minister if he doesn't accept that to please talk to A-level students and they would give him practical every day-to-day example for the problems that they experience?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I do talk to A-level students and that is not an overbearing grudge that I have. Everybody would like to have everything within the particular site, but it is not too onerous. I assure the hon. Member that I do talk to students all the time.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: So on Question 327, I think the Hon. the Minister stated in his reply that very confidently the new College or College in the new site would be open, I think was January 2027, and he has nodding his head. In order to address any possibility that this could be another empty and vacuous promise by the Members opposite, can I pin him down further? Is he able to state how long it is envisaged that the construction will take place?

More importantly, when does he say that ground will be broken and construction will commence?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, considering that we built the two comprehensive schools in about 18 months, this is a project which will be much quicker than that. I would say a maximum of 18 months and breaking ground as soon as possible. I think one of the advantages of this site is that it is empty, it is available, there is no need for relocation.

So all these things speed up the opening processes of any project like this, which can take up to six months, but on this occasion, because the site is there and available, that will actually speed it up. So I am as confident as one can be that it will be finished and able to be opened by January 2027.

Hon. D J Bossino: When the Hon. Minister says that this particular development will be a lot quicker than the construction of the comprehensives, can I press him further? I assume that is because it is going to be a smaller building, I take it. Can I press him in terms of what capacity is he envisaging that this building, this College, this educational facility will be able to provide a way of service to pupils?

How many pupils in effect is he expecting to be provided a service in this particular building?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: This will largely depend on a number of factors, including our desire to increase the vocational element of our courses. It also will open opportunities for more adult education, so without counting the adult education which has a great potential. At the moment, we have approximately just under 300.

I would envisage that this would cope for more than that, but it is difficult to say because the new College will bring about different ways of teaching. We want to make it a first-choice College. We do not want it to be considered like it used to be once upon a time, you know, where you went if you couldn't do academic.

So it will be a first-choice College. We will be realigning some of our courses, so it is difficult to say. But obviously, like all the other schools that we built, we built it bigger than the current capacity.

We had one problem, as we all know, in St. Martin's, but apart from that one, and because we built it bigger than our needs, we have been able to absorb in other areas. So I couldn't say exactly, but it will be able to accommodate more students than currently in the College.

Hon. D J Bossino: I am slightly concerned when I hear the Hon. Minister responding in those terms. Does he not agree with me that people will be very concerned indeed that he is not being much more precise and much more focused with a particular plan, given that considerable amount of money will be spent in respect of this particular construction that is already been subjected to a significant change as to location? And now what we are hearing from the Hon. Minister, with all the greatest of respect to him, is that he doesn't seem to know where this is going.

He ought to be, again with the greatest of respect to him, providing very particular answers in terms of the question that I posed to him. Does he not accept that?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Absolutely not. Unfortunately, the hon. Member is showing his lack of experience in running projects, and obviously he has never had the benefit of experience in Government. I hope he never does, clearly.

No, I do not accept that at all. This is a dynamic process. My experience in designing and working with designing schools and in development projects is the absolute close engagement with the staff.

Meetings have already started. There have been exchanges with similar institutions in the United Kingdom, and we are developing this at the same time as the architects are finalising the design. We are hoping to go to planning within the next couple of months.

This is all coming together. The plans will be there when they're there. We are clear where we want to go, but I am not going to commit to any figures which are then going to be challenged if I do not meet them or if I exceed them.

And then the hon. Member is going to go around saying, you know, that I have failed and this and that and the other, which he loves to do. This is not going to fail. This is going to be an amazing College, and I am sure that he will recognise it in the future once it is finished, but I do not think the hon. Member has ever recognised any of this Government's achievements, so he might not.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Yes, Madam Speaker, can I just ask the Hon. Minister to explain a bit more about what he means by a first-choice College? So, if it is going to be what I would have understood as a first-choice College, perhaps he can explain it, it would have been, if it is an alternative educational pathway for entry for our students at a particular level, presumably it would need to be distinct from the academic or other offerings of Bayside or Westside. What's the kind of age at which this pathway would start, and what's the kind of offering that would be distinct to create that first-choice College so that people can choose whether to go one way or the other?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: This would continue to be a 16-plus College, and the offering is what's being discussed at the moment. It would do everything that it is doing now, but there are opportunities to do other things, including working together with the training centre and advancing the offers and the opportunities available to our young people.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Yes, but in terms of specifics, if it is 16-plus and the Minister says it is going to continue doing what it is doing, and it is going to offer other things, but that is what I am asking.

2940 Is there any detail in terms of a strategy of what exactly it is going to widen to so that it really does become a first-choice College? Is it a US-style community College?
Is it something else? What's the thinking, the strategy of the widening of the offering?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: These are discussions that are currently ongoing. I had a meeting with the College team yesterday. I am going to be seeing all the staff, I think, in two weeks' time, so this is currently happening.

We want to increase the number of vocational courses, and we have already done so, as I have shown today in answer to one of the other questions, in the secondary schools. We want to offer the opportunity of these courses then being taken to a higher level at post-16, and we want to offer the College as an avenue for that, but I am not going to be drawn into specifics because these are still under consideration.

Madam Speaker: One last question the Hon. E J Reyes.

2955 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. E J Reyes: Arising out of the answer the Hon. Minister has added there, he mentioned that he looks forward to, I think he used the word, to a greater cooperation of working with the training centre. Does that mean that the new College building is going to as well cater for facilities so that the training centre, which are currently offering NVQ levels, will actually be housed within the same campus?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: No, Madam Speaker.

2965 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q330/2025
Laguna Estate –
Cockroach infestation

Clerk: Question 330, the Hon. D J Bossino.

2970 **Hon. D J Bossino:** What measures are being put in place in order to deal with the cockroach infestation at Laguna Estate?

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

2975 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the Environmental Agency pest control team responds to complaints related to Government properties and communal areas of Government residential estates, now as it did on the many occasions that cockroach infestations occurred when the hon. Member's party was in Government. Environmental Agency also carries out continuous proactive sewer treatments with the use of approved pesticides across Gibraltar to control cockroach and rodent populations, including at Laguna Estate, usually before the summer season. The Agency responds to all complaints, including from Government tenants in Government flats.

2980 They also receive works orders from housing. The last complaint the Agency received relating to cockroaches in that area was from St. Anne's School on the 20th of January. They also received a complaint relating to cockroaches from two flats in Ark Royal House in December 2024.

Both of these complaints have been resolved.

Hon. D J Bossino: So, the question was what measures are being put in place. The Hon. Minister has given his reply on those terms. The information that I have is that it is not being dealt with, which clearly runs counter to what I am taking from the response that the Hon. Minister has provided, is that it is all fine, nothing to see here, it is been dealt with.

So the specific question is, can he say whether the measures which he has outlined are indeed on the ground being successful in tackling the problem? What the hon. Member has said is that the last two complaints, and he referred to the specific blocks in that estate, had been addressed or had been responded to. It doesn't necessarily say whether from a qualitative perspective the issues have been addressed.

The information that we have on this side of the House, and it is coming to us, is that it has not, the issue still remains, and it is a very serious and concerning problem.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, it is well known, it is said that cockroaches would survive a nuclear war, and I hesitate when I say that the state of the world is now, but they probably would. Cockroaches are a problem across the world, and I dare say we will never get completely rid of them, however much we would like to. And I am an animal lover, but I am no lover of cockroaches.

The Environmental Agency responds always, and I believe promptly to call out. They have a programme which usually tackles the problem before the summer season, which is when they breed more in the hotter weather. As winters become less cold, and until this winter less wet, they tend to breed throughout the year.

I suspect that this year we may see fewer, because I think the rains will have washed a lot of them away into the sea, probably to become fish food. But they have a programme in place. There will always be cockroaches, sadly, but what I encourage people to do, including members opposite, when they have these complaints, is to refer the people to the Environmental Agency who will go and tackle it right away.

Hon. D J Bossino: There is one specific structural issue which has been raised with us, which is that in fact there is a particular problem, and I am not suggesting when I say this that it is sort of a estate wide, there may be one or two blocks, but it may also be a estate wide, and let me tell the hon. Member, it is not that I want to ask these questions, that we are expecting the bar to be as high as he suggested, and the answer is there won't be any problems. There will always be an issue with cockroaches, indeed in many places, not such as in the reports of everyone.

But there is a specific problem, and I ask him whether he is aware, and if he is, what issues arises from this, is in relation to the cladding, the cladding that was set up by the hon. Members opposite, indeed in their first term. That these insects are festering and growing in gaps which exist between the cladding and the original concrete wall, and that is, it provides a habitat which fosters this type of growth. I can't think of a better word than that.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I have not been made aware of that, I do not know whether the Minister for Housing has been. If the hon. Member has knowledge of that, then I would encourage him to share it, both with the Hon. Minister for Housing and with myself, and we will address it, but I have no knowledge of that.

Hon. P A Orfila: If I could interrupt here, please, Madam Speaker. I do not need your permission. We have had a couple of complaints about cockroaches.

It was not what you're saying, it was to do with a duct that hadn't been properly sealed. However, if you're referring to Laguna, is that the blocks that you're referring to? Well, in Laguna there was a spider infestation, and that has gone.

There are no spiders anymore, and they were in the lift shafts. I do not know whether maybe they confused spiders for cockroaches, but that is really a complaint we've had, and the environment completely eradicated them. Thank you.

3040 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q331-333/2025

**Moorish Castle complex –
Bolting of goods lift; Heritage and Antiquities Act Breach**

3045 **Clerk:** Question 331, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: What immediate steps, other than its removal, have been taken by the Government to address the bolting of the goods lift onto the outer wall of the Moorish Castle complex?

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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 332 and 333.

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Clerk: Question 332, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: What necessary measures have been taken by the Government to address the bolting of the goods lift onto the outer wall of the Moorish Castle complex?

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Clerk: Question 333, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Are steps being taken in connection with the obvious breach that there has been of the Heritage and Antiquities Act as a result of the bolting of the goods lift onto the outer wall of the Moorish Castle complex?

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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 Ministry for Heritage acted immediately upon being informed of the incident by the hon. Gentleman, although by his own admission he delayed providing the information to quote for months. The contractor was contacted on the morning of Friday 28 February and the matter was investigated without delay. Due to adverse weather conditions, it was not possible to conduct a site meeting or remove the structure on the same day.

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However, a meeting was held first thing on the Monday morning following which the goods lift was removed. So instead of delaying, like the hon. Member admitted he did, we acted immediately, Madam Speaker. Subsequently, the Ministry wrote formally to the contractor recording the substance of the meeting and highlighting the breach of both the licencing procedure and the Heritage and Antiquities Act.

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The contractor was cooperative and acknowledged the oversight apologising and expressing full willingness to follow the proper procedures going forward. Damage will be repaired as much as possible at the contractor's expense and under expert supervision. The Ministry is now awaiting legal advice on the next steps including whether any actions lied against individuals who were aware of a breach of the Heritage and Antiquities Act and failed to report it.

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Meanwhile, the contractor will be required to submit a formal application for a heritage licence if they wish to proceed with the installation of any alternative structure to assist with site logistics. As per standard process, this application will be considered by the Heritage and Antiquities Advisory Council who will determine whether a licence is to be granted or not.

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Hon. D J Bossino: I do not think in all the time that I have been in politics and in this particular pit, has one had to endure the response that the Hon. Minister now says in this House but has said in press releases and in press releases exchanges in relation to this issue. How is it possible that they, a Government, the Hon. Minister in particular, who thinks that he is the guardian of everything heritage in Gibraltar. Who has moved the passing of this Act in 1918, sorry in 2018, who boasts of all these processes and procedures and committees and advisory committees who advise him to do precisely what he is meant to do and politically tasked to do, which is to actually be what he thinks he is, but I say he is not the guardian of Gibraltar's heritage. How is it possible that actually it is my fault, it is a lowly Opposition Member's fault for not having told him what was a very obvious and clear breach of this particular provision when we saw the bolting of that horrible metal structure against one of our most prized assets in terms of heritage in Gibraltar? How is it possible?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, that is absolutely not what I said. The hon. Member, by his own admission at the last sitting, had seen it months before and did not report it. Now if the hon. Member expects me to have actually seen it then as Minister for Transport I should be able to now unequivocally tell him how many cars are unlawfully parked along Line Wall Road because if I do not know I am failing in my duty as Minister for Transport.

Madam Speaker, it is absolutely ridiculous that I should be expected to actually see everything that is happening. I did not see it like I do not know how many cars are unlawfully parked now in Line Wall Road, it is not my duty to know how many cars are currently parked in Langle Road. Madam Speaker, I believe that the hon. Member should have contacted us immediately, he did not, be that as it may, we have acted immediately, we are following due process and then we will see how the matter ends.

Hon. D J Bossino: Well, indeed, how the matter ends. Does he not appreciate that what he has offered in this to this House by way of that particular reply is absolutely pathetic. It is ridiculous for the Hon. Minister to state by way of analogy that he as Minister for Transport cannot say how many cars are double line parked in Line Wall Road It is completely and utterly different.

This is a fundamental breach both in terms of law and physically against the wall of a prized and important heritage asset, for goodness sakes, it is the Moorish Castle Complex. Which bit of that does the hon. Member not understand and I will ask him, as I did in relation to the other line of question, I will ask him and does he not appreciate that he ought to be politically apologising. In other places, in other jurisdictions, the Hon. Minister would have had to have resigned for something like this and resigned for the Cabinet but clearly, because we are in a trustable place, we know what the effects of that would have been. We would probably have had a very quick General Election, which I dare say we would have won

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, the Government does not agree with any part of that analysis, not least that anything said by any Minister in this House in respect of the actions of this Government are pathetic or that the result of the General Election would be, as the hon. Gentleman has suggested, because that is what he suggested the result of the last General Election was going to be.

Hon. D J Bossino: I do not recall that I ever suggested that in advance of the last general Election. I mean, one always has the confidence that one will win an Election, then ultimately it is up to the ultimate arbiter, which is the people of Gibraltar and its electorate to decide. I made a reference, Madam Speaker, to the obvious breach in one of my questions to the provisions of the Heritage and Antiquities Act and that is as normal and common for the Hon. Minister. He sends us around the Houses with his normal worthy replies and I think he made a reference that he and his department is seeking legal advice. I think it is. In respect of what measures to take.

3140 Is it not palpably obvious that there has been a breach of legislation which, as I said earlier, he himself introduced to this House and I only need to refer him, and I am sure that there are other provisions, to section 14(1)(f), which refers to what certain activity by any individual would give rise to the creation of a criminal offence, punishable by a fine or indeed even imprisonment. It is that high that the bar was set in respect of breaches of protected and as the term, the
3145 statutory term is scheduled documents and it talks about erecting building or placing on or against any such scheduled monumental building, any erection building or other structure.

It is very wide, and it is very obvious and it is very clear. So can I ask the hon. Gentleman to at least acknowledge what I have said and be more robust and more emphatic in terms of his reply and say that yes, it is his intention, subject of course to the legal advice that he is rightly and
3150 properly seeking, to take this matter further by a way of, in effect, court proceedings as it is resulting from a very clear and obvious breach of this particular legislation and whether that action will be taken against the contractor and or the subcontractors.

Hon. Chief Minister: No, Madam Speaker, because the hon. Gentleman in his supplementary has asked the question and told the Minister what the answer should be and the tone in which the Minister should answer and on behalf of the whole Government, I tell all hon. Members in this House that Ministers will provide the answers that they are bound to provide which are, that is to say, the truth in answer to any supplementary in such tone and in such manner as they consider to be appropriate and that the hon. Member who is a lawyer and has admitted that he saw a
3160 breach of this Act which he describes as being quite so heinous, failed to bring it to the attention of the Minister or any other prosecuting authority and needs to examine his conscience about whether he acted properly or not given the heinous nature that he says that these facts have. And finally Madam Speaker, as to prosecutions etc, the Government will continue to take the view that prosecutions are not a matter for the Government, they are for a different party. We make the laws, we do not enforce the laws.
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Hon. D J Bossino: Of course, I mean that is a matter for legal advice and of course the Government, the Minister is able to put certain things in motion in order for certain procedures to be taken. I think it is in the mattress courts by way of a complaint and that would be a matter for him and to seek legal advice. As to the process, what I have asked him is whether he can be more emphatic and robust but be that as it may, it is clear and obvious that my admonitions as to how pathetic and ridiculous the answers that we are getting (**Madam Speaker:** I press the hon. Member for a question) from the press also apply unfortunately and very sadly to the leader of the current Government.
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I think the Hon. the Minister in one of his replies mentioned I think the possibility of one of the measures that could be set in motion is to seek from the contractor and indeed the subcontractors some sort of readdressing of the damage that has been done to this particular war. Is the Hon. the Minister able to say how serious the particular breaches have been and also in that context, does the Hon. Minister have an idea of what the likely costs will be in order to make the
3180 necessary repairs to, as far as possible, make good the damage that has been done to this particular war?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, the last time I checked, this was a Parliament in a question-and-answer session, not in an admonition session. The Government has not come here to confess to something where the hon. Gentleman, as Father Confessor, is there to impose on us a penance for failing to act in the way that he considers may or may not be appropriate. We are not here to hear from him whether he thinks that we are pathetic or indeed for us to tell them whether we think that they are pathetic.
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We are here to be asked questions and not to have to listen to hon. Members preface questions with those sorts of remarks. So the hon. Gentleman will understand that when he has made a question and he has made that question about something that he has been told may
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potentially soon be *sub judice*, the Government is also not going to be drawn on those matters in order not to potentially affect the ability of those who might determine that there are offences committed here by the contractors, by those who have seen things which are illegal and have reported them etc, that those should in any way be prejudiced by further remarks in this House.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

Hon. D J Bossino: Oh I see, sorry. I am now going to be targeted, am I?

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Madam Speaker: The subject has been exhausted sufficiently. Next question.

Q334/2025
Gibraltar Chronicle –
Digitalisation of archives

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Clerk: Question 334, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: My Speaker, will the Government update the House on any plans to digitise the Gibraltar Chronicle archives and allowing public inspection of these?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, the Gibraltar Garrison Library team has been moving forward with their digitisation projects, the first phase of which is the digitisation of the Gibraltar Chronicle archival collection. To date, the library team have been working towards updating their web page and calculating the size of storage they will need for the metadata and data that will be produced. All this involves a certain degree of groundwork.

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The carrying out of test scans, they're working out a formula based on number of pages to be digitised and the approximate digital size of each page. They have been in active consultation with their scanner providers for some months now on all these technical issues, which also include processes through which to ensure seamless web-based access to their digitisation output. The Garrison Library team are currently at the stage of finalising dates for a visit to Gibraltar from their UK scanner providers for a technical and training session.

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These sessions are an inbuilt factor to their yearly support arrangement. The aim of this occasion is to consolidate all necessary technical strands ahead of progressing with a web page. In terms of timelines, the library aims at having some digital presence of the Gibraltar Chronicle's earliest editions before the end of this year.

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These will be fully searchable, but we do have to be realistic about the volume of pages to be scanned and made ready for web-based access. As such, the uploading of Gibraltar Chronicle archival editions will be phased in to ensure that all steps made are solid. In terms of current access to the Gibraltar Chronicle and the wider Gibraltar newsprint collections held at the Gibraltar Garrison Library, these original volumes are of course available for all to consult at the library.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker can I ask in terms of the timelines, because obviously the explanation the Minister has given is lengthy in terms of the explanation of the project itself and clear in terms of the outcome, which is a positive outcome to the extent that there would be web access by people so that it is not just some kind of project which would then require a physical visit, because I am sure he'll agree with me that the objective must be that then people can access this from their homes.

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It is a substantial project, but he says that before the end of the year the first few years might be available online. Clearly we are talking about more than 200 years of chronicles, so does he have a timeline in terms of the expectations that we will not hold him to, but that to give us an understanding of the length of the project itself?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition is clearly much kinder than the person to his right, to his right both physically and politically, clearly. So I thank the hon. Member for realising that I cannot be held to this because of the complexity, but I think that we do nitro rata it, because as I have explained, a lot of the work is up front. It is the test scans, the estimation of the digital size of the pages, the size of the storage needs for metadata and so on, so all that is being done up front.

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So once the process starts, it won't necessarily take as much per page or per edition as if you take into account the beginning of the project. I cannot give the hon. Member a timeline. I am very glad to see that the first editions will be there before the end of 2025.

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I do not want to commit, but I suspect it won't take as long as the preparatory phases have taken. I am happy to discuss this with the Board and the Director of the Garrison Library and give him an indication, but I wouldn't like to do that here without consulting first.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Yes, that is fine and perhaps we can discuss the detail, but in terms of resources, in terms of, you know, is this going to be handled by external resources, contracted by the Library, or is it going to be in personnel that are doing these things, and is there an element of an assessment of cost of the project itself?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, it is being provided by an external agency, as I have discussed, they're coming from UK. I need to confirm this, but I believe that this has been funded externally by a sponsor, but I would need to confirm that. I am virtually sure it is.

I am happy to provide that information here or elsewhere. Very helpfully, the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister, who is responsible for the Government Archives, has told me that the Archives already have a considerable number of editions digitised within their collection as well.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Well, if that is the case then, and indeed that would, then it would make sense, does he agree, that they should work together so that they would no doubt speed up the process and cut down costs? Does he agree? Is that something that he will look into?

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Hon. R M Clinton: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes, the Hon. R M Clinton.

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Hon. R M Clinton: Thank you, Madam Speaker. If I may, if I could ask the Hon. Minister to perhaps pay a visit to the National Archives and have a look at the work that they've already done on digitisation of the Chronicle. I say this because, Madam Speaker, I have actually used the digitisation Chronicles that they have already, which is an external hard drive that is connected to a viewing computer and is actually OCR searchable.

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I believe they have certainly done as many Chronicles as they have in the National Archives. I am not sure how far they got to, but there is a fair chunk of it already done. I would encourage the Minister, you know, from the point of view of practicality, to perhaps see if there is perhaps a sharing of data that could occur, because it would then mean that if, for example, the Garrison Library project is looking at a web-based system, we could get this onto the web much faster than effectively reinventing the wheel when a lot of the hard work has already been done.

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, in answer to the previous question, I think it really is an extension of the same. Clearly, they will work together. So, yes.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

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Q335-336/2025

Seagrass project –

Environmental assessment; Government financial contribution

Clerk: Question 335, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

3300 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, has there been an environmental assessment of the impact of the proposed Seagrass project?

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

3305 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 336.

Clerk: Question 336, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

3310 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Are the Government making any financial contribution to the proposed Seagrass project?

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

3315 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the Seagrass project is being carried out by the Nautilus Project, an independent NGO. The Government has made no financial contribution to this project. It is my view that no EIA will, in fact, be necessary.

3320 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** So, let me just unpack that, if I may, and just ask for a bit more details. The Minister says they've made no financial contribution. My question asked, are the Government making any financial contribution?

So, that is not just about the past, it is about the future. Can he confirm?

3325 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Yes, Madam Speaker, I wasn't trying to play with words. It has made, and it is not intending to make any financial contribution. It has not been asked for any financial contribution to the project.

The project has been funded, as is publicly known, by Peninsula, and they also were awarded a Darwin Plus project by the UK Government, and those are the elements of funding.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: In relation to what he has answered, that in his view, there is no requirement for an EIA, and I apologise, certainly, if he has misunderstood my question. I wasn't asking, really, for the formality of, under the planning laws, do you require an EIA to do this? I wasn't asking that.

3335 So, what I asked was, has there been an environmental assessment of the impact? I was interested in this project when I read it, in terms of how it was described as restoring the seabed, and clearly, there must be an objective to restore the seabed, and someone must have decided that it will have, presumably, a positive impact. So, what I was asking was, is, in the discussions that have been with Government, has anyone advised, or does he have information, as to whether there is going to be an impact?

3340 I mean, there mustn't be an impact of the project, and what is that impact expected to be, in terms of marine life, or anything else, in terms of that area?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I thank the Hon. Leader of the Opposition for that helpful interpretation of his question. The Government has supported the project. The Government was asked about it, and in fact, it was required to support it for the project to be eligible for Darwin Plus funding from the UK Government, as part of the Overseas, their Overseas Territories Programme.

The seagrasses have been likened to the Amazon rainforest for contributing to oxygen, for absorbing carbon dioxide. They are about the richest underwater environment. They act as nurseries for fish. They have fascinating species, like seahorses. So, the impact of a seagrass meadow is very positive.

There were seagrass meadows in Gibraltar waters in historical times, and some authors of botanical texts, dating from the early 1900s, refer to their presence, and therefore, it is something that we would like to see back.

It will increase biodiversity significantly. It is not easy, and I must commend Lewis Stagnetto and his team for taking on this challenge, because it is difficult. They are intending to sow the seeds of the seagrasses, to grow them in an artificial situation, and then to plant them out in protective cases.

So, it is not an easy project. I am wishing them every success, but full marks to them for trying it. It will make a significant difference to the richness of marine life in Gibraltar waters, if it succeeds.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: And that being the case, and I mean, I saw certainly in the public domain, in the discussion about it, there was going to be a very significant contribution made by one of our local companies, which is very welcome, of course. But given the investment, and can he tell us whether, I mean, the dimensions of this project, in terms of a landmass of the seagrass, and to the extent that it is achieved, then what protective measures, does he have information about what protective measures will be put in place, so that then that very significant investment is not disturbed by raking and stuff like that?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, certainly in the initial stages, the plantation, the turf, so to speak, will be encased and protected. Hopefully, that will then cede and extend. So that is what will hopefully get the seagrasses established.

And clearly, then we would like to think that the habitat will thrive and grow and get firmly established. It can be quite tough, it could be susceptible even to severe weather. And this is why I say it is challenging.

But I think it is being very thoroughly thought out. And as I say, I hope we have a problem in the not too distant future, where the problem will be how we ensure that these fantastic meadows are protected and maintained.

Madam Speaker: Yes, the Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Minister is obviously much more of an expert on this than I am. I think you recall there was a problem with an invasive algae on the seabed.

To what extent will this address that issue? Or will it complicate matters?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: There is an invasive alga. The team from Nautilus is very much aware of that. They believe that the methodology they're going to use will, by protecting and so on, will exclude.

It is a challenge and it may need some maintenance and removal of alga if it develops. But this is a long way ahead in the future. They first have to get the grass growing, then they have to establish these turfs, and then they have to put it into the sea.

So this is quite a way into the future. The alga is a problem which will have to be managed.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

3395

Q337-339/2025

Night Bus service –

Passenger statistics broken down by year; Environmental assessment

Clerk: Question 337, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Can the Government provide statistics of passenger usage of the bus night service broken down by month for the following years, 2018, 2019, 2022, 2023 and 2024?

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

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Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 338 and 339.

Clerk: Question 338, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Can the Government provide statistics of total passenger numbers of the bus night service broken down by the following years, 2018, 2019, 2022, 2023, 2024?

Clerk: Question 339, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Can the Government provide statistics of total passenger numbers on the various bus night service routes broken down by the following years and by route?

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

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Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, I handed over a schedule with the information requested. I should point out, Madam Speaker, that there are gaps in the information for the years 2020 and 2021. They are not complete because that coincides with COVID years, so those would not be complete.

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The other years should be complete, but 2020 and 2021 will be missing in some of the schedules or will have gaps which relate to the COVID years.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 339

ANSWER TO QUESTION 337

Total number of passengers that used the Night Service per month

2018		2019		2022		2023		2024	
Jan-18	509	Jan-19	463	Jan-22	117	Jan-23	224	Jan-24	273
Feb-18	450	Feb-19	498	Feb-22	112	Feb-23	173	Feb-24	304
Mar-18	475	Mar-19	637	Mar-22	148	Mar-23	362	Mar-24	382
Apr-18	477	Apr-19	494	Apr-22	197	Apr-23	269	Apr-24	337
May-18	618	May-19	615	May-22	210	May-23	261	May-24	373
Jun-18	929	Jun-19	674	Jun-22	223	Jun-23	389	Jun-24	510
Jul-18	733	Jul-19	765	Jul-22	328	Jul-23	744	Jul-24	465
Aug-18	1349	Aug-19	1082	Aug-22	323	Aug-23	471	Aug-24	718
Sep-18	1434	Sep-19	629	Sep-22	296	Sep-23	220	Sep-24	353
Oct-18	644	Oct-19	522	Oct-22	315	Oct-23	286	Oct-24	424
Nov-18	690	Nov-19	648	Nov-22	250	Nov-23	359	Nov-24	621
Dec-18	744	Dec-19	601	Dec-22	408	Dec-23	522	Dec-24	1096

ANSWER TO QUESTION 338

Total number of passengers that used the Night Service per year (from 2018 - 2024)

Year	Total Number of Passengers
2018	9052
2019	7628
2022	2927
2023	4280
2024	5856

ANSWER TO QUESTION 339

ANSWER TO QUESTION 339

2018

Date	N8	N1
Jan	509	
Feb	450	
Mar	475	
Apr	413	64
May	552	66
Jun	858	71
Jul	666	67
Aug	1201	148
Sep	1319	115
Oct	558	86
Nov	602	88
Dec	654	90

2019

Date	N8	N1
Jan	398	65
Feb	433	65
Mar	546	91
Apr	396	98
May	522	93
Jun	570	104
Jul	664	101
Aug	915	167
Sep	551	78
Oct	400	122
Nov	552	96
Dec	526	75

CONTINUED ANSWER TO QUESTION 339

2022

Date	EASTBOUND	SOUTHBOUND	UPPERTOWN
Jan	27	50	40
Feb	29	70	13
Mar	53	55	40
Apr	47	107	43
May	72	89	49
Jun	42	112	69
Jul	89	135	104
Aug	107	100	116
Sep	82	143	71
Oct	112	121	82
Nov	85	104	61
Dec	147	179	82

2023

Date	EASTBOUND	SOUTHBOUND	UPPERTOWN
Jan	78	90	56
Feb	57	72	44
Mar	108	179	75
Apr	106	100	63
May	81	131	49
Jun	91	203	95
Jul	240	384	120
Aug	121	200	150
Sep	50	100	70
Oct	92	99	95
Nov	116	170	73
Dec	149	238	135

Cont...

CONTINUED ANSWER TO QUESTION 339

2024

Date	EASTBOUND	SOUTHBOUND	UPPERTOWN
Jan	82	116	75
Feb	97	125	82
Mar	110	169	103
Apr	99	147	91
May	122	147	104
Jun	195	252	63
Jul	175	205	85
Aug	280	272	166
Sep	142	132	79
Oct	161	155	108
Nov	237	242	142
Dec	446	360	290

3435

Madam Speaker: Right, we will come back in due course to question 339 for supplementaries. Now we can take, does the Hon. E J Reyes have any questions in relation to 316?

3440

Q316/2025
Vocational and BTEC courses –
Enrolment -
Supplementary Questions

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Very simple clarification with respect to the schedule. I see that on the list of the vocational BTEC courses offered on the list of Bayside, there is a Level 2, Year 2 and Level 2, Year 1 for a subject area, capital C, then small o, PE.

3445

I do not want to misinterpret exactly what subject that is. I was tempted to think it was a certificate of physical education or something, but the Minister may have the correct nomenclature for that course.

3450

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, my first thought would be PE, but I am not going to say that because I need to check. And I will tell him tomorrow or later today.

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, I am grateful just, you know, for future use. Can I double check, Madam Speaker, with your leave? Because the Minister before did try to explain there was a difference.

3455

Under the Gibraltar College, there is a course on women's Hairdressing, Level 3, Year 2. Then there is, in the Bayside, there is a reference to Hair and Beauty, Level 2. And on the Westside, there is a Hair and Beauty, Level 2, and he has broken that down to Year 1 and Year 2.

So, are they completely different courses or are there different syllables attached to each one? He did sort of hint that there was a difference between women's Hairdressing and Hair and Beauty, but does he have any further clarification for those of us not well-acquainted with this? What are the actual differences in the course?

3460

I know one is sort of registration done for the College, the other two are Bayside and Westside. I mean, do they both type of courses use the same external provider? I know the one from the College does, but do the others still use the same external provider?

3465 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Yes, Madam Speaker, they are different courses. The Hair and Beauty, which is the one done in the secondary, is Hair and Beauty. The one in the College is Hairdressing and they are both provided by the same external provider.

Madam Speaker: All right, next question.

3470

Adjournment

3475 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, that might be a convenient moment to take the next question tomorrow at 3 p.m. and I therefore move that the House should adjourn to tomorrow at 3 p.m.

3480 **Madam Speaker:** All right, I now propose the question which is that this House do now adjourn to tomorrow at 3 p.m. I now put the question which is that this House do now adjourn to tomorrow at 3 p.m. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye) Those against?

This House will now adjourn to tomorrow at 3 p.m.

The House adjourned at 7.53 p.m.



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.04 p.m. – 4.17 p.m.

Gibraltar, Thursday, 20th March 2025

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 3.04 p.m.

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

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: P A Borge McCarthy Esq *in attendance*]

Questions for Oral Answer

CHIEF MINISTER

Q401/2025

Child grooming case –

Issues relating to the professional conduct of a teacher in 2019

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Thursday, 20th of March, 2025. Answers oral questions continued. Questions to the Hon. the Chief Minister.

5 Question 401, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition, on behalf of the Hon. J Ladislaus.

10 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, why was the report in respect of the child grooming case that was delivered to Government in 2022 by Gillian Guzman KC, and which involved issues relating to the professional conduct of a teacher in 2019, never made public?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

15 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, the Government has previously made clear that the report on the 2019 child grooming case was not published due to legal and safeguarding concerns. The case involved a vulnerable minor and a serious breach of trust. And as such, the Government felt it was imperative to protect the victim's identity and privacy.

20 I would have thought that the hon. Members opposite would have come to the same conclusion. Additionally, in response to public calls for disclosure, the Government has consistently said that the report contains highly sensitive information and has advised that the publication of such report is not appropriate. Nonetheless, action was taken. The teacher was permanently removed from Gibraltar's education system and safeguarding policies were strengthened to prevent such failures in the future.

25 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, we understand that there will be aspects of the report that would be highly sensitive and so on. So to the extent that the report made recommendations that were not subject sensitive in terms of an individual, but were broader in nature, did the Government consider whether it was possible to produce some kind of redacted form of recommendations that could have been perhaps put in the public

30 domain? And if not, but it did lead to the review of the safeguarding policies, can the Chief Minister give us a bit more detail on how the safeguarding policies were improved as a result of recommendations made in that report?

35 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, can I start my non-prepared interventions today by welcoming Phillip Borge to the House, who is my team's loss given that you managed to poach him from No. 6 Convent Place and from the Parliament team to the spot here as Clerk. My loss, Madam Speaker, is Parliament's gain. Second, Madam Speaker, can I ask the hon. Gentleman to reflect whether he wants to declare an interest in this matter?

40 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Well, Madam Speaker, if the hon. Member is, the Hon. Chief Minister must be referring to the fact that I believe that a partner in my firm acts for the family. As the hon. Member knows, this is not my question. I am taking this question on behalf of my colleague, Mrs Ladislaus, who isn't in the Chamber today, and I'm asking a supplementary on that basis.

45 Yes, he is right to remind me that that is the case. I would not be putting this question had it not been that I was reading out her question.

50 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. And then in the context of the first answer to the first of the two supplementaries that the hon. Gentleman asked in one, although I understand your guidance is that we should ask one supplementary at a time, the Government did consider the possibility, because we were asked to by his firm to publish a redacted version of the report. That was not considered something that would avoid the issues that concerned us about publishing an unredacted version of the report because we have to understand, Madam Speaker, Gibraltar is Gibraltar, and redaction
55 may not prevent the ability of people to be fully identified.

In answer to the second of the supplementaries that he posed, Madam Speaker, the issues which arose were not structural issues in the main. There was one concern about an inability to have information move from a private school to a state-owned school and from teachers in the private schooling sector to the Department of Education, which
60 we think has been dealt with in a way that should ensure it doesn't happen again.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q402/2025
Former Chief Secretary –
Educational projects or initiatives

65 **Clerk:** Question 402, the Hon. E.J. Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide details of what educational projects or initiatives the former Chief Secretary is currently working upon?

70 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, the former Chief Secretary is not currently working on any educational projects or initiatives.

75 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, I pose my question asking what educational projects or initiatives because, I hope I haven't recalled wrongly the Chief Minister in Parliament did say that the former Chief Secretary was moving on to do other tasks for Government, which included some work connected with educational projects. I think he was talking about the big overall picture of updating or collating together details and information that
80 the education authorities have already got.

So, if it is nothing at all to do with educational projects, is it fair for me to ask the Chief Minister what is then the former Chief Secretary currently engaged doing, given that we have been led to believe he had some tasks to do that were educationally related?

85 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, this is not a political matter, it is an administrative matter. I understand that Mr Grech has expressed the desire to now completely leave the Service, so he is in the process of doing that and finishing off whatever it was that he was doing. Of course, he was my Chief Secretary for many years, so I wish him very well indeed and I thank him for the service that he gave Gibraltar.

90 The contribution that he is made to educational initiatives, I understand, is still ongoing. It is not something that he does under my purview.

Madam Speaker: Next Question.

95

Q403/2025
The Economy –
Revenue per sector

Clerk: Question 403, the Hon. C Sacarello.

100 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Could the Government please provide a breakdown of the revenue per sector of the economy for the last 12 months?

Clerk: Answer the Hon. the Chief Minister.

105 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, as I have already told hon. Members in response to other very similar questions, now that we are in the final quarter of the year, indeed in the final few days of the final quarter of the financial year, the Government will wait until the end of the quarter to provide figures in order to ensure that they are as reliable as possible. These figures, in any event, are traditionally provided at the time of the budget debate.

110

Hon. C Sacarello: Madam Speaker, that is much appreciated. Would the Hon. Chief Minister be able to identify which sectors at least have been identified as the strong growth potential and what has been done to foster further growth in these key areas?

115 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Yes, Madam Speaker, the Government has identified a number of areas. We have been talking about them now for a number of years. We have set out our economic policy and successive budget statements in respect of how we will foster growth in respect of each of those areas.

I commend those statements to the hon. Gentleman.

120 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. So, in the absence of any information being
provided directly to this question, I will move on to the next one, which is, what does the
Chief Minister see as a prognosis for the business community in the event of an agreement
and the increase in threats from, is this hypothetical, what is being done to alleviate the
125 fears of the business community that in the event of an agreement they would be open
to not just greater competition but also a different tax regime?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I do not accept that I have not given any
information in respect of the hon. Gentleman's first supplementary. I have actually
directed him to where the information in detail is already provided and I believe that the
130 hon. Gentleman's second supplementary, the one he is posed now, is predating, or sorry,
is about a matter which is next on the Order Paper on his next question.

Q404/2025

**Business community tax and safety –
Negatively impacted**

135 **Clerk:** Question 404, the Hon. C Sacarello.

Hon. C Sacarello: Following representations that we have received from the business
community that two of the attractions of doing business in Gibraltar, namely tax and
140 safety, will likely be significantly and negatively impacted on, can the Government explain
what it is planning to do to mitigate these issues in the event of a deal?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

145 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Well Madam Speaker, I genuinely do not know what
the hon. Member is referring to when he refers to safety being one of the two attractions
of doing business in Gibraltar. Does the hon. Member refer to security, the public security
context, or to the security offered by our regulatory and other public institutions? In any
event, let me assure the hon. Member that nothing that we might agree to with the
150 European Union will lead to the erosion of any concept of safety in Gibraltar in any context
whatsoever.

Insofar as the hon. Member might refer generally to tax, I similarly do not know
precisely what it is that the hon. Member is referring to. I can assure the hon. Gentleman,
however, that there is no question of Gibraltar's tax rates being in play. The hon. Member
155 then mentions mitigation.

Agreeing a treaty would not, as I see it, lead to an exercise in mitigating against
loss in any of the areas that he refers to, or indeed at all. It would, however, potentially
lead to an exercise in adapting in order to capitalise on the opportunities that a treaty
could bring. For obvious reasons, Madam Speaker, that is all I will be drawn into saying at
160 this point.

Hon. C Sacarello: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, that is understood. I do understand
the sensitivities of the negotiations.

165 Having said that, the business community does view these things in a different way
to which the Chief Minister described. Whilst there are opportunities, there are certainly
threats there which are live and real, as has been indicated by the Chief Minister himself.
I will move on to safety.

170 Yes, the question was guided more towards the security, as the Chief Minister
pointed out, into the increased levels of crime. There is a general concern amongst the
community, a wider concern, about safety. My question is, what security or safety
measures are being taken or are being planned to be put in place in the event of an
agreement to ensure that our border, as we know it now, is not more porous and open to
crime entering and exiting Gibraltar?

175 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Madam Speaker, I do not accept that the business community
feels otherwise. I am talking to the business community. He might be talking to some
people in the business community, but they are giving him their view based on what their
business may be or their misunderstanding of what it is that the Government is saying.

180 But the business representative organisations that we talk to have many
businesses that fear that we might not do a treaty, because if we do not, their business
model might be the one that is under threat. So this is a picture which has a myriad of
different concerns from a myriad of different sectors. The Government is engaged with
all of those sectors.

185 It requires on the part of the Government a balancing act between all of those
different areas to reach the right balance. We believe we will reach the right balance. And
Madam Speaker, we do not for one moment believe that there is the slightest chance that
Gibraltar will become more porous than it is today to potential criminal actors or that
indeed anything that we might agree would make Gibraltar less safe.

190 We think everything we might agree and anything that we might do in
consequence of what we might agree will actually make Gibraltar safer.

Hon. C Sacarello: Well Madam Speaker, I am extremely glad to hear that and the Chief
Minister speaking confidently on that matter is exactly what the public would like to hear.
But perhaps the Hon. Chief Minister, would like to use this opportunity to reassure the
195 general public how and what measures would ensure that their security is maintained as
it is, as they know it nowadays.

Hon. Chief Minister: No Madam Speaker.

200 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q405/2025
Companies House Gibraltar –
Guidance on sensitive words and expressions

205

Q406/2025
GAR Ltd –
Properties owned and managed

Q407/2025
GSBA Ltd –
Properties owned and managed

Q408-9/2025
GSTR Ltd –
Residential properties acquired in Clemence Suites; Car parking spaces acquired in Ocean Spa Plaza

Q410/2025
GSF Ltd –
Properties owned and managed

Q411/2025
Government, GDC and GSB owned companies –
Off plan purchases of residential property

210

Clerk: Question 405, the Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, can the Government provide the information given to Companies House Gibraltar as required by guidance in notes 4 on sensitive words and expressions issued by Companies House Gibraltar as to what the particular letters or abbreviation in the names of the following Government owned, Gibraltar Development Corporation owned and Savings Bank owned companies stand for, namely GDC and GDC Directors Limited; GCP and GCP Investments Limited; ES and ES Limited; GAR and GAR Limited; GRP and GRP Management Company Limited; GSBA and GSBA Limited; GOC and GOC Secretaries Limited; GEP and GEP Limited; GSTR and GSTR Limited; GUT and GUT Limited; GSF and GSF Limited, KIY and KIY Parking Limited.

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I will answer with 406 to 411.

Clerk: Question 406, the Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Can the Government advise what properties does GAR Limited own and manage?

Clerk: Question 407, the Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Can the Government advise what properties does GSBA Limited own and manage?

Clerk: Question 408, the Hon. R M Clinton.

240 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Can the Government provide a schedule detailing the residential properties GSTR Limited acquired in Clemence Suites and their associated purchase price and date of purchase?

Clerk: Question 409, the Hon. R M Clinton.

245 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Can the Government provide a schedule detailing the car parking spaces GSTR Limited acquired in Ocean Spa Plaza and their associated purchase price and date of purchase?

Clerk: Question 410, the Hon. R M Clinton.

250 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Can the Government advise what properties does GSF Limited own and manage?

Clerk: Question 411, the Hon. R M Clinton.

255 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Can the Government provide a schedule detailing all off plan purchases of residential property (excluding 50:50 schemes) by the Government, any Government owned company, any Gibraltar Development Corporation owned company or Gibraltar Savings Bank owned company from 1 January 2012 to 31 January 2025?

260 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, the company names listed in Companies House, Gibraltar are the names of the companies and do not represent abbreviations. They are nonetheless acronyms which helpfully identify activity as follows:
265 GDC and GDC Directors Limited stands for Gibraltar Development Corporation. GCP and GCP Investments Limited does apparently not stand for anything, ES and ES Limited was originally Europa Stadium Limited but is now used for energy supplies, GAR and GAR Limited stands for Gibraltar Asset Rentals, GRP and GRP Management Company Limited stands for Gibraltar Residential Properties. GSBA and GSBA Limited stands for
270 Gibraltar Savings Bank Assets, GOC and GOC Secretaries Limited stands for Government Owned Companies, GEP and GEP Limited stands for Gibraltar Education Projects, GSTR and GSTR Limited stands for Gibraltar Short Term Rentals, GUT and GUT Limited stands for Gibraltar Underpass Tunnel, GSF and GSF Limited stands for Gibraltar Sports Facilities and KIJJ and KIJJ Parkings does not stand for anything.

275 GSTR Limited acquired 125 parking spaces in Ocean Spa Plaza on 11 February 2020 for £1,250,000. The parking spaces are managed by Gibraltar Car Parks Limited. I should have said GCPL! There are currently 123 parking spaces rented out at £100 per month. This is collected by GCPL.

280 Madam Speaker, in respect of Questions 406 to 408, 410 and 411, the information requested is in the schedule that I now hand over. Madam Speaker, GAR owns and manages the following properties. There is a table which I think I have given the hon. Gentleman in 407 and 408.

Madam Speaker, the answer to 411 is that the only off-plan residential property is purchased by the Government, any Government-owned company, any Gibraltar Development Corporation-owned company or Gibraltar Savings Bank-owned company from 1 January 2012 to 31 January 2025 is via GSTR Limited as set out in the answer to Question 408.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 411

ANSWER TO QUESTION 406

GAR Limited owns and manages the following properties:

Property	Address	Cost
Ex- St Bernard's Hospital	21 Hospital Ramp now St Bernard's School	£18,857,393
Law Courts	32-36 Town Range	£15,774,389
HM Prison	Alectoris Lane, 1	£11,960,710
Government Offices	6 Convent Place	£11,134,502
The Mount	Europa Road 15	£8,501,109
Police Headquarters	Rosia Road, 31	£6,665,377
Queen's Hotel	Boyd Street, 1-3	£5,500,000
Queens Cinema	Boyd Street, 11-13	£4,179,745
Joshua Hassan House – Offices	Secretary's Lane, 2 -8	£3,500,000
General Post Office	Main Street, 104 & Irish Town, 69-71	£2,649,905
Old Airport Terminal Plot	Winston Churchill Avenue, 9	£2,037,241
Offices – Duke of Kent House	Cathedral Square, 11	£2,023,413
Customs' Offices	Winston Churchill Avenue, 2	£1,602,530
Offices – Ombudsman	Governor's Lane, 10	£1,553,848
Office – Port department	North Mole Road, 6	£1,151,890
Ex-Chronicle Building	Library Street, 2	£1,100,000
Offices & Store – Nelsons Anchorage	Rosia Road, 32B	£632,185
9 & 10 Park View House	Queensway, 21	£271,916
Offices – Stores & Mess Room	Cemetery Road, 19	£119,980

Costs include purchase price and related costs

ANSWER TO QUESTION 407

GSBA Limited owns and manages the following properties:

Property	Address	Cost
Gibraltar International Bank	310 Main Street	£5,756,140
Treasury Building / GSB	206/210 Main Street	£4,862,669
Flat	49 Ragged Staff Wharf, Queensway Quay	£1,091,789
Ex-North District Post Office	Unit A, George Jeger House, Glacis Estate	£55,352
Ex-South District Post Office	22 Scud Hill	£31,313

ANSWER TO QUESTION 408

The following schedule details the residential properties GSTR Limited acquired in Clemence Suites and their associated purchase price and date of purchase.

No. Bedrooms	Apartment name	Purchase Price Paid	Date of purchase	Date of Sale	Sale Price	Profit on Sales
2	AMETHYST	£356,720	Aug-19	Mar-23	£565,000	£208,280.00
2	RUBY	£356,720	Aug-19			
1	MOONSTONE	£233,240	Aug-19	Nov-23	£355,000	£121,760.00
2	SAPPHIRE	£359,660	Aug-19	Feb-25	£540,000	£180,340.00
2	AMETHYST	£359,660	Aug-19	Feb-24	£580,000	£220,340.00
2	JASPER	£359,660	Aug-19			
2	RUBY	£359,660	Aug-19			
1	MOONSTONE	£233,240	Aug-19	Nov-23	£355,000	£121,760.00
1	ZIRCON	£233,240	Aug-19	Apr-23	£395,000	£161,760.00
		£2,851,800			£2,790,000	£1,014,240.00

Madam Speaker: I will give the hon. Member some time to look at the schedules and we will revert to supplementaries. Next question.

Clerk: Question 412, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Before the House continues, Madam Speaker, I think that we have not put in the schedule the answer to 410. The answer to 410 is as follows. GSF Limited owns the Lathbury Sports Complex at 3 Buffadero Lane. The complex is managed by the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority on behalf of GSF Limited.

Q412-14/2025

Gibraltarian Status Act –

Applications for Gibraltarian status submitted and refused over the last 10 years

Clerk: Question 412, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, how many applications for Gibraltarian status under Section 5 of the Gibraltarian Status Act have been submitted and refused over the last 10 calendar years, broken down by each calendar year?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, we will answer 413 and 414.

315 **Clerk:** Question 413, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: How many applications for Gibraltarian status under Section 9 of the Gibraltarian Status Act have been refused over the last 10 calendar years, broken down by each calendar year in respect of an applicant born in Gibraltar?

320

Clerk: Question 414, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: How many applications for Gibraltarian status under Section 9 of the Gibraltarian Status Act have been submitted over the last 10 calendar years, broken down by each calendar year?

325

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, the number of applications for Gibraltarian status under Section 5 of the Gibraltarian Status Act which have been submitted over the last 10 calendar years, broken down by each calendar year is as follows.

330

Year	Applications Submitted
2015	670
2016	570
2017	497
2018	448
2019	393
2020	219
2021	487
2022	592
2023	302
2024	362
2025	89

335

Madam Speaker, of those, no applications have been refused. Madam Speaker, in respect of Question 413, one was refused in 2004. The number of applications for Gibraltarian status under Section 9 of the Gibraltarian Status Act which have been submitted over the last 10 calendar years, broken down by each calendar year is as follows.

340

Year	Applications Submitted
2015	163
2016	117
2017	97
2018	84
2019	77
2020	64
2021	136
2022	199
2023	105
2024	110
2025	7

Applications often require several months to process due to the various robust checks undertaken by the team at CSRO.

345 Consequently, an application submitted towards the end of one year may not receive a decision until the beginning of the following year.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, given that those numbers were rattled off, I will wait for the printed version of the answer and then consider for further meetings of the House. But can I just ask, in relation to 412, the numbers that the Hon. Chief Minister gave, he said, I think, at the tail end of that answer that none had been refused. So those numbers, if that was right, so the numbers he gave were submitted and granted no refusals. Is that correct?

355 **Hon. Chief Minister:** That is what I said, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: That is what I thought I had heard. But given the very last thing that he said, which is that some applications are considered over a long period of time and it may be that it is submitted one year and granted another. So, to the extent that I have asked for applications that have been submitted and granted or submitted and refused, as it were, on this occasion, because on previous times I have asked about submitted and granted.

360 So, is he saying that, to the extent that I have had a schedule that says submitted and granted, that it may not be talking about the same things? In other words, there could be a number given for submissions of a particular year and the column in which I have been given a number that is either granted or refused may not correlate to the particular column of submissions. Is that what he is saying?

Hon. Chief Minister: That would appear to be correct, Madam Speaker.

370 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q415/2025
Eastern Beach –
Alleged incident involving a Spanish state vessel

375 **Clerk:** Question 415, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, will the Government update the House on information it has concerning the alleged incident near Eastern Beach on Sunday 10 November 2024 involving a Spanish state vessel and the number of ribs and where the shots were fired?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

385 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, as I previously stated, this was part of an ongoing investigation. It would, therefore, not be appropriate for me to comment at this stage.

390 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, indeed, that was the principal answer last time, but
the Chief Minister will recall, he also indicated to me, that if I asked the question, perhaps
in the future, in a couple of months, that he might be able to give us more information. I
have waited, I think, about four or five months to ask the question again. Is it that he is
got no new information or that he is got new information but the investigation has not
reached the point where he is able to speak about it across the floor of the House?

395 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Madam Speaker, I have not been given any more information.
I do not seek this information, other than when the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition,
asks me to seek the information. I hear comments all the time about how governments
must not interfere with investigations and, therefore, I am surprised that I am being asked
400 to seek information about an ongoing investigation.

Once the investigation is not ongoing any longer, Madam Speaker, one would
expect the police would make a statement.

405 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Well, Madam Speaker, I am not going to get side tracked into the
irrelevant comments of the Chief Minister, but when he says he does not ask about this,
but he does when I put the question. So, when he put the question, was he given an
update or was he simply told the investigation is still going on and we are not ready?

410 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Madam Speaker, I do not consider anything that I have said is
irrelevant. In fact, it is highly apposite, given some of the commentary I see from the
Leader of the Opposition in some other regards. Madam Speaker, as I have said, when a
parliamentary question is filed, the parliamentary teams seek the information. If no more
information has been provided, it's because no more information is available to be
provided or it would be inappropriate to provide it.

415 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q416-19/2025

Scholarship awards –

Policy; New discretionary criteria; Eligibility rule, Gibraltar Tax Payers

Clerk: Question 416, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

425 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Who has the Minister for Education met or reached out to when explaining the Government's new policy on scholarship awards to private schools?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

430 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I will answer with 417 to 419.

Clerk: Question 417, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

435 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, when will the Government announce the new discretionary criteria for scholarship awards?

Clerk: Question 418, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

440 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Why is the Government discriminating between resident children of resident taxpayers in drawing up eligibility rules on mandatory scholarships?

Clerk: Question 419, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

445 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Why should children of resident Gibraltarian taxpayers not be entitled to mandatory scholarships like other children of resident Gibraltarian taxpayers, irrespective of the school they attend?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

450 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, after filing his questions, the hon. Member and other Members of the Opposition have been making public comments and issuing statements in respect of both this issue and their other questions. I am sure that Speaker's rulings about such comments, once a question is filed, are meant to apply to all Members and not just to Members of the Government's side. After all, Madam Speaker, we are all Members here.

455 In their public statements, the Opposition and Mr Azopardi in particular have, as ever, taken it upon themselves to distort reality and create unnecessary concern about the Government's mandatory scholarship scheme, a policy, I must add, introduced by the Father of the House in the first GSLP administration and a policy which this Government is immensely proud of also I should add, Madam Speaker, that it was a policy that was
460 strongly opposed when the Father of the House started to propose it. Madam Speaker, the Minister for Education has met with representatives of the Board and Management of Prior Park and both Hebrew high schools, and has engaged via email and conversation with a number of parents and students.

465 This is not a secret policy change, nor is it one designed to unfairly impact students in any sector of education. The Opposition's latest attempt to generate controversy over

this matter is just another example of their deliberate efforts to create confusion where none should exist. They are acting, Madam Speaker, in my view, as a flamethrower that spreads jet fuel and fire in an attempt to make politics on the shoulders of students.

They should be ashamed of themselves, but I am sure they are not, because they
470 have no shame, Madam Speaker. Government's intention has always been to ensure fairness in the allocation of taxpayers' money and to prevent abuse of the system. This is not a new principle. It was clearly set out by me in my New Year's message.

The issue at hand is not about targeting students in private education. It is about ensuring that taxpayer-funded scholarships are only awarded to those who are genuinely
475 entitled to them.

Madam Speaker, I am surprised by the Leader of the Opposition's questions asking the Government when it intends to announce the new discretionary criteria for scholarship awards. I am surprised, Madam Speaker, because the Government is not reviewing the criteria for discretionary scholarships. What we have said we are reviewing
480 is the criteria for mandatory scholarships.

The Opposition claims that the Government is discriminating against certain students. This could not be further from the truth. Perhaps they are just guided by what they read, some sloppy blogs, without bothering to carefully analyse.

The revised criteria apply across the board and are aimed at ensuring that
485 scholarships are available to those who have a genuine and long-standing connection to Gibraltar. The GSD's continued attempts to falsely suggest that we are targeting private schools are nothing short of reckless scaremongering. An attempt by them to start a 21st Century class war with the sole purpose of gaining the votes they lost because of the Leader of the Opposition's disastrous management of the last General Election campaign.

Additionally, Madam Speaker, the notion that children of resident Gibraltarian
490 taxpayers are being denied access to scholarships is completely false. What we are doing is introducing necessary safeguards to ensure that only those who meet the eligibility criteria benefit from taxpayer-funded scholarships, whatever school they go to, or none. The Government remains committed to ensuring that every Gibraltarian student who is
495 genuinely entitled to a scholarship, receives one. We are also equally as committed to ensure that those who have come to Gibraltar to abuse our system and to claim benefits from the state to which they are not contributing and should not be entitled, do not get one.

The question the public should be asking is why hon. Members opposite appear
500 so desperate to protect the loopholes that have enabled some individuals to take advantage of our scholarship system. Do they believe that Gibraltar's taxpayers should fund scholarships for those with little or no substantive connection to our community? Because that is the logical conclusion of their arguments.

The simple fact is that the GSLP and the GSLP Liberal Government have always
505 supported education, tertiary education, and we introduced and then enhanced all access to scholarships for Undergraduates and then Master's Degree, and we continue to do so. What we will not do is allow our fair, well-intended, and necessary policies to be misrepresented by an opposition that is more interested in sowing discord on everything rather than engaging in a constructive debate on anything.

The real disservice to students and to parents is not the policy change itself, which
510 is designed to protect the system, but the Opposition's deliberate and irresponsible attempts to stir anxiety for political gain. The Government will continue to support

students fairly and equitably, and will ensure that Gibraltar's scholarship system is sustainable for generations to come.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, what a monument of a castle-in-the-air argument that was. I mean, if there was any sowing of anxiety among students, it was when students were invited to a presentation and then summarily excluded by the Government that he represents, that he's supposed to be so concerned about students. It is not the Opposition that is causing anxiety. It was the bungling efforts of the Government in presenting its policy change to students that did that all by itself. If there's any controversy, it is a self-created controversy.

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Madam Speaker, we have made comment, yes, last week, after we filed the questions. But the questions were filed after this story broke and became controversial through their self-created wound. He gave an interview on GBC, and so did I. We were reacting in the public interest, which is justifiable cause for commenting in public. Or is that not the case? But can I ask him this? Because somehow he's turned it all on the Opposition. Somehow he's turned it all on the Opposition when it's a self-created wound through their bungling.

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Let me remind him because the Education Department produce, as they always do, an information handbook for students. In 2024, it said, in its criteria, that it required applicants to be attending a school in Gibraltar. In 2025, the same handbook with the same criteria was issued to students and parents and students were invited to a presentation.

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Lo and behold, days before, a new version of the 2025 handbook is produced with a line that excludes certain schools in Gibraltar. Does he not accept that it was that bungling effort at miscommunication that raised anxiety among students and parents in Gibraltar? Why won't he accept that responsibility once and for all, rather than always turning it to the Opposition, as if it's our fault? We did not invent the policy that he created. We did not change the line. It was his Government. Take responsibility.

535

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, he could not once again be more wrong about every aspect of the comment that he has made. And the two questions that he has asked, unless I interpret the first one as being rhetorical. Let me start, Madam Speaker, with the issue of comment outside this House.

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I am not complaining about the fact that the hon. Gentleman gave an interview. I might complain about the content of it, because it was frankly designed to pour napalm on the issue, literally pouring jet fuel on the skin of students to try and get things going, as I said in my response. All of that, Madam Speaker, was before the notice for questions had gone out, or at least before the notice for questions had been completed.

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The issue is, Madam Speaker, once a question has been filed, we're asked not to comment. And the hon. Gentleman goes on social media and comments with copies of his questions. Look, to say that he is going to ask his question is not to comment, but to give comment on his questions is to comment.

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Then today in the Gibraltar Chronicle, I read an article by an Opposition member that is dealing with exactly these issues. So on the issue of commenting after the notice of questions, Madam Speaker, I think that the Government is very clear that the rule should apply to all of us and not just to some of us. In particular, when it is Members opposite that often seek to try and remind the Government of these issues.

560 Frankly, Madam Speaker, the Government does not recognise any of what the hon. Gentleman has said as being the issues. He may be trying to litigate it in that way, because as the apparent spokesperson of private schools in Gibraltar these days, which he is trying to set himself up to be, he seems to want to only concentrate on those issues. I was at Westside and Bayside yesterday for the Liberal Studies talk.

565 One of the most challenging things any senior politician in Gibraltar ever does, which is to stand before Gibraltar's brilliant young minds. We get better questions from them than we get from the international media. And I was asked there about the issue of scholarships, and I made clear there, in the state schools, in the comprehensives, that even those who are in the comprehensives need to ensure that they comply with the eligibility criteria.

570 We have the information on all of those students. We don't have all of the information on all of the students in the private schools. That is the issue.

Constantly the debate is that hon. Members opposite have set themselves up for the past 14 years as being the guardians of waste and corruption against the public purse. 575 And yet, when the Government takes the slightest step to try and stop that potential corruption of the eligibility criteria, what do we face? That the hon. Members opposite become the guardians of there being no eligibility filter, and that things must just continue as they are, and how dare we cause a concern for a student.

No A-level student in Gibraltar needs to have any concern whatsoever. Not just 580 those in the three private schools. Not those just in the comprehensive schools.

Also those who seem to be forgotten, Madam Speaker, perhaps because there is not enough of them for the Hon. Leader of the Opposition to care about the quantum of their votes. Those who are not in school, who are educated at home. So that is why I say in private schools, in state schools, or in no schools, none of them need to have any 585 concern whatsoever.

The only issue is if your parents have not been contributing in the way that they should have been contributing for you to be able to fulfil the eligibility criteria. The eligibility criteria is going to be tightened. There may be an element of grandfathering of that, or there may not be an element of grandfathering of that.

590 When that is announced, and we are working on that in detail, people will be able to see whether they come within it. None of the people who appear to have any concerns should have any concerns. But why do they have concerns, Madam Speaker?

Not because we are saying we are going to tighten the eligibility criteria to ensure that parents have been in Gibraltar contributing to tax and social insurance for the 595 number of years required, because everybody expected that, whether you were in private school, in state school, or in no school. But because the Opposition have raised a media storm around the issue in a way that is designed to create a problem. I have seen this before, Madam Speaker.

I have been at the receiving end of this type of politics from Members opposite, 600 when I used to sit opposite and they used to sit here, and through all of the time, thank goodness they sit over there and I sit over here. What happens, Madam Speaker, is that the facts soon find their way into reality in people's minds. And when all of these students who are being told today that the terrible Government is causing them a problem realise that they had no problem at all, and they have in their hands their brilliant A-level results, 605 their offers of University places, and their scholarships funded by a GSLP Liberal

Government that will be the only parties in this House that will vote for their money when the budget debate comes.

They will leave in September with their tuition fees paid for, their maintenance grants paid for, thanks only to the GSLP Liberal Government. Nothing to do with the people opposite who made them worried about that eligibility.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, does the hon. Member actually think that he can just stand up there and make black look white? Because that really is the opposite of what people think. It's the opposite.

I do care about the taxpayer. I will tell him something about that. We do want a crackdown on waste and abuse, but I also care about fairness.

What I care about is that all our school children, all the children of Gibraltarians and long-term resident taxpayers of Gibraltar are treated in the same way, that it doesn't matter which school you go to. There could be people that are earning more money sending children to the Government schools than are sending their children elsewhere. So what matters is fairness.

Is it going to be a means-tested thing? Or not? Because if it is not a means-tested thing, if it is about picking on people who go to School A rather than to School B, it is inherently unfair.

Does he not realise that Gibraltarians have already been excluded, children of long-term residents, taxpayers in Gibraltar and Gibraltarians have been excluded by changing that single line in the criteria. Does he not realise that? If he wants to be concerned about the taxpayer, does he also not realise that an average child, a student, going to a Government school will cost a certain amount of money?

In England, it is accepted that it costs around £9,000 to fund a child in school. If there is a mass exodus because of the bungling of this Government, from private schools to Government schools, it is going to cost the taxpayer more rather than less because of their mismanagement of this issue. Does he not accept that?

Madam Speaker: Alright, before we continue with this...

Hon. Chief Minister: Sorry can I deal with the substance of that before you deal with the process issue?

Madam Speaker: I am not going to deal with the process issue. What I am going to say is that both the Hon. the Chief Minister and the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition have been on their feet twice with lengthy questions, lengthy answers. I am concerned that this shouldn't become a debate.

So, going forward, I will allow more supplementaries if they are in, but short. And I will entreat the Hon. the Chief Minister to keep his answers also short so that we can do a question and answer and not have a debate this afternoon.

Hon. Chief Minister: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I do appreciate your guidance on that. In fact, my view was that this, if it was considered to be so important, should have been an issue that perhaps hon. Members might wish to debate on a motion. But of course, if they did that, Madam Speaker, they would be exposed for the reality of what I am about to deal with.

That is to say, if the hon. Gentleman wants to try for one moment to sustain that he believes in fairness, then what he needs to do is support the Government. Because there could be nothing less fair than somebody who has fulfilled the eligibility criteria should have a scholarship and that somebody who should not fulfil the eligibility criteria should also have a scholarship. Because then, what is the fairness?

If you have complied with everything that you are required to comply with, watching somebody who doesn't comply with the eligibility criteria getting away with the same benefit. Isn't that what the hon. Gentleman should be concentrating on, Madam Speaker, if he genuinely wanted to make this a debate about fairness? But he gives himself away.

He says there should be nothing to do with what school you go to. It will have nothing to do with what school you go to. We have made that clear already.

If there was a misunderstanding on that, there should be no reason whatsoever for there to be any further misunderstanding on that. It is about the fact that we hold more data on children who are in our schools and therefore we can more easily judge their ability to become eligible under the criteria than those children which are in my private school. So we are looking at a different process to determine their compliance with the eligibility criteria.

If they comply with the same eligibility criteria that the children in the state school sector or who are not in school, then the fact that they are in a private school is irrelevant. It is that simple. But that is not convenient for the hon. Gentleman.

What he needs to do, Madam Speaker, is to continue to spray the jet fuel. That is why it is not that he is not clever enough to understand it. He knows I have the utmost respect for him intellectually. It is that he wants to be purposely, politically mischievous. He wants people at Prior Park to think that we are discriminating against them when we are not. Of course, Madam Speaker, if people were to take their children out of Prior Park and send them to the Comprehensive, it would be more expensive for the Government. Of course that is the case.

There is a big debate in the United Kingdom now because of the Labour Government adding VAT to private school places in the United Kingdom. It is an obvious point.

Madam Speaker, if that is the case, when we helped the establishment of Prior Park, why were they against it? Isn't that the question that hon. Members opposite should be asking themselves?

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, let me ask a very precise question, if I may. I am not going to go around the hedges. The Chief Minister says, as he has just stood up, he said, it will have nothing to do with what school students go to.

Will have nothing to do with what school they go to. Will he, therefore, confirm that they will withdraw the amendment to the criteria that says that the applicants must attend a Government school?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, no, because that is not about the eligibility criteria for the mandatory grant, Madam Speaker. That is for the automatic process that we know that we can undergo. And that is why we are saying this is about a different filter for the same eligibility criteria to be confirmed as having been fulfilled.

I would have thought, Madam Speaker, that that was easy to understand but I can see, that it is equally easy to make mischief with it. So I am going to repeat the position

so that the hon. Gentleman cannot jump on the hedges and pretend the opposite with his flamethrower.

Whatever school you are at, or if you are not in any school, you will have to comply with the same objective eligibility criteria. If you are in one school, the assessment of compliance with the eligibility criteria will be handled in one way. If you are in another school, where the state does not have access to your data as easily as it does when you are in the state school sector, the route to confirm the compliance with that self-same identical eligibility criteria will be different.

It is not about criteria. It is about route-improving eligibility. The hon. Gentleman understands this perfectly.

I have the utmost intellectual respect for him. He does not want to pretend to understand it, because he wants to stand there with either napalm and the flamethrower concerning people who should be thinking about their A-levels, not about whether or not they're going to have scholarships. But, Madam Speaker, he does not care.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, I have allowed the Chief Minister to say that several times but I really have to say to him that perhaps when he puts the point and he answers me again, he might want to actually use a different example. The idea and the imagery that members on this side are throwing napalm on the skin of students trying to ignite them is a disgusting imagery, by the way. It's a disgusting imagery.

He may want to put robust points to me, but perhaps not that one and in that way, because that is not something that I do to him, certainly on this issue. Let me ask him this, because the first line of that section of the handbook talks about applicants meeting the following criteria. It is about eligibility. It is precisely about eligibility and it is tied in with attending to a Government school, a direct contradiction with what he has said today, that it will have nothing to do with what school you go to. If it has nothing to do with what school you go to, well, then change the line. Take it back to what it was, where it did not matter what school you did go to. Does he not agree with that?

Hon. Chief Minister: I do not agree with any of that, Madam Speaker, let alone the idea that my imagery is somehow inflammatory. My imagery is descriptive of what he has done and if he doesn't like it, Madam Speaker, he should stop being the guy who throws the stone and hides his hand behind his back. He can come here on a debate about debt and call me Dick Turpin and think that that is absolutely fine, but does not like it when I tell him that he is causing an incendiary debate to get worse. He does not like it? He should not do it. It is that simple, Madam Speaker.

Let us be very clear. The Government has said on a number of occasions that the school that you go to is not relevant to eligibility. It is about the route to prove eligibility. That is simple enough, Madam Speaker. Simple enough that he, who I have a great intellectual respect for, I know understands.

But in the same way, Madam Speaker, that he wanted to create one image when he called me Dick Turpin and then sheepishly withdrew it when I responded to him in that debate, I see that he now doesn't even want to be associated with his own actions and the effect of them. So if he does not want to see the imagery of him with a flamethrower, then he should stop, Madam Speaker, causing these conflagrations.

Madam Speaker: I am going to stop it here because we are going too far. The last question was a repeat of the previous one, which I allowed, but the subject has been exhausted. If it is an entirely different question, I will allow it.

750 But before I allow it, I will hear it.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: It is a different question, Madam Speaker. I will say this, though, if I may, before I can put the question, because I need to...

755 **Madam Speaker:** I do not want to debate. If the hon. Member wants to debate the matter, then there is a procedure for that and we can debate the matter. I have allowed both sides more leeway perhaps than I ought because it is a matter of public interest and I recognise that. A question or no question?

760 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Well, I will ask a question, Madam Speaker, but of course, when I ask my question, there needs to be a reciprocal, in my view, treatment because if the Chief Minister is then going to be allowed to wade into a political attack and I am not allowed to respond in making my question... I am going to put a question.

765 I am putting a question which is distinct to the one that I last asked, but surely I can preface it with something in relation to what he has just said. It will take 30 seconds.

Hon. Chief Minister: I am not poisoned, it is what I am saying, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Right, go, 30 seconds.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, I will say this... That any comparison that I made to him, to the hon. Member, and Dick Turpin cannot be worse than the imagery that he has concocted about children in flames. His concoction. I will ask him this. He said that in answer to the question that I asked, which is when will the Government announce the new discretionary criteria, he says they're not changing the discretionary criteria.

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But, Madam Speaker, in his hall of mirrors world of garble, he has said, and I quote, the discretionary process is simply the route for those who qualify to obtain a mandatory grant. He has suggested they're changing the discretionary criteria because that is the route, apparently, to get a mandatory grant. So what is it and when will they publish this?

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Hon. Chief Minister: Sorry. You said you would rule on whether you would or not.

Well, Madam Speaker, the Government will set out the new rules for eligibility criteria as soon as we are able to. These things have to be tested to ensure that they do not create unfairness and they do not create any concern in people who might have believed that they had a legitimate expectation that something was going to be done. And so we are testing those robustly and we will be able to set those out as soon as we are able.

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And in doing so, Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman, when he wants to comment on them, might want to keep his powder a little drier and he might find he is not accused of anything. But if he does not keep his powder dry, he might find, Madam Speaker, that what is good for the goose is good for the gander. And if he calls me one thing, I might call him another. That is the mature nature of politics these days, Madam Speaker.

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795 **Madam Speaker:** Right. The Hon. D J Bossino had a question which is different to any question that has been asked thus far.

Hon. D J Bossino: Yes, I am grateful, Madam Speaker. As I understand it, the eligibility criteria, one, will apply across the board. I think the Hon. Chief Minister has made that
800 absolutely and abundantly clear. Two, the eligibility criteria will, however, I think he just mentioned in his last remark, will be the subject of change, but he's not yet in a position to advise us of the change in that regard. I think he also says, three, that as far as the private schools are concerned and those who are of no school, there will be a different application process which will be adopted. In that regard, given that I have been shown a
805 letter which has been sent, I think, to parents of Prior Park in particular, and I imagine also now to parents of those children who are in the Hebrew schools, it says, a line says, and I quote, a new application process has been established, so it says established, for applicants for the school award who do not attend Government schools.

And that accords indeed with what the Hon. Chief Minister has said. But given that
810 it is already established and it will be promulgated, I think.

Madam Speaker: Sorry, I am going to interrupt the hon. Member because there is a reference in Erskine and May that supplementary questions shall not quote from letters. It's not in our rules, but it is in Erskine and May, and it is a rule which is followed in the
815 House of Commons. And so, in this instance, it would not be appropriate to quote from letters.

Hon. D J Bossino: So the question relates to that application process, which I understand has been established, whether the Hon. Chief Minister is able to provide us information
820 as to what that application process, which differentiates the schools, is.

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker before I deal with the substance of that question, would the hon. Gentleman like to consider declaring an interest?

825 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes, indeed, Madam Speaker. I mean, I am not too sure whether it is appropriate to delve into personal matters like that, but my children do attend the school. But if the Hon. Chief Minister wants to, I think perhaps even seek to embarrass me in relation to that, so be it.

But I understand that there are other members who have children in different
830 schools, private schools, who will be impacted. Indeed, other members who have sought to admit their children in this particular school, which is impacted. But yes, my children are to attend that school.

Hon. Chief Minister: Sorry, Madam Speaker, I really do not understand how asking
835 somebody to comply with the rules of the House is to seek to embarrass them. The hon. Gentleman might like to explain that to me over a coffee, a tea, or a pint, because it is difficult for me to fathom that when somebody has an obligation to do something and you ask them to comply with that, what you're doing is trying to embarrass them. I would have thought you just get up, you declare your interest, and you ask your question.

840 There is no embarrassment, Madam Speaker, as far as I'm concerned, that I would associate with what the hon. Gentleman has done, just that he was embarrassed into being reminded that he had to declare an interest. Anyway, Madam Speaker, the

Government will make public the new process as soon as we are able to. I have just indicated that we are testing it to ensure it is robust and does not create any hostages to fortune, and certainly none that might enable hon. Members opposite to be able to make the sort of incendiary comment that we have seen them make in the past weeks.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I am very grateful that the hon. Gentleman has quoted from a letter, although Erskine May tells him not to, that demonstrates that everything that his colleague to his left was saying was completely untrue.

Madam Speaker: All right, as I understand it, that is the end of the questions for the Hon. Chief Minister. We have some supplementaries which the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition, may or may not have in relation to Questions, I think 337, 338, I think it was 339 was the schedule. The buses one, yes. No, it was for the Hon. Minister for Education.

Hon. Chief Minister: No, Madam Speaker, you still have outstanding potential supplementaries to me on matters related to my schedules.

Supplementary questions to Q406-408 and Q411/2025

Madam Speaker: We have 406 to 408 and 411. Any supplementaries to those? Yes.

Hon. R M Clinton: Thank you, Madam Speaker. If you just bear with me while I go through this. I do in fact have a supplementary.

In fact, because we moved on quickly, Madam Speaker, because you appreciate it all bunched up, I did have a chance to ask a supplementary on 405, which is a very simple one, if I may. Yes. 405, Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Chief Minister for his comprehensive answer.

The Chief Minister may remember that I asked a similar question on 26 March 2018 of the Father of the House, specifically in respect of GOC secretaries, GEP Limited and GSTR Limited. And, Madam Speaker, the response I had at the time from the Father of the House was, the names chosen for the companies identified in the hon. Member's question are made from letters of the Roman alphabet, which run from A to Z. There is no other name for such companies other than that which has been registered.

Madam Speaker, in light of the comprehensive answer the Chief Minister has given us today, I wonder whether he might wish the record to be amended in respect of that answer, although I appreciate I do not know what the rules are of the House for a previous Parliament in which a member of his Government gave such an answer.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): No, Madam Speaker, I do not want to avail myself of any such opportunity because of the chapeau that I gave to the answer that I provided, which was as follows. The company names listed in Companies House, Gibraltar, are the names of the companies and do not represent abbreviations. They are nonetheless acronyms, internal acronyms, which help identify activity.

So there is absolutely no change to what the Father of the House said. Those are their names. And if the hon. Gentleman wants to refer me to the guidance note of Companies House, which I referred him to, Madam Speaker, he needs to understand that the Government is not bound by that guidance note, and the reason for the guidance

note, which is in particular to ensure that the protected words are not offended because it is the Government that gives consent for the use of the protected words.

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Chief Minister's answer. So is the Chief Minister telling the House that when it comes to anything incorporated by the Government they do not advise Companies House as to what any potential abbreviations or acronyms stand for? Is that correct?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, that is a different question. That is about the procedure that is followed by the Government when it incorporates a company and what its role in conversation with Companies House is. I do not know what that issue is.

I can tell him that I am the person who approves the use of sensitive words, and when the Government submits for the use of a name and it has a G in it, which sometimes Companies House might think represents Gibraltar, it does not ask me for consent for that because we are the ones filing the application to use it. That is to say, consent is assumed to have been given because we are the ones seeking to use it.

Hon. R M Clinton: I thank the Chief Minister for that answer. If I may move on to Question 406, and I thank the Chief Minister for the schedule of properties which GAR Limited owns and manages. Can I ask the Chief Minister what is the rationale for GAR Limited owning these properties and effectively paying the Government rent?

For example, I notice that No. 6 is owned by GAR and yet the Government pays rent to GAR. What is the rationale for the creation of GAR?

Hon. Chief Minister: We think it is economically sensible. That is the advice that we have. It is the best way to ensure that the Government is properly accounting for its real property assets and the value of them.

Hon. R M Clinton: If I may move on to Question 407. Again, I am grateful for the schedule with details of assets. I am aware of the Treasury Building and the Post Office's surprise about the International Bank, but I guess it does make sense.

The flats, does the Chief Minister have any information as to why the Savings Bank, I mean GSBA is owned by the Savings Bank, purchased a flat for a million pounds in Ragged Staff Wharf?

Hon. Chief Minister: I do, Madam Speaker, and if the hon. Gentleman had been here for long enough and he reviewed these answers, he will know that that is the home of the Deputy Governor, as he is known, Madam Speaker. When we got back the cottage on Mount Road, the deal with the Foreign Office was that we would buy them a three-bedroom property at Queensway Quay, which would be nearer to the Convent. We did that and we received a monthly rent from the Foreign Office in respect of the use of that property. We got it at a very good rate. I cannot imagine you would get a flat with a penthouse on Queensway Quay now for anywhere near what we paid for it. Very good business it was too.

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, I obviously was not around at that time, but I am grateful to the Chief Minister for elucidating perhaps on that point. If I move on to GSTR on 408, and we have a schedule of 9 properties that GSTR purchased in Clemence Suites.

By the looks of it, all at the same date in August 2019, I assume these are purchased off-plan from the developer.

940 Can I ask the Governor why did GSTR buy these properties off-plan? Have they bought any other properties in any other development in Gibraltar? Why this particular development?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, in the tail end of that supplementary, the hon. Gentleman has just asked me the question that is 411. And 411 is answered on the basis
945 that this is the only property that we have bought off-plan. So he does not need to re-ask me that because he's given notice of that question and I've answered it, I've read it out.

The only off-plan residential properties purchased by the Government, any Government-owned company, any Gibraltar Development Corporation-owned company, or Gibraltar Savings Bank Company from 1 January 2012 to 31 January 2025 is by GSTR
950 Limited as set out in the answer to Question 408. So he didn't need to ask me the tail end of that question. There is the answer.

Hon. R M Clinton: Thank you. Sorry, Madam Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister for that, but perhaps he could answer the first end of my question, which is why this particular
955 development?

Hon. Chief Minister: Well, Madam Speaker, if hon. Members stuck to your rulings and asked me only one question in each supplementary, then I would be able to answer in keeping with your rulings, which is to answer one supplementary at a time. The answer is
960 very simple, Madam Speaker. We were offered the opportunity to buy these properties at the off-plan price, which would enable us to house people that we were housing at Europlaza at rental rates whilst we would own here.

We did that, Madam Speaker. We did it very successfully for a period of time, but nonetheless some people do need to be in different places, closer to, for example, the
965 hospital where we have a lot of the people who come out to Gibraltar who require housing, and so we have reduced it to the number of properties that we think we need, which are not geographically sensitive, and therefore we have made a very large profit indeed. We have made a £1 million profit already, whilst we still retain three properties in that development, which we can use for non-geographically sensitive housing of
970 contract officers to the Government.

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, if I may ask the Chief Minister just this one question, because he only needs one at a time. Were all these properties on the same floor at Clemence Suites?
975

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, it is not that I only need one at a time, and I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is trying to be kind to me by saying that. I think he is trying to be deprecatative of my mental ability, which he can be because he has been consistently, and the people of Gibraltar have nonetheless decided I should sit here and he should sit
980 there, despite him asking them for three times to put me here, there, rather than here. But never mind.

I don't know what floor they are on, Madam Speaker. I do not get into that sort of aspect of our business. It is not what I spend my time doing.

985 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, I will move on now to 409. I am happy if the Chief Minister corrects me. I heard him correctly.

I think he says in terms of 409, in terms of car parking spaces, that there were 125, did I hear that correctly, at a cost of about £1 million, and they are being rented out at £100 a month. If the Chief Minister could provide the House with some information as to the rationale for that purchase.

990

Hon. Chief Minister: Well, Madam Speaker, these are the 125 parking spaces in Ocean Spa Plaza, which we make available to the tenants of Glacis Estate and all of that area. The rationale was that we wanted to be able to provide parking spaces to residents of Glacis and that area. We issued a number of press releases at the time, but I will not rely on telling the hon. Member that this matter is a matter of public record, because if I do, it appears that I am trying to obfuscate, when in fact the reality is that they should know the facts.

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1000

Procedural

Madam Speaker: All right, that is the end of the questions. Before we move on to the Order Paper, the Hon. Chief Minister raised a point of procedure earlier, in which I accept the Hon. Chief Minister has not asked for a ruling, but I think it is an interesting point. My tentative view, and I say this by way of tentative view, is that no Member of the House, whether it's Ministers or Opposition members, should issue statements, press releases, et cetera, once a question has been filed on the Order Paper.

1005

But at the moment, I leave it no higher than as a tentative view. I will look into that more carefully. I am aware that I have a matter which the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition, has raised with me also on the issues of press release, and I will rule on that when we next come back in April.

1010

And I will also... May? May, of course.

Yes, May. I could come back by myself in April, but it would not be so much fun. So I will deal with both matters when the House next sits.

1015

Adjournment

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): I am obliged, Madam Speaker. This may now be a convenient moment then for the House to adjourn until next Wednesday at 3 p.m.

1020

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

1025

This House will now adjourn to Wednesday at 3 p.m.

The House adjourned at 4.17 p.m.



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.01 p.m. – 6.02 p.m.

Gibraltar, Wednesday, 26th March 2025

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 3.01 p.m.

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

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: P A Borge McCarthy Esq *in attendance*]

Questions for Oral Answer

HEALTH, CARE AND BUSINESS

Q340/2025

**GHA Prescription Fees –
Bruces Farm**

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Wednesday 26th of March 2025. Answers to oral Questions continued. Questions to the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

5 Question 340, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Is the Government considering excepting GHA medical prescription fees for individuals who enter the 12-week residential programme at Bruce's Farm?

10 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, no ma'am, there are no such plans.

15 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, grateful for that answer. We are receiving some concerns from relatives and individuals who either have taken part in this 12-week residential programme or are currently on the 12-week residential programme that face some difficulties when they are on the programme with regards to having to take unpaid leave or leave from their jobs and they have difficulties facing the, GHA prescription medical fees. Would the Hon. Minister care to look into
20 this and perhaps a way of setting up something to assist these individuals during this 12-week rehabilitation and recovery programme?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, apologies, I will answer the question immediately. Before I started, I meant to give the apologies of the remaining members of Government. They are
25 currently attending a funeral, but as soon as they are available they will make their way over immediately. So apologies for that, but they will be here imminently.

In answer to the hon. Lady's questions, I can confirm that we are looking at an overhaul of the entire GPMS system. We are looking at what the rules are in their entirety.

30 As part of that process, we will be looking at instances such as this, but we have no plans specifically on Bruce's Farm. What we have done in relation to Bruce's Farm is that we are looking at instances where we can give them a reprieve from their bills, so their utility bills, in order to

give them a reprieve in some way. But I can confirm that we haven't specifically looked at that point, but we are looking at the GPMS scheme more generally.

35 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Grateful, Madam Speaker. I understand that the Hon. Minister is looking at the point more generally, but in relation to this point specifically, and in relation to the 12-week residential programme at Bruce's Farm, and given that we are receiving concerns from some individuals that have been on the 12-week programme or are on the 12-week programme and their relatives in relation to this, would the Hon. Minister perhaps look into this specifically and
40 look into ways where perhaps this, in a similar way that utility bills are exempted or there is a system for that, perhaps a system can be set up in relation to prescriptions exclusively for the 12-week Bruce's Farm programme.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, as I have confirmed, we are looking at the entire GPMS and this will be taken into account as part of that overall review.
45

Madam Speaker: All right, the next question. I understand ought to be Questions 341 and 342. I know the hon Member is calling my attention, but I can not work out what she is trying to say.

50 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** My apologies, Madam Speaker. It is just a further supplementary on that question. I was not sure whether my colleague had any further questions.

Madam Speaker: A further supplementary, all right. Yes, I will allow another one.

55 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, could the Hon. Minister confirm what those other GPMS changes are and what that means for the GHA system?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, we are looking at entitlement generally and what it means in 2025. So we are looking at the system currently and we are looking at what changes are
60 required in today's society.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Could the Hon. Minister perhaps give some examples of those changes that are being looked at?

65 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, I do not want to commit on any of the changes that are being looked at, but what we are looking at is making sure that entitled people are entitled to receive care at the GHA, so the Gibraltar residents are entitled to receive treatment at the GHA when they are entitled or otherwise. So what we are looking at is what exactly does entitled mean? I am not willing to go any further down that route, but we are looking at that at the
70 moment.

Madam Speaker: All right. The next question I understand ought to be Question 341 and 342, but I understand that there has been a request to postpone those questions until Minister Santos arrives. There is some overlap on Ministerial areas in terms of any possible supplementary.

75 So we'll just shelve those for the moment and continue with Question 343.

80

Q343 379-381/2025

GHA Mobile Health Unit –

Available to the Public; Locations; Service users since launch; Age Groups

Clerk: Question 343, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: With reference to the Government Press Release 309-2023, which stated that this service will initially be provided for service users age 70 and above, but it is envisaged that eventually it will be opened up to all age groups. Could the Government provide the following details regarding the mobile health unit? The exact dates on which the Mobile Health Unit has been available to the public since the 16th of May 2023, including locations and the purposes of the services provided, specific ways in which the Mobile Health Unit has been used to provide services for the elderly, including dates and key locations where these services have been offered?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, I'll answer this question together with Questions 379, 380 and 381.

Clerk: Question 379, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: How is the information as to where and when the Mobile Health Unit is operating disseminated to the public and how often?

Clerk: Question 380, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: How many service users have been seen at the GHA's Mobile Health Unit since it was launched in May 2023, broken down by month?

Clerk: Question 381, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: What services does the GHA's Mobile Health Unit currently provide and to what age group or groups? Will further services be rolled out in future?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, before I move on to the substance of this question, can I, with your leave, Madam Speaker, inform the House that I alerted the Hon. Mrs Ladislaus that the Government would be issuing a statement on the Mobile Health Unit ahead of answering questions in the House. As you know, Madam Speaker, I am fully cognisant of the Parliamentary Convention pertaining to this matter and for this reason it was my intention not to issue any Press Release until after Parliament questions were finalised. However, what I did not expect at the time was that I'd be answering questions today after the launch of the Mobile Health Unit yesterday.

It was, therefore, necessary and in the public interest, to issue the statement before today so that the public could be made aware of the Mobile Health Unit deployment. Madam Speaker, I wrote to you formally on Monday 24 March informing you of this and of my prior conversation with Mrs Ladislaus also. In answer to Question 343, I now hand over the schedule with the information requested.

In answer to Question 379, the dates and locations will be widely publicised on the GHA's social media pages as well as the local media. Madam Speaker, no formal records are kept in

relation to Question 380. No formal records are kept of how many service users have used the Mobile Health Unit.

130 In answer to Question 381, since May 2023, the Mobile Health Unit has supported local charity organisations on Global Health Days and campaigns to raise awareness and understanding of health issues. The Mobile Health Unit has also been used to administer the influenza vaccine during the winter of 2023. To date, the Mobile Health Unit has engaged with all age groups.

135 As of yesterday, Madam Speaker, the Mobile Health Unit is offering well-person clinics to members of the public aged 16 and over. Individual and family medical histories will be reviewed together with smoking and alcohol status to determine if further management by a GP is required.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, I am not aware whether my hon. Colleague has any questions on the first question asked, which was Question 343. Mine pertained to the ones I asked, as from 140 379 onwards. So I don't know whether...

Madam Speaker: You may continue. I'll come back to the hon. Member after you.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, Question 379, as to how the information is going to be 145 disseminated to the public. We have heard that it is going to be on the GHA's social media pages. Nevertheless, given that this was an initiative that was initially targeted at the over-70s, now we hear it's obviously across the board, but how is it that some in the older demographic are going to be able to access these services when perhaps they don't have access to social media or they don't access social media on a regular basis?

150 Is it something that the GHA is considering perhaps rolling out and advertising in a different manner?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, yes, we also made reference to advertising in place in the local media, advertising where the Mobile Health Unit will be. 155

Hon. J Ladislaus: How far in advance will that be advertised?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I do not have the exact information, but as and when required. 160

Hon. J Ladislaus: Moving on, Madam Speaker, to Question 380, as to how many service users have been seen. We have heard that there is no data having been collected. And again, the importance of data can not be understated.

165 Nevertheless, we can see from the answer to Question 343 how many times it has been deployed. Can I ask, given that this was initially launched or rather announced in May 2023, why has it taken this long for this service to be formally launched?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, the service was being set up with the staff required.

170 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Could the Hon. Minister perhaps comment as to why it has taken two years to set up the staff required? Is it GHA staff or have we have new staff being brought on board?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, this was an initiative which I was very keen to reintroduce. I see the benefit of the Mobile Health Unit going round Gibraltar, so the GHA is 175 actually brought out to the public. Given that we have also relaunched the PCC taskforce successfully, and there are now more available appointments daily at the PCC, what we are actually trying to do is to try and keep people out of the PCC as much as possible.

So the whole idea of it was to set the unit up properly. As I made public yesterday, the lady leading this is indeed Susanne Romero, who was a GHA staff nurse. Susanne Romero is in

180 charge of the Mobile Health Unit. Susanne Romero has indeed been used to deliver the service.
What we wanted to make sure was that we had a service which tied in with the services in the
GHA, and it was seamless so that if someone was found to have an issue in the Mobile Health Unit,
there was a seamless transfer for them to be able to see a GP if required.

185 So it is just taken time in order to make the service work properly, and I am very, pleased
that it was actually launched yesterday, and that it will now be going round the entire community
to different estates, to different places, to ensure that people that just want their basic checks to
be done can actually have their basic checks done near their home, whilst they are having a cup
of tea, whilst they are having a cup of coffee in Casements, and actually make sure that their basics
are seen to regularly.

190 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, could the Hon. Minister, I do not know if she has this
information in front of her, but could the Hon. Minister comment as to how many staff are
required to man the Mobile Health Unit, or how many staff are attached to the Mobile Health
Unit?

195 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, yesterday there was a nurse leading it, and there were
two nurses that were used with the lead nurse. So the service is currently being deployed with
that complement, alongside a driver, obviously, as required.

200 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** In terms of the nurses, are those nurses fully employed on a full-time basis by
the GHA, and is this, so to speak, an extra responsibility that has been added to their existing
responsibilities?

205 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, I do not have the information available. If the hon. Lady
wants to put that question to me next time, I am happy to answer it.

Hon. J Ladislaus: In terms of the driver, is that driver an ambulance driver, or is somebody else
volunteering, so to speak, or employed in order to do the driving of the Health Units?

210 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, again, I do not have details in terms of the complement.
Whilst I imagine I know what the answer is, I would rather have the information available in front
of me. So if the hon. Lady wants to put a question to me as to a complement, I am very happy to
answer it in the next session.

215 **Madam Speaker:** The hon. Member had a question.

220 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, the initial Government Press Release 2003, it not only
mentioned that the new model of care would be most beneficial for our elderly, but it said that it
would enable the GHA team to provide a care closer to where patients live. From the schedule
that has been provided in answer to Question 381, I can see that the Unit has been used for
campaigns and to assist charities, but I can not see that it has been used in estates or identified
locations that are close to where our elderly live. Is this something that is going to form part of
the model of care going forward in relation to the Mobile Health Unit? And may I ask why this has
not been done since it was announced as something that was going to form part of the Mobile
225 Health Unit all the way back in 2003?

230 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, as the schedule points out, the Mobile Health Unit has
been deployed at Casements, No 6 and the Piazza - different locations. The aim going forward is
that it is deployed to estates as well as all of these locations. Now I am very familiar with the
patterns that my mother has in Main Street, and I am very familiar that my mother frequently
goes to Casements for a cup of coffee, so she would have been able to avail herself of the service.

Now, when we speak about where the Mobile Health Unit is going to be going forward, I can confirm that the Mobile Health Unit will be in Casements, in different estates in Gibraltar and will move around to the housing estates as well as Casements, Piazza, etc, going forward.

Hon. A Sanchez: And does the Hon. Minister have a timeframe of when the community can expect this to be rolled out and when they can expect to have information as to when the Mobile Health Unit can be seen around the estates?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I am very happy to say that the Mobile Health Unit yesterday was in Casements. It was indeed the front page of the Chronicle today. The Mobile Health Unit will be deployed on a weekly basis to different estates, and we will inform the public of where exactly the Mobile Health Unit will be on a weekly basis so the public knows where it is meant to be.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. C Sacarello had a question.

Hon. C Sacarello: Yes, Madam Speaker, thank you very much and good afternoon to all. Two quick questions for the Hon. Minister. I will pose one at a time, if I may.

The first being, related to Question number 380. The Hon. Minister mentioned that there were no formal records, in her response. So my question would be, why are there no formal records and is it the Government's intention, rather, to address this?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I am unaware of why there have been no formal records. What I can confirm is that what we are doing now is we're looking to maintain records on site so a connection has been set up between the GHA and the van going round so that there are formal records kept going forward.

Hon. C Sacarello: Thank you very much for that. My second question is a rather more generic one regarding the Mobile Health Unit generally. We see from the list in answer to Question 343, I think it is, there's an extensive list of reasons why the Mobile Health Unit has been out and about.

Very few actually include delivering well-person checks. I would suggest that this is probably the most popular use of it. It is very difficult to get an appointment, certainly one quickly, at a convenient time in people's busy lives for an MOT, as it were. And I would suggest that this would be a way of both making it easier for people to access but actually relieving a little bit of stress from the GHA clinics in this respect. So my question is, will well-person checks be available at each and every outing of this van, the Mobile Health Unit, and will there be targets set for this and will there be enough notice for people to know where they are if they do not have access to social media?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: As I have already answered to the gentleman's hon. Colleague, the Mobile Health Unit will be advertised not only on social media but also in the local media. The very headline to our press release in relation to the Mobile Health Unit this week was that the Mobile Health Unit will offer well-person clinics across Gibraltar.

So, yes, I am very, happy to say that the Mobile Health Clinic will be offering Mobile Health Clinics at each and every one of the outings that it has. So everywhere that it goes in Gibraltar, I did not think that it was necessary in the press release to say that it will be doing it everywhere. Of course it will be doing it everywhere.

The Mobile Health Unit will be offering well-person clinics all across Gibraltar at each and every outing that the Mobile Health Clinic does.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 381

ANSWER TO QUESTION 343

Since 16 May 2023, the Mobile Health Unit has been deployed on the following dates and locations:

22nd June 2023 – delivering well person checks.
Location: Outside No 6 Convent Place

29th June 2023 – delivering well person checks.
Location: Bassadone Motors.

12th July 2023 – delivering well person checks.
Location: HM Prison

20th September 2023 – All charity events program.
Location: John Mackintosh Square.

29th September 2023- CPR/AED Demonstrations in partnership with the Cardiac Association.
Location - John Mackintosh Square.

10th October 2023 – Restart a Heart Day- charity 694/2023. Raising awareness of what to do in the situation of a sudden cardiac arrest in the community.
Location – Casemates Square.

11th November 2023- Influenza vaccination campaign, administering vaccines. Location - Casemates Square.

18th November 2023- Influenza vaccination campaign, administering vaccines. Location- Casemates Square.

25th November 2023- Influenza vaccination campaign, administering vaccines. Location- Casemates Square.

02nd December 2023- Influenza vaccination campaign, administering vaccines. Location- Casemates Square.

31st May 2024 – World No Smoking Day
Location: Casemates Square

26th September 2024 – World Heart Day – raising awareness.
Location: Casemates Square.

16th November 2024- Diabetes awareness day - offering advice in diet and lifestyle modification. Additionally providing point of care testing for blood glucose and blood pressure readings.
Location – Casemates Square.

19th November 2024- International Men's day - offering well person male checks.
Outside the Sunborn Hotel, Ocean Village.

In all of the above deployments the services offered have supported all age groups particularly those aged 65 years and above.

CONTINUED ANSWER TO QUESTION 381

ANSWER TO QUESTION 380

Madam Speaker, no formal records are kept on how many service users have used the Mobile Health Unit.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 381

Since May 2023, the Mobile Health Unit has supported local charity organisations on global health days and campaigns to raise awareness and understanding of health issues. The Mobile Health Unit has also been used to administer the Influenza Vaccination during the winter of 2023. To date the Mobile Health Unit has engaged with all age groups.

As of yesterday, Madam Speaker, the Mobile Health Unit is offering Well Person Clinics to members of the public aged 16 and over. Individual and family medical histories will be reviewed together with smoking and alcohol status to determine if further management by a GP is required.

285 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q344-345/2025

**Courses offered by the GHA –
Type 1 Diabetes – Desmond Course**

290 **Clerk:** Question 344, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Could the Government outline the courses currently offered by the GHA for individuals diagnosed with type 1 diabetes?

295 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, I will answer this together with Question 345.

300 **Clerk:** Question 345, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Could the Government provide an update on the progress of obtaining a licence to deliver the Desmond course for individuals with type 2 diabetes?

305 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, in answer to Question 344, there are no specific courses offered by the GHA to individuals diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. However, support is provided to all adult type 1 diabetes patients through guidance and advice from General Practitioners. In addition, secondary care support is provided by the Endocrinologist and the established diabetes team.

In answer to Question 345, the GHA is currently in the process of obtaining licences for the delivery of the Desmond course. This is expected to take up to six months.

315 **Hon. A Sanchez:** I am grateful for that answer, Madam Speaker. Could the hon. Minister confirm whether it was the case that there was a course called doze Adjustment for normal eating in relation to type 1 diabetes that was previously offered by the GHA and is no longer offered by the GHA to individuals that were diagnosed with type 1 diabetes?

320 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, the information I have in front of me is the information that I have provided, so I do not know what was offered in the past. If the hon. Lady wishes to pose that question, I am very happy to answer it next time.

325 **Hon. A Sanchez:** When the hon. Minister speaks of the specialist team, would the hon. Minister happen to have information as to whether the GHA currently has a dietician that specialises in diabetes?

330 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, as I have spoken about previously in this House, we are in the process of recruiting diabetes specialist nurses. Unfortunately, because the question did not relate specifically to dieticians with specialist interest in diabetes, I do not have that information in front of me. Again, if the hon. Lady wishes to pose that question, I'm very happy to answer it in the next session.

335 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Specifically, in relation to courses for people diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, does the hon. Minister have more information in relation to support and guidance offered to individuals or training offered to individuals in relation to carb counting and dose adjustment? Is there any specific training or specific guidance given by the GHA and who specifically gives this to individuals?

340 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, I hate to reiterate the same point. These are very specific questions that are being asked on carb counting for diabetes. If the hon. lady wishes me to answer specific questions, I am very, happy to provide all the information requested, but I do need notice of the question.

345 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q346/2025
GHA vacancy –
Physiotherapist Senior 1 Paediatrics

350 **Clerk:** Question 346, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Is the Government in a position to confirm whether a successful candidate has been found for the GHA vacancy for the position of Physiotherapist Senior 1 Paediatrics, which was advertised by the GHA?

355 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, no ma'am.

360 **Hon. A Sanchez:** I am grateful for that answer, Madam Speaker. Does the GHA currently employ a Physiotherapist Senior 1 specialised in Paediatrics and is that person currently in post?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, there is a post holder in the post at the moment and her contract will terminate on the 30th of April 2025.

365 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, given that the hon. Minister has confirmed that there has been no successful candidates for the position of Senior 1 Paediatrics and this individual's contract ends, is there a contingency plan in the event that a successful candidate is not found to cover this post given that the information that we receive is that the workload of this team is quite significant? What contingency measures are in place to deal with this eventuality, would it be the case?

370 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, as the hon. Lady is aware, we have taken a particular interest in the neurodevelopmental pathway and this post is one of the posts that forms part of the team that develops the neurodevelopmental pathway. So of course we will be on top of this post and of course we have taken measures to mitigate the fact that we have not yet found a candidate. The post was initially advertised by the GHA on the 22nd of January and the vacancy closed on the 12th of February with no suitable candidate being identified.

375 However, what we now have is that the GHA is now able to advertise on NHS jobs. So there is a whole new platform that we have available to us where we are able to advertise jobs. So, the post was re-advertised on the 5th of March 2025 on NHS jobs with a closing date of the 19th of March.

380 At the time that this question was prepared there were two expressions of interest that have been received.

385 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, for what reason were no future plans set in place? Surely this individual must have flagged the fact that they were retiring well in advance of doing so and not simply a couple of months ahead. So for what reason is there no forward planning here as we see often with posts within the GHA?

390 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, the post has become vacant in May. The job was advertised in January. The GHA has a rolling programme of vacancies and this is one of the ones that was advertised. So by the time the individual is scheduled to leave we hope to have somebody in post.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q347/2025
GHA complement –
Geriatric Psychiatry and Psychology

400 **Clerk:** Question 347, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Within the GHA's complement of psychiatrists and psychologists, could the Government state how many are specialised in geriatric psychiatry and psychology?

405 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, none. Within mental health there are multiple sub-specialities including child and adolescent psychiatry, forensic psychiatry, intellectual disability psychiatry, addiction psychiatry, neuropsychiatry and

liaison psychiatry, amongst others. In a small jurisdiction such as Gibraltar, it is not feasible to employ specialists in each of these fields.

Hon. A Sanchez: Grateful for that answer, Madam Speaker. Is the Hon. Minister, is she aware whether there is a visiting locum or anyone that consults in relation to this speciality or is it that it is a view that we, as a small jurisdiction, do not need to have any specialist input in relation to this area?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, within the mental health team there are two psychiatrists who have significant experience in elderly mental health. These work in the memory service and the other one works in general psychiatry. But they have extensive experience with older adults.

What we do is that, as and when required, we do have a locum that we bring to Gibraltar if they are required. This locum has been brought out, I understand, very infrequently because a local team manages the patients better. What we are advised is that having psychiatrists that focus on, for example, dementia is not ideal. It is better to have a geriatrician that focusses on MDTs with psychiatrists that have significant experience in elderly mental health.

Madam Speaker: Next Question.

Q348-349/2025
GHA's Complement/ Occupational Therapist –
Elderly Residential Services

Clerk: Question 348, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Could the Government clarify whether there have been any changes to the complement of general practitioners, doctors, covering elderly residential services, detailing any changes that have been made, the rotation of services covered by these practitioners, including the sites they cover?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 349.

Clerk: Question 349, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Could the Government clarify which sites are covered by Occupational Therapist within the Elderly Residential Services?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, in answer to Question 348, there have been no changes to the complement of doctors covering ERS. ERS doctors cover John Cochrane Ward, Mount Alvernia, Hillside, John Mackintosh Wing and Bella Vista, and there has been no change to the rotation of the services provided by them. In answer to Question 349, the occupational therapist covers all ERS sites except for Bella Vista, which falls under the community occupational therapist.

Hon. A Sanchez: I am grateful for that answer, Madam Speaker. We have been receiving numerous...

Madam Speaker: Can I ask the hon. Member what number she is asking the supplementary in respect of?

Hon. A Sanchez: In relation to Question 348; we have been receiving concerns from relatives and residents of ERS sites in relation to, what they claim are changes to GPs, if not the complement to changes that seem to have been made in relation to the team, GPs being moved. So could the Hon. Minister confirm if the complement has not changed, perhaps the makeup of the team has changed or there have been some changes that might be causing some confusion. Could she elaborate on whether there have been some changes?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, there have been changes in the distribution of work, which aligns with the increased clinical need at St Bernard's. Dr Elena Montero, who was contracted by the GHA and appointed full-time to ERS, has moved from Mount Alvernia to St Bernard's to deal with elderly patients in St Bernard's. So whilst there is been a change in the distribution of the work, there has not been any change to the complement or to the patients that she has seen, because she has seen the same patients at SBH rather than at Mount Alvernia.

Hon. A Sanchez: Grateful for to have that answer, Madam Speaker. So my understanding is correct. The GP that the Hon. Minister mentions has moved to a team down at St Bernard's Hospital.

Is it the case that now she will cover patients that come under the GHA beds and that she will no longer be seeing patients up at ERS facilities? Is this the case?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, the distribution of her workload will be decided by clinicians at the GHA. I do not get involved in the distribution of the workload. The distribution of the workload at ERS and the complement at ERS remains the same.

She is currently also seeing patients at SBH because of a clinical need at the moment. I am unclear on whether that will be ongoing or whether that is temporary, but the clinical need at the moment is that she's seeing ERS patients at St Bernard's.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, what I am trying to establish, which is the concern that has been brought to us by various people, is that previously it seems that there were three GPs covering ERS sites, residents at ERS facilities, and that one GP now seems to have been moved to St Bernard's to cover elderly patients at St Bernard's. My question is whether that GP that has been moved down to St Bernard's will continue to cover the residents of ERS facilities or is it that the residents of ERS facilities will only be covered by the remaining two GPs that remain at the ERS sites? Is it that the complement has not changed but that the ERS facilities will now be covered by those two GPs and the GP that has been moved down to St Bernard's will only be covering those in St Bernard's Hospital and not in the ERS facilities?

Can the Hon. Minister clarify this for me?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, that is entirely led by clinical need. Whatever the clinicians advise is best suited for the needs of the patients at ERS sites is the deployment of the GPs at ERS sites. So whatever is clinically required for the GPs at ERS is where we will deploy those GPs to maximise the ability of their services.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, and is the Hon. Minister aware of whether this is affecting any changes in the rotation of how often the GPs are able to visit the all ERS sites given that perhaps now instead of three GPs visiting there might be two GPs visiting? And is the Hon. Minister aware whether this is affecting any weekend visits that might have been happening before and may not be happening now?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I am unaware of those specifics. What I do think is necessary to point out is that pre-COVID there were 20 sessions a week. 20 sessions is two doctors. And there are now 34 less beds than there was pre-COVID. So as long as the clinicians are happy with the service levels and as long as the clinicians tell us where it is that that need is most needed, that the GPs are most required, we will follow clinical advice on where they believe that those services are best deployed.

Hon. A Sanchez: But that is not the basis of my question, Madam Speaker. I am trying to get the hon. Minister to explain, to allay the concerns of those that are coming to bring us these concerns, to explain to or perhaps to clarify what the changes are. Because they are concerned that there is one GP less during the rounds in the ERS facilities, in the ERS sites, and that it is a case that they have gone down from three GPs to two GPs because one GP hasn't been moved to St Bernard's Hospital and is only seeing patients at St Bernard's Hospital and that this might be affecting the rotation and the number of times that GPs are able to go to these ERS sites and that this is having an effect on weekend visits too. So given that from the Minister's answer, I am not really getting clarification on whether this could be affecting the service. Perhaps she can elaborate on the compliment hasn't changed, but given that one seems to have moved down to St Bernard's and seems to be working out of there and only seeing patients there, the reality is that there seems to be one less GP available for the ERS sites. Is that not the case?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, let me be clear. We do not think its affecting service. We think service is improving because the clinicians are where the clinicians are most required.

So, when I say that this is clinician-led, what I mean is that the clinicians tell me where they feel the service is best deployed. Do we feel that the service is affected? No.

We feel that this is an improvement to the service. We feel that the GPs need to be where the GPs are most required. Are the GPs most required at ERS or are they most required at St Bernard's Hospital seeing ERS patients?

If the clinicians tell us, at present that the GPs are most required at St Bernard's seeing ERS patients, then we will follow their advice. That does not mean that service is affected. That means that service is improved.

We are consistently looking to enhance service. We are consistently looking to improve the service. So if a GP is removed from a nursing home and moved to where clinicians tell us that the GP services are most required, then I will be led by the clinicians, as I am frequently told by the Opposition that I should be, and listen to the clinicians to tell me whether GP services is best required.

So, again, just to be abundantly clear, we do not think that the service is being affected. We think that the service is being improved because we are using the resources that we have in a manner that is most efficient, and what we are trying to do is use the resources we have in the best way possible. If the clinicians tell us that the best way to use those clinicians is by deploying them in St Bernard's, then we will deploy that GP in St Bernard's for ERS patients.

We are consistently looking to improve the service, and what we are trying to do is to try to improve the service at St Bernard's. So whatever the clinicians tell us is required is what we will follow.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. J Ladislaus had a question

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, we have heard in the Hon. Minister's answer that Dr Montero, the third GP, was deployed down to St Bernard's Hospital due to clinical need. Could the Hon. Minister clarify what is meant by clinical need at the GHA? Is it that the GHA simply did not have enough doctors to see elderly patients?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, what is meant by clinical need is that the clinicians tell us that that resource is best deployed at St Bernard's Hospital. So I will repeat, the resources should always be used where they are most required. Again, what I am keen to state here is that we have reverted to pre-COVID levels.

So even if the service, which I'm not saying it will, even if that GP were permanently deployed to ERS, the service levels at ERS were two GPs for ERS. So what we have done is that we have now gone to services that were offered at pre-COVID levels. So we have removed the extra measures, but that GP hasn't been removed from complement.

That GP is now being used where that GP is felt to be best used. So if a clinician tells me, and it's not because the doctors aren't being seen at the hospital, there are geriatricians at the hospital, but if the clinicians at the GHA tell us that the GP is best used at the GHA, and again I repeat, and not at a nursing home, then the GP will be moved to where the clinicians tell us that that resource can be best used.

Madam Speaker: Yes, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Can I just ask the hon. Lady to clarify? She mentioned, not the last answer, but the one before that, but it might be related to this answer, that they have 34 beds less, that is how I understood it.

Did she actually mean that the bed occupancy is lower by 34, or is it that there are actually 34 beds less? And if so, if it is the latter, can she explain what the reason for that is?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I don't want to venture into territory where I haven't got confirmation, so if that question is posed to me next time, I will be able to explain that, but I don't have the information in front of me.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Well, it is not a question of posing the question, with respect. She said, in answer to a supplementary, that there were 34 beds less, and I just wanted to understand, did she mean that it's less beds, actually there are less beds at ERS, I assume that she meant, or did she mean it as in that there is less bed occupancy? I just wanted to understand in what context she said it. It is not a question, I can pose a fresh question, but I am really trying to understand in what sense the hon. Lady meant her remark.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, my remark was meant simply in the context of an explanation as to what the doctors are being currently deployed. So again, if the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition wants to pose that question, I am very happy for that question to be posed in the next session, and I will have the information available.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, I am simply trying to understand what the hon. Lady said. Of course we can pose a specific question, but if the hon. Lady explained it in terms of the reason for the redeployment is because we have 34 beds less, I just want to understand, is it that there is less occupants or less beds? That is all I'm trying to understand.

It is her own statement, it is not really, I hope I'm not asking a difficult question.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I am very grateful for that. My explanation was in the context of having reverted to pre-COVID levels. So my explanation is to the fact that we are reverting to the complement in ERS that was used at pre-COVID levels. So it is in that context that I use that statement.

What I was saying was that the GPs, there were two GPs available in Mount Alvernia prior to COVID, and that statement was made in that context. What I am saying is that we have not removed the GP from the complement. We are keeping the level of the complement at the post-COVID level, but we are redeploying the asset to where we feel it is most usefully used. So the

statement that I made was in the context of the COVID remarks. It was not in the context of more or less beds. It was in the context of we have reverted to pre-COVID levels.

Madam Speaker: Any more supplementaries? Next question.

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**Q350-351/2025
Hillsides Staffing Levels –
Air Conditioning**

Clerk: Question 350, the Hon. A Sanchez.

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Hon. A Sanchez: Could the Government provide details on the staffing levels at Hillsides, specifically, one, the number of carers assigned to each floor, broken down by floor, and by day and night shifts? Two, the number of nurses assigned to each floor, broken down by floor, and by day and night shifts?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 351.

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Clerk: Question 351, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Could the Government confirm whether any air conditioning units or related equipment at hillsides are currently experiencing issues, and if so, provide details of these issues?

635

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, in relation to Question 350, I now hand over schedule with the information requested, and in relation to Question 351, all air conditioning systems in both patient and staff areas are functioning and operating as expected.

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Madam Speaker: All right, any supplementaries on Question 351? If necessary, we can revert to Question 350 after the Hon. Member has looked at the schedule, although it is a brief schedule, so she may be in a position to ask supplementaries now. But in any event, anything on 351?

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Hon. A Sanchez: I am grateful for that answer, Madam Speaker. We have been receiving a few concerns in relation to air conditioning units and related equipment, particularly affecting one floor of Hillsides, and relatives who seem to have been reporting the issue via the appropriate channels. The issue seems to be ongoing and it does not seem to be getting resolved, and they seem to be very concerned given that this is an issue that was ongoing during the last summer months, that we may face another summer where the issues with air conditioning will continue to be one that affects the residents of Hillsides.

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Is the Minister aware of this? Has she been made aware of this? And if not, could she look into this matter to ensure that it is addressed?

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Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, there are some air handling units that are undergoing pre - fixed maintenance programmes, so that may be the issues that the hon. Lady is hearing about. What I would suggest is that all relevant enquiries are put to the adequate department, and they will be notified whether the works are planned maintenance works or otherwise. There are no issues at all in relation to any air handling units, since, as the hon. Lady is aware, there were works carried out to these last year.

Everything that's going on at the moment is purely a planned maintenance programme works.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member in a position to pose any questions in relation to 350, would you like some more time?

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, would the Hon. Minister be able to confirm whether there has been any changes to the complement of carers or nurses in recent months, or has this been, the ongoing complement at least for the last few months?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, as the hon. Lady will be aware, the complement will be set, so as far as I am aware, there have been no changes to the complement.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, again, we are hearing concerns from relatives regarding complement issues that are affecting the workforce in relation to leave, when carers need to take leave, or are away on sick leave, or on emergencies, and perhaps on some instances, cover not being sent. And this particularly affecting the night shift, and evidently not only having an effect on the workforce, but then perhaps potentially having an effect on the service being provided. Is the Hon. Minister, has she been made aware of these concerns, and if so, are they being addressed?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: No, Madam Speaker, I have not been made aware of any such concerns.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 351

ANSWER TO QUESTION 350

WARD	DAY SHIFT CARERS	DAY SHIFT RGN	NIGHT SHIFT CARERS	NIGHT SHIFT RGN
Trafalgar	2	1	2	1
Alameda	5	1	2	1
Queens	5	1	2	1
Castle	5	1	2	1
On rotation		1 charge nurse day shift		1 charge nurse night shift

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q352/2025
Waiting list figures –
Mount Alvernia

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Clerk: Question 352, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Could the Government provide the most up-to-date figures for the current waiting list at Mount Alvernia?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I remind the hon. Lady that, as I informed her last year in answer to a similar question, there is no specific waiting list for Mount Alvernia.

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Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, the Hon. Minister actually gave me the figures for the waiting list for all ERS sites last year when I asked this question. I posed a question last month with a wording in relation to the answer that she gave that time, but the Hon. Minister informed me that that was not the language, or was incorrect language, or that it wasn't the right way to ask it. So she then advised that I ask for the waiting list for Mount Alvernia in this session which I have.

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Does the Hon. Minister have the figures either for waiting list for Mount Alvernia, either the waiting list for all ERS sites, or does she have any information available that she might be able to share?

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Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, the Elderly Residential Services assesses individuals for bed suitability across all of the ERS sites. As of 13 March, there is a total of 263 applicants for all ERS sites, 15 of which are high priority, 45 are over 90, and 172 are non-urgent.

Madam Speaker: Any supplementaries?

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: May I just ask, before my hon. Colleague asks the supplementary, the hon. Lady said 45 urgent, 172 non-urgent, and then the middle one was what?

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Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I said; 15 high priority, 45 over 90, 172 non-urgent, there are 29 in the GHA long stay, and two additional Ocean Views.

Madam Speaker: Any supplementaries?

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Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, given the number of people on the waiting list, there is evidently a demand for some sort of residential care or supported type of living. Does the Government have any plans in relation to, for example, what was announced in relation to the Rooke building, for example, it was said that it was going to be a type of care nursing home. Does it have any plans in relation to what's going to happen with that building by way of addressing this waiting list, for example, and if not that, any other plans that it might have in mind in relation to addressing this waiting list?

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Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, we are assessing all options currently.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Can I ask, is this a rolling applicants list, presumably, and does the hon. Minister have a kind of breakdown out of the 263 people who are applicants, so how many of those would have been on that applicants list for, say, over 12 months? Does she have a figure like that, for example?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I do not have that information on me. What I do know is that the applicants are assessed regularly and they are assessed regularly on a needs base. So this is one change that this Government brought about.

So we currently assess every single applicant on a needs base and it is not on a first-come, first-served basis. So whenever an applicant joins a waiting list, we assess whether or not that applicant has a greater need than someone that's been on the list for, let's say, two or three years. And it is an individualised, needs-based approach that the hospital takes to admissions.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I understand, and that makes sense. But I imagine that is like a rolling kind of assessment, so from time to time people will be assessed. But do the Government hold...

If we were to put a question as to when people arrived on the applicants list, would the Government be able to give us a breakdown of how long people have been on that list?

Madam Speaker: May be hypothetical.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Is it possible to provide us that information?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: No, the Government is unable to provide that information.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: The Government is unable to, but somebody else could. Or it is not possible to provide this information?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: The Government is unable to provide that information because the Government does not hold that information. The Elderly Residential Service may be able to provide that information, but I don't know if that is information which the Elderly Residential Services hold.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

**Q353, 394-397/2025
Reached a decision –
Sunshine Ward Ocean Views**

Clerk: Question 353, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Has the Government reached a decision regarding the Sunshine Ward Ocean Views, and can it clarify whether this decision will involve the elderly residential services?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 394 to 397.

Clerk: Question 394, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Can Sunshine Ward be adapted to suit the needs of dementia patients?

Clerk: Question 395, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: How many beds does Sunshine Ward have, and how many of those beds have been occupied from September 2024 to date?

Clerk: Question 396, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Have the work scheduled to be undertaken at Ocean Views as outlined at the October session of Parliament as follows. Replacement of the air conditioning system of Sky Ward and Rockside Flats to include installation of new systems and removing of old from roof level, installation of new external system and degassing, installation and removal of all BS boxes, 19 of them, and installation of new ones, installation of new refrigeration pipe work where required, charge refrigeration gas to system, build or works to any damaged areas, commissioning and testing by Dakin engineers been completed? If not, why and by when are those works estimated to be completed?

Clerk: Question 397, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Have works to convert a room into a further seclusion room and repairs to damaged flooring in Horizon Ward been completed? If not, why and by when are those works estimated to be completed? Please provide a total of costs expended to date on these works.

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, in relation to Question 353, no decision has been taken on the future of Sunshine Ward. In relation to Question 394, yes, Madam Speaker. In relation to Question 395, Sunshine Ward was closed in July 2022 and had the capacity of 14 beds.

In answer to Question 396, Madam Speaker, all these works are now completed. In answer to Question 397, the completion of works to convert the Horizon Ward to a seclusion room is pending the installation of safety padding throughout the room. The delay with the padding installation is due to the difficulties encountered in identifying contractors who specialise in the installation of specific padding.

This is requested by the mental health clinical professionals. The issue has now been resolved through a specialised UK company. The Mental Health Sites and Services Department is currently liaising with the UK company with the aim of coordinating works and establishing commencement and completion dates.

The repairs to the Horizon Ward's damaged flooring are complete. The costs associated with the flooring and the seclusion room conversion are £40,428.44.

Madam Speaker: Let's start with Question 353.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, grateful for that answer. I believe the Hon. Minister has confirmed that the Government has not reached a decision, regarding Sunshine Ward. Could the Hon. Minister confirm how long Sunshine Ward has been... Well, actually, could she confirm what Sunshine Ward is currently being used for?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Sunshine Ward is currently not being used, Madam Speaker.

Hon. A Sanchez: Could the Hon. Minister also confirm whether Europa Wing is also not being used?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I am unaware whether Europa Wing is being used or otherwise. If the hon. Lady would like to pose a question on that, I am happy to answer next time.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, could the Hon. Minister confirm how long Sunshine Ward has not been used for?

845 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, unfortunately I do not have that exact information in front of me. If the hon. Lady would wish to pose a question, I am very happy to answer the next time.

850 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, well, I am unsure for how long Sunshine Ward has not been used for, but I am aware that the Mental Health Board did indeed, in 2023, in their report, highlight the fact that Sunshine Ward wasn't being used. I think it was an issue that had been raised prior to this. They did recommend that Sunshine Ward could be perhaps used for the managing of dementia patients who require more specialist care and support.

855 It's a recommendation that they made to the Government. I am aware that the Hon. Minister has stated that the Government hasn't reached a decision, but does she have a timeframe as to when the Government intends to make a decision about a ward that seems to have been unused for a significant period of time now?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: No, Madam Speaker.

860 **Madam Speaker:** Any supplementaries on 394?

Hon. J Ladislaus: Not on 394, Madam Speaker, but on the next questions.

865 **Madam Speaker:** Anyone on 395?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I am unsure as to which ward the hon. Lady is referring to.

870 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Sunshine Ward, Madam Speaker, which was the subject of question 395.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Many thanks, Madam Speaker. Is there a Question?

875 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Yes, just to confirm, because the Hon. Minister confirmed to Parliament that the ward has been closed since July 2022. Is that correct? Is my understanding of that correct - So the ward hasn't been used in almost two years. Am I understanding correctly?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I am very grateful to the hon. Lady. If that is what the answer was provided, then yes, that is the correct information.

880 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, in terms of the works that were completed, I am on Question 396, the works that were completed in respect to the air conditioning system of Sky Ward, could the Hon. Minister confirm when those works were completed? Because we have been hearing recent issues arising out of the air conditioning system in Sky Ward. So if the Hon. Minister could confirm that that is definitely completed and when it was.

885 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, the works were completed on 13 December 2024. Again, as I have confirmed to her hon. Colleague, the noise that the hon. Lady may be hearing is around planned maintenance works that are ongoing on some wards which do not render the wards unusable.

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895 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Although they do not render the wards unusable, Madam Speaker, can the Hon. Minister confirm that they do not render the air conditioning system unusable? Because my understanding is that the windows cannot be opened in Sky Ward for safety reasons and therefore the air conditioning is of utmost importance in terms of ventilation, particularly since we are moving into a hotter season now. So can the Hon. Minister confirm that there is no impact on the air conditioning units, on maintenance?

900 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, as I had previously confirmed, this is planned maintenance. If it is planned maintenance, it is not envisaged that there would be any issues.

905 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, in terms of Question 397, we've heard that the seclusion room is pending completion at Horizon Ward. Can the Hon. Minister perhaps confirm what the costs to date are in terms of the flooring splits with the seclusion room? Because there was a question in October where the Hon. Minister confirmed that the flooring to Horizon Ward would cost £716.60, that was the quote obtained. But now we have a figure of £40,428 and I just would like to see the breakdown between that and whether that includes the seclusion room works.

910 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, the question posed relates to the total costs that are expended to the date this works. I am very happy to provide a breakdown, but would need notice of that question.

915 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Can the Hon. Minister confirm when the flooring in Horizon Ward was completed, when works to the flooring were completed?

920 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, again, the question relates to whether the works were completed. I confirm that the works to the flooring have been completed. I do not have a date as to when those were completed, but we can confirm that the works were completed.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, in terms of the seclusion room at Horizon Ward, does it have toilet facilities within that room?

925 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, I would need notice of such a question.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q354-361/2025 **Carers Employed Lifecome**

930 **Clerk:** Question 354, the Hon. A Sanchez.

935 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Could the Government clarify whether carers employed by Lifecome Care Gibraltar have access to a designated staff room, a rest area for breaks, including facilities to heat up food and shelter during bad weather?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

940 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 355 to 361.

Clerk: Question 355, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Could the Government state how many carers employed by Lifecome Care Gibraltar have completed the following training programmes? Conflict Resolution, Infection Control, Dementia Awareness, Basic Food Hygiene.

Clerk: Question 356, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Can the Government confirm whether all carers employed by Lifecome Care Gibraltar have completed the mandatory training programme? Additionally, could the Government provide a specific outline of the following?

1. What does the mandatory training programme include?
2. How soon after a carer is employed do they receive and complete this mandatory training programme?

Clerk: Question 357, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Could the Government clarify whether Lifecome Care Gibraltar has a team of relief workers to cover absences due to annual leave, sickness or other emergencies?

Clerk: Question 358, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Can the Government provide the total number of hours per month of care provided by Lifecome Care under its contract with the Government for home support and domiciliary care for the following months? October 2024, November 2024, December 2024, January 2025, February 2025.

Clerk: Question 359, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Regarding home support and domiciliary care, could the Government confirm whether a logbook, also referred to as a communication book, is maintained in the residence of each service user? Furthermore, are these logbooks being updated in accordance with the standards set by the Care Agency?

Clerk: Question 360, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Since September 2024, how many spot checks have been conducted in relation to domiciliary care and home support? Additionally, could the Government clarify who is responsible for conducting these spot checks, how frequently these spot checks are carried out?

Clerk: Question 361, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: In relation to home support and domiciliary care, could the Government confirm whether care plans, including manual handling plans and risk assessments, are available in the homes of all service users receiving this service?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, as I have repeatedly told the hon. Lady both inside and outside the House, these questions should be directed at Lifecome Care. The hon. Lady knows that at present we are not satisfied with the service being provided by Lifecome Care and the Government has engaged lawyers in this respect.

The Care Agency has a contract for domiciliary care and home support with Lifecome Care and the Government expects Lifecome Care to meet all of its contractual obligations.

Madam Speaker, Lifecome has a simple choice. Either they deliver as they legally agreed they would or their lifeline is cut and they're gone.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, I am grateful for that answer but as the Hon. Minister has stated before, the Government has a contract with Lifecome and Lifecome is, as she has stated, bound to meet their obligations. So the Hon. Minister must have information made available to the Care Agency which the Hon. Minister insists is monitoring the progress of the contract, has mechanisms in place to monitor, whether the standards are being met and I believe she must have the information available to her to be able to address these questions and nothing of what the Hon. Minister has said in her answer addresses any of the questions that have been put. So I would try to perhaps provide us with a little more information given that the matter seems to be one of huge public concern.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, the matter is one of huge public concern and that is why we are taking it seriously. That is why we have engaged lawyers and that is why we are currently in the process of engaging with Lifecome to see whether they address each and every one of the points that we have addressed in our letter. As I have said, the Care Agency do have a contract with Lifecome.

That contract does hold Lifecome to account and what we are currently in the process of doing is holding them to account on that contract. We should not and we cannot stand here in Parliament and talk about the intricacies of any of those provisions and the breaches thereof. Therefore, at this point of time, I think the Government has made its position significantly clear about the choices that Lifecome currently face.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, grateful for that answer, but with respect to the Hon. Minister, I have not submitted a question in relation to the breaches that Lifecome might have committed or not committed. I have not submitted a question in relation to the lawyers, in relation to the legal review. I have not submitted a question in relation to any of this.

I have submitted specific questions and she has provided no answers in relation to these questions. So I would urge the Hon. Minister to, given that it is a service of home support and domiciliary care, which is a service that is provided by the Government by way of subcontracting these services, I would urge the Hon. Minister, with responsibility for care, to address these questions and provide more information, especially given that it is an area of such a huge public concern and there are many constituents that come to see us with many concerns in relation to this.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, we are acutely aware of the concerns raised by constituents. As I have made the hon. Lady aware on numerous occasions, the Care Agency is seeking those concerns at present. The Care Agency is reaching out to make sure that the level of service is being delivered by Lifecome.

As I have previously said, we are not satisfied with the level of service provided by Lifecome. As I will also happily commit, the Government will issue a press release on Lifecome as soon as it is able to make a decision. And at the moment, as I have said, the matter is with lawyers and we are not able to answer these questions at present.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, my hon. Colleague has not asked about breaches, although she is absolutely right in raising the issue of public interest because there are concerns about the impact of the service or the lack of it to people. The thrust of my hon. Colleague's questions are to ask about, because the hon. Lady has said in this House and outside it, that the Government

1045 have an ability, under the contract, to hold Lifecome to account. What we are trying to understand is what is the extent of the contractual obligations between the Government and Lifecome?

So, for example, there are questions here that ask about how many carers have been trained. So that must impact on whatever clause there is in the contract which may require certain people to be trained. So we are trying to understand that.

1050 We are trying to see how many people there are. There is a question on can the Government provide the total number of hours per month of care provided? Presumably there are hours of care provided under the contract or there is a mechanism under the contract that defines the extent of care that is provided by Lifecome.

1055 We are trying to understand, as a matter of fact, how many hours of care have been provided. That does not encroach into any legal advice that the hon. Lady may be receiving or indeed as to the stance of the Government in relation to this particular contract. So providing us, for example, how much care they have provided in October, November or December cannot possibly encroach on those aspects.

1060 Can she please therefore provide us the answer to the questions that simply ask for information that does not encroach on that situation?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, to be clear, there are a couple of questions that I will answer related to the number of hours. The majority of the questions that are posed do not relate to the contractual obligations between the Care Agency and Lifecome. They are questions that are specifically for Lifecome.

1065 Let me take you example by example: Could the Government clarify whether carers employed by Lifecome have a designated staff room? It is a question for Lifecome; Could the Government state how many carers employed by Lifecome have completed their training programme? It is a matter for Lifecome; Could the Government confirm whether all carers employed by Lifecome Care have completed the mandatory training? It is a matter for Lifecome; Could the Government confirm whether Lifecome Care has a term of relief cover workers to cover absences? It is a matter for Lifecome.

1075 The questions that we will answer are the total number of hours that are provided per month. In relation to Question 358, the total number of hours provided in October 2024 was 27,419 hours; in November 2024, it was 26,445 hours; in December 2024, it was 27,714 hours; In January 2025, it was 27,838 hours; and in February 2025, it was 25,718 hours.

The rest of the questions, I will submit, are a matter for Lifecome to answer, as we have made abundantly clear before in this House.

1080 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Is the Minister saying that there are no provisions in the contract that govern the number of carers or the number of carers that need to be trained, that there is no detail in the contract governing that, that there is no detail in the contract that governs the facilities that Lifecome will enjoy or the carers will enjoy, that there is no provisions in the contract about care plans and that there is no provisions in the contract about whether there's communication books in the residence of the service users or care plans.

1085 There is no provision in the contract dealing with any of these issues. Is that what she is saying?

1090 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** No, Madam Speaker. What I am simply saying is that that is not what the question is asking.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, with all due respect, my hon. Colleague's questions, and I apologise because I'm interfering in her questions, I'm going to give way to her, but my hon. Colleague is asking about the bite of the contractual obligations on all these important issues that affect people. So we want to understand, to the extent that the Government said that they are

able, through the contractual mechanism, to hold Lifecome to account, what are the provisions against which it is holding Lifecome to account?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, we have the most detailed contract ever in respect to this service. The reality is that the questions, once again, do not seek the information that the hon. Gentleman is now seeking. The reality is that we are dealing with all of these issues which the hon. Gentleman is raising, and we are dealing with them, as I have said that we are dealing with them, by way of letter to Lifecome that we sent on 10 February.

We are dealing with each of these issues, and the questions and the way that the questions are raised are a matter for Lifecome. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to address questions in relation to the contract provisions, the questions should be asked in relation to the contract provisions.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, there is a question. I am just going to highlight one example. There is a question here in relation to training and whether the carers have completed mandatory training. I believe there is a schedule in the services agreement between the Government and Lifecome Care which outlines the mandatory training programme that the carers have to undertake, and it actually sets out the different mandatory training programmes that the carers have to undertake as part of the services agreement between the Government and Lifecome Care.

If it is indeed the case that the Government has mechanisms to ensure that Lifecome has to meet their contractual obligations, then this information should be readily available to the Minister as part of the mechanisms to ensure that Lifecome is meeting their contractual obligations. I think the question is pretty clear.

We are not going to ask for information that another company holds on the training of carers because the Government contract is with Lifecome Care in relation to home support and domiciliary care. It is not with another subcontracted entity. I really don't know what subcontracted entity name the hon. Minister wants me to put in that question.

It just seems that the hon. Minister, from the get-go, is very reluctant to provide this information across the floor of the House. And now it is very convenient. Well, look, it is under legal review.

It is very simple, basic information that we are asking here. And if it is the Government's stance that they have mechanisms to ensure that contractual obligations are met, then this information should be readily available for the Government.

And if the hon. Minister, if it is her position that she does not want to share it in a transparent and accountable manner, then that is her position to take. But I would urge her not to hide behind a legal review.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I am not hiding behind absolutely anything. And it is in the hon. Lady's usual style that she raises these concerns. We are not hiding.

We are not doing absolutely anything which is other than transparent. I have stood in this House and I have said with conviction and with a certain amount of bravery that we are not satisfied with the service that Lifecome Care is providing. I think that is self-evident from my previous responses to this House.

We are not satisfied with the service that Lifecome Care is providing and we are looking to Lifecome to either provide us with the responses that we require or they will understand what the consequences of not providing us with that is. So the hon. lady can be as inflammatory as she wants. She can resort to her usual tactics, which are very *Sálvame* me, quite vile.

But actually the response that the hon. Lady will get to the applause of the gallery opposite is going to be exactly the same. The answer to questions on LifeCome are questions to LifeCome, not to this Government. This Government has been entirely transparent.

This Government has actually held the company to account and this Government has provided a contract and provided services over and above anything that Gibraltar has ever seen.

We have moved from 68 packages of care at the time that the hon. Lady's Government was in office to 512 packages of care that we currently provide. What we are looking to do is to make sure that each and every one of those packages of care receives the quality of care that they need.

Now, we have got a contract with LifeCome, which we are not satisfied is being met. We have said that quite transparently. I am not going to go through here each and every one of the things that we are not satisfied with.

We have said that and we have said that in a very transparent manner and we are looking for them to either remedy those breaches or we will look to the other consequences of what that entails. However, to accuse us of not being transparent when we have for the first time listed out all of the obligations that the Government looks to meet and looks to these companies to meet is actually quite misleading. We have, for the first time ever, set out in a contractual format exactly the obligations that we expect the company to meet.

We have looked to set out exactly what our aspirations to the company are and we have looked to provide the elderly with the service that we wish. Now, if that service is not being provided, we are looking to LifeCome for those answers and we are actually squaring up to LifeCome and asking LifeCome why they are not providing the service that we are actually paying for because we, the GSLP administration, are paying for services which are unheard of in Gibraltar. We are providing a service at home with packages of care that are over and above that which this community has ever seen, accepted throughout the community, because as I have told the hon. Lady previously. I have been at events where the elderly are actually telling me that they themselves are receiving care that their mothers never received 20 years ago.

So, it is a service that this Government is actually very proud of. The easiest thing for this Government and for myself to have done was nothing, to continue receiving the care that the people were receiving. However, I did not think that was good enough.

So we put this contract out to tender. We are now saying we are not satisfied with the level of service that our elderly are receiving and therefore, because we are contractually able to hold LifeCome to account, we are now saying we are not happy with the level of care that LifeCome are providing. I cannot say that any clearer.

We are not happy with the level of service that LifeCome are providing and therefore, we are looking to improve that service in numerous different ways. And we are holding them to account because for the first time ever, we have a contract which sets out their obligations. And all of these questions as to whether or not they have a staff room for their staff are questions for LifeCome.

It is questions which we are holding them to account but they are questions which should be put to the company directly.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, I point out that it is, as my hon. Colleagues have pointed out, it is the taxpayer that pays for these services. Not the GSLP. The taxpayer pays for these services which are currently, evidently, not functioning as they should be functioning.

We have a situation which is of huge public concern, huge public interest, a situation where we now have the Union saying one thing on one hand, LifeCome saying one thing on the other hand, and the hon. Minister refusing to answer questions about the issue when the Opposition is trying to get some clarification as to what is going on. So I stress again, Madam Speaker, and I urge her to perhaps provide clarity and provide some more information in relation to the questions that have been put to her, I would urge, for example, in relation to the matter of relief cover, which is a concern that we continue to hear, particularly in the sense that the services seem to continue to face disruption. Services that continue to be missed, carers that continue to miss sessions, apps that do not seem to be working.

Can the hon. Minister shed some light into what is being done to resolve this? Because it's all very well and good for the Minister to come here and say the huge amount of money that the taxpayer is spending on this, not the GSLP, the taxpayer, the people of Gibraltar and the

services are not functioning as they should. Can the hon. Minister elaborate as to what is being done to resolve this?

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Other than, well, we are warning LifeCome and that is as much as she can say.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I think I have been quite clear in what we are doing. We have issued a letter on the 10th of February and we are following that letter up. In the next few weeks, the actions will become clearer and we are engaging, actively, with the Unions and with LifeCome as to what we are going to do in the coming weeks.

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We are actively engaging with everybody that is involved in order to secure a service. And yes, you are right, it is the taxpayer that is paying for the service, but it is the GSLP administration that determines that this is a fundamental service for our community. It is the GSLP administration that has determined that these funds are better spent in this way. It is the GSLP administration that has increased massively the spend in elderly residential services. It is the GSLP administration that has increased the spend in Social Care. It is the GSLP administration that has increased the spend in the GHA.

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So, whereas I take the hon. Lady's point and you are entirely correct in making it, that it is the taxpayer that is making it, it is the GSLP administration that is determining that it is its priority. And a priority for which I am proud to stand because it is a priority that I got into politics to defend. It is a priority which has always been at the forefront of my mind.

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I am here to defend the patient, to defend the service user. And what we are doing is looking to improve the service for the service user. So when the hon. Lady asks me, Madam Speaker, what we are doing for the user? I can tell the hon. Lady what we are doing for the user.

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We are trying to improve the service. We are not sitting back and allowing the service to be a mediocre service. We are writing to the organisation, we are writing to the company and asking the company to remedy any breaches which are currently enforced.

We are looking to the company to provide us with certainty that the contractual obligations are being met. And we are not satisfied that those obligations are currently being met. Because of the sensitivity of the issues at this precise moment in time, I do not think it is in anyone's interest to sit here, or to stand here rather, and to talk about each and every one of the provisions and whether they are or they are not being met.

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Because of the sensitivity of the issues at this precise moment in time, it is incumbent on the Government to try and manage the issue so that the end user, so that the service user, so that the elderly in our population do not feel any effect on the service. It is incumbent on Government to ensure that the service is as smooth as possible. We have accepted that we are not happy with the level of service that is being provided. And we are therefore doing something about it. The easiest thing for us to have done, again Madam Speaker, is to have done nothing and the point of doubt, that is not the path that we went down.

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Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, can the Hon. Minister elaborate? Does the Government have any contingency plans in the event that the outcome of this is that the contract with LifeCome Care has to be terminated?

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Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Yes Madam Speaker, we do.

Hon. A Sanchez: And would the Hon. Minister be able to elaborate further on this?

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Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: No Madam Speaker, unfortunately I cannot.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: And can I ask on that theme, the letter that she says was sent through lawyers, I imagine, I think she said, was on the 10th of February. Has there been a deadline given to the company to perform its obligations?

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Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Yes Madam Speaker, of course there has.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: And would she share what the deadline is?

1255 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, I do not wish to share what the deadline is. I can confirm that we are meeting with the company in order to discuss the next steps.

Madam Speaker: Yes, the Hon. A Sanchez

1260 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, given the recent news about the planned strike by the Union and the carers, would the Hon. Minister confirm whether the Government has any contingency plan to avoid any disruption to the service provided to the service users to limit any disruption in the service provided to them?

1265 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, it would appear that the hon. Lady and indeed the entire Opposition thinks that I am just sitting here taking this matter quite easily. Of course we have met with the Unions. Of course we have engaged with them. Of course we have contingency plans in place. This is a matter which we are taking very seriously. This is a matter which the Government is not simply sitting back and doing nothing about. Of course we have met with the Unions. Of course we are looking at contingency plans. Of course we are looking at doing everything possible to avoid any implications to any of the users of our service.

1270 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, I think the Hon. Minister is getting rather upset when I ask her these questions. I am just asking her whether the Government has contingency plans and if so, can she elaborate further as to what these contingency plans are? I am not suggesting that the Government or the Hon. Minister is not taking the matter seriously.

1275 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, we confirmed yesterday in the press that we did have contingency plans in place. We confirmed yesterday in the press that we are looking to engage with Unite. So this information was already publicly available yesterday.

Hon. A Sanchez: Grateful, Madam Speaker, but can the Hon. Minister elaborate as to what these contingency plans are?

1285 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, as with any contingency, we are looking at ways to make sure that the service continues. So we are looking at ways to provide the cover.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. R M Clinton had a question?

1290 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, could the Hon. Minister perhaps elaborate on how they plan to provide this cover?

1295 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, the Care Agency is looking at all options that are available to it. Could the Hon. Minister elaborate on what these options are? Madam Speaker, I would wish to take this opportunity to tell all users of the service that the service will not be interrupted if there is a strike.

1300 We are currently working with the Unions just to make sure that that option is not on the table. So we are engaging with the Unions to try and see what we can do with the Unions. But of course, in the same way as we would with any other strike action, we are looking to see what contingency plans can be made. So we are looking to see how we can provide the service in different ways.

1305 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, the Hon. Minister is not really providing any details as to what these options are. She assures that cover is going to be provided and that they are exploring all options. I am asking her to perhaps elaborate on what these options are.

1310 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, the reality is that when I have spoken in Parliament about things that are hypothetical, I have then been accused by the hon. Lady and others in the Opposition of misleading Parliament. We do not have exactly what we are going to do and as I have said quite clearly, we are exploring all options. So we don't have exactly what we are going to do so I do not wish to elaborate so that I am in the future not accused of misleading Parliament.

1315 I do not have further details of what exactly the options are but we are looking and the Care Agency is diligently looking, at all the options available. Once again, Madam Speaker, as I have done at every possible opportunity, I wish to thank the staff of the Care Agency because they have gone above and beyond throughout to contact each and every one of those packages of care, to contact the families of those receiving each and every one of those packages of care and to try and alleviate any issues that arise as a result of the provision of care. So, I would like to take this opportunity, once again, to publicly thank the Care Agency staff for all their resistance during this period.

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Madam Speaker: All right, the Hon. R M Clinton has allowed one more supplementary.

1325 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given this is a £3.8 million contract as was announced when the tender was awarded, I wonder if the Minister could advise the House in terms of the detailed contract that was entered into whether there are any financial penalties that can be levied against the company for non-performance of this contract or whether the company provided any form of bond or surety in the event that they cannot perform the contract.

1330 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, at the risk of repeating myself, that question does not arise from any of the original questions. I am very, very happy, as I always say, I am very happy to provide that information to the hon. Gentleman, but I would be very grateful for notice of that question.

1335 **Madam Speaker:** Before we move on to the next question, perhaps we could revert to the outstanding ones, which were questions 341 and 342.

Q341-345/2025

Care Agency – Dry House

1340 **Clerk:** Question 341, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Could the Government clarify whether the Dry House which comes under the Care Agency's Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Service has changed location?

1345 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 342.

1350 **Clerk:** Question 342, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Does the Government intend to open an additional Dry House within the community?

1355 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): In relation to Question 341, yes ma'am. In relation to Question 342, Madam Speaker, this is currently being reviewed.

1360 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful. Would the hon. Minister be able to confirm the date on which the Dry House changed location?

1365 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, unfortunately I do not have that information available. It is not because I do not want to share it. I am very happy to share that information if I have notice of that question.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, would the Hon. Minister be able or would she happen to have the information of how much notice was given to the residents of the Dry House notifying them that they were to move from one location to the other?

1370 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, I do not have information as to the notice. What I do have information on is that the new property offers a safer environment and it is a better quality of accommodation for the service user. The feedback that we have received from the service users has been very positive.

1375 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, would the Hon. Minister be able to confirm that before the residents moved to the new Dry House that it was ready with all necessary furniture and amenities before they moved into the new Dry House?

1380 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, whilst I do not have that information in front of me, I would expect that that was the case.

Hon. A Sanchez: And I believe that in answers to previous questions that I asked in relation to the Dry House, the Hon. Minister Santos confirmed that in the other location there was CCTV installed. Would the Hon. Minister be able to confirm that there is CCTV installed in the common areas of this Dry House?

1385 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, unfortunately we do not have that information. Again, if the hon. Lady poses that question, I am very happy to provide her with the answer.

1390 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q362, 363-364/2025
GHA & ERS –
Direct employees salary**

1395 **Clerk:** Question 362, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Could the Government provide details on the total number of direct employees of the GHA and ERS who earned a basic salary exceeding £70,000 and received overtime payments

1400 amounting to more than 50% of their basic salary during the period from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1405 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, I'll answer this question together with Questions 363 and 364.

Clerk: Question 363, the Hon. A Sanchez.

1410 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Could the Government provide details on the total number of public or civil servants excluding direct employees of the GHA who were posted to or working within the GHA and ERS earned a basic salary exceeding £70,000 and received overtime payments amounting to more than 50% of their basic salary during the period from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024?

1415 **Clerk:** Question 364, the Hon. A Sanchez.

1420 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Could the Government provide details on the total number of employees of Government-Owned Companies including GDC employees who were posted to or working within the GHA and ERS earned a basic salary exceeding £70,000 and received overtime payments amounting to more than 50% of their basic salary during the period from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1425 **Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez):** Madam Speaker, in answer to Question 362, only one employee of the GHA and ERS with a basic salary exceeding £70,000 has received overtime payments amounting to more than 50% of their basic salary. With regards to Questions 363 and 364, the answer is none.

1430 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, can the Hon. Minister confirm that in providing the answers that she has provided that the basic salary excludes any benefits in kind or allowances of any kind?

1435 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, the basic salary means the basic salary so I would imagine that when asked a question about the basic salary then the answer provided relates to the basic salary without any allowances or benefits in kind.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q365/2025

GHA–

EpiPens provided to schools

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Clerk: Question 365, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Does the GHA provide EpiPens to all Government of Gibraltar schools? If so, how many are provided to each school per month?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, the GHA does not provide schools with EpiPens. These are prescribed to individual patients who can then decide to keep these in school for their own personal needs.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q366/2025
GHA–
Ear irrigation

Clerk: Question 366, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Is ear irrigation currently offered by the GHA to patients requiring the procedure? If not, why and when did the GHA cease the provision of this procedure?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, evidence-based practise does not substantiate this treatment and as such it has not been offered to the GHA since autumn 2024.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, perhaps the Hon. Minister could provide information as to how it is that individuals who previously relied on ear irrigation, which my understanding is to remove ear wax, what treatment would they now seek? My understanding is that they are having to seek this treatment privately.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, as I have confirmed the evidence suggests that this treatment has been proven in certain instances to damage and perforate the eardrum which is why it is no longer offered. This is the NHS stance. The removal of ear wax has been provided by a local ENT consultant to a cohort of patients.

So, this is to any hearing aid wearer and patients with persistent vertigo.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Is it correct then that the GHA no longer offers the treatment or the removal of ear wax as treatment for issues pertaining to build up of ear wax? Is that correct? What is it that a patient is meant to do?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, the question relates to the irrigation of ear wax and the GHA has determined that the irrigation of ear wax and the NHS guidelines and the NICE guidelines seem to suggest that this procedure is actually harmful to patients and, therefore, that is why the GHA no longer provides this service.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Since when has that advice been out because my understanding or what we have heard from the Hon. Minister is that it has only just recently been removed as something that the GHA offered?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I confirmed that this was since autumn 2024.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Did the NICE guidelines state that since autumn 2024 or was it prior to that? That's the question.

1495 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, unfortunately I do not study the NICE guidelines. I am informed by clinicians that the practise was deemed unsafe and therefore the procedure was stopped. I do not know exactly when the procedure was deemed unsafe by the NICE guidelines.

What I am told is that the NICE guidelines do not recommend that the procedure is offered and it is not offered in the NHS. Therefore, the procedure is no longer offered by the GHA.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Could the Hon. Minister confirm what procedures are offered by the GHA in place of ear irrigation because if this procedure is dangerous then what is the alternative?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I have confirmed that the removal of ear wax has been provided by a local E&T consultant since to a cohort of patients.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: We heard that the cohort of patients included, for example, wearers of hearing aids. Is that then limited or will it be offered across the board because as I understand it people who do not wear hearing aids are also affected by impacted ear wax.

1510 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, again the advice that we have received by clinicians is that this service should no longer be provided by the GHA for the reasons that I have given. It is not a reason of not having sufficient staff. It is not a reason of having sufficient resources.

The reason that has been given is simply that it is not advisable to provide this service. I am unsure of what other services are available other than the E&T consultant that provides services to a cohort of patients.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q367/2025

GHA–

Dental services for children

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Clerk: Question 367, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Are parents of children who are eligible to access dental services at the GHA called to invite them for a first appointment or do parents have to call to register their interest in the service?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, any children when they turn forward will be automatically registered and therefore be called in due course. As a consequence, parents do not need to actively call the GHA to register their interest in the service.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Can the Hon. Minister clarify how long after the child turns four on average would that call be received by the parents or before?

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Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I am not able to confirm how long after the child turns four. What I am able to confirm is that the service is currently in overhaul and we expect that the new service commencing April 2025 should be reaching out to all patients. We have been reaching out to all patients aged four but we are looking to make the service far more efficient as from this April.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Can the Hon. Minister share details as to what the service overhaul has entailed?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, the overhaul entails a recall system which the GHA will be implementing.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: What is meant by a recall system, Madam Speaker?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, it means that patients will be called.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, the patients will be called. Are these patients who have been waiting on a lengthy waiting list for some months because, again, we heard a few months back that the waiting list still hadn't been cleared and that they were due to be cleared by March. Are these patients that are due to be called patients already existing on a waiting list or new patients or who is going to be called, Madam Speaker? I am sure the public has great interest in this area.

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Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, the explanation that I gave a couple of months ago is that the waiting list is a rolling waiting list. The waiting list cannot ever be cleared because there will always be new four-year-olds coming into Gibraltar. So the patients that are coming into the list now in 2025 will be recalled using a new system which will be more robust and more effective.

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However, patients have currently been called and the waiting lists are currently being cleared. The explanation I gave to the hon. Lady a couple of months ago was that it is impossible to clear this list because there will always be new children coming onto the list.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Is the expectation that children will now be called and be seen by a GHA dentist before the average age of 6 which was the age quoted by the Hon. Minister at the session of Parliament, I believe it was January session?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Yes, Madam Speaker.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

**Q368, 369/2025
GHA–
Asthma pathway**

Clerk: Question 368, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Does the GHA have an asthma pathway for diagnosing, monitoring and managing asthma in (1) child and (2) adults?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

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Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 369.

Clerk: Question 369, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Does the GHA have the capabilities to diagnose asthma in children under 5 years of age?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. Minister for Health, Care and Business.

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Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, in answer to Question 368, children presenting with respiratory symptoms are assessed and investigated with a diagnosis of asthma made when appropriate. We follow UK guidelines for the management of asthma in children. However, there is no specific dedicated pathway for asthma in children and these are managed within the general paediatric clinics.

Those children with complex asthma needs are discussed with a tertiary respiratory specialist and, if necessary, referred for specialist review in the UK. In respect of adults, NICE guidelines are followed within the primary care for diagnosis and treatment of asthma. Secondary care input is sought for more complex patients as and when required.

Patients follow a standardised procedure with the consultants if this is required. In answer to Question 369, the GHA possesses the capability to diagnose asthma in children under 5. However, due to the difficulty of performing objective tests at this age, the diagnosis is made clinically, based on a thorough history, examination and response to trial treatments.

Hon. J Ladislaus: As to Question 368, Madam Speaker, is it the case that the GHA offers a blood test in the first instance in order to assess asthma, in adults in particular?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, like the hon. Lady, I am a lawyer. I am unsure of what specific tests are offered by clinicians. As always, I am very happy to provide an answer to the hon. Lady. I just need the specific question because I am unsure of exactly what test is offered in the first instance.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, with all due respect, the question posed did ask whether the GHA has the asthma pathway for diagnosing and I am simply asking this question based on the fact that I am referring to the NICE guidelines which the Hon. Minister quotes are in place at the GHA and the NICE guidelines state that the first port of call is a blood test which is why I asked the hon. Lady and I would have expected that she may have been provided with that information when I asked the question and it was sent for preparation. So, I ask again, does the Hon. Minister have any information as to what exactly the pathway within the GHA entails? Because we would like to see whether it is obviously in parallel to the NICE guidelines or not.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I am very happy to say that I do not have that information. What tests are provided pursuant to the NICE guidelines are up to clinicians to determine. I am not sure that I should have the knowledge on what specific test is required by a clinician in order to determine whether or not an adult or a child has asthma.

I am not sure that that is within the remit of my portfolio to determine whether or not it is appropriate for a person to have a blood test or otherwise. As I have previously said, I am very happy to provide the information, asking the clinicians if that is indeed what they do, if the question is posed to me in a future session.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, is the Hon. Minister's position therefore that the Hon. Minister has nothing to do with the services that the GHA offers? Because this is a point in question. The question is whether the GHA offers the first points within the pathway in the NICE guidelines.

If that pathway has been implemented in Gibraltar, then the Hon. Minister should have some awareness as to what services the GHA offers and where the gaps are. Am I correct in that or not?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: No, Madam Speaker, the hon. Lady is not correct. I am the Minister with responsibility for the GHA. I should not know what tests are being offered.

I need to be assured by the clinicians that the appropriate pathways are being followed. What tests are being done to patients is not within my remit. In fact, I do not know how diabetes is diagnosed. I do not know how different diagnoses are made by doctors. It is not within my remit

to understand the different steps of the diagnosis procedure. What it is within my remit to ensure is that there are proper clinicians and the proper complement who actually advise on what the steps are and that they carry out the steps. It is for the clinicians to determine whether it is a blood test or otherwise it needs to be made. Madam Speaker, I am not sure that this is the most appropriate use of our time. I am being stood here, questioned and quizzed on whether I know the appropriate pathway and the appropriate test to diagnose asthma.

I hate to say this, but it is not within the remit of a Minister to understand whether a blood test is appropriate for the diagnosis of asthma or otherwise. If I were involved in that level of detail, Madam Speaker, I hasten to say that the first ones that will say that there is not the necessary independence between the clinicians and the Ministry are the Members of the Opposition. It is not at all correct for the Minister to determine what the different milestones are to determine whether someone has asthma or otherwise.

It is for me to ensure that the appropriate pathways are in place and it is for me to ensure that the complement is in place for them to be able to diagnose or otherwise. It is not in the slightest bit the remit of the Minister to determine whether a blood test should be used to diagnose cancer and it would be inappropriate for me to step into the clinician's shoes and determine whether a blood test should be used to determine whether someone has asthma or otherwise.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, with respect, but I have not asked whether the Hon. Minister should determine whether a blood test or not is appropriate. I have asked based on the fact that the Hon. Minister said that the NICE guidelines and the pathway are followed in Gibraltar. I have asked whether we have blood tests in place because it is a service that the GHA offers supposedly under that pathway which has been transposed from the NICE guidelines.

Therefore, it is, Madam Speaker, I would argue within the remit of the Minister to determine whether a service is being offered or there is a gap in the service within the GHA. And so I ask the question now, is it something that the Hon. Minister could find out? And I will file specific questions if so.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, very grateful to the hon. Lady for saying that. If the appropriate question is asked, I will of course determine whether the clinicians determine it is best to diagnose by way of blood test or otherwise. At present, I do not have that information.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q370, 371/2025
GHA—
Scabies Diagnosis

Clerk: Question 370, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Does the GHA have the equipment to diagnose scabies?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, I will answer this together with Question 371.

Clerk: Question 371, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: How many individuals were diagnosed with and treated for scabies in the past 12 months, broken down by month?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

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Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, in answer to Question 370, yes ma'am. In answer to Question 371, I now hand over a schedule with the information requested. It is necessary to clarify, Madam Speaker, that the numbers provided do not solely represent patients who have been diagnosed with scabies in the past 12 months. They also include their household close contacts who require treatment as a precautionary measure to prevent further spread of the condition.

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This approach ensures that all individuals at risk receive appropriate care, reducing the likelihood of reinfection and ongoing transmission. Due to the manner in which the diagnosis and treatment of scabies is electronically coded, it is not possible to differentiate from the figures provided the number of actual diagnosis.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, the context for this question comes from a member of the public who alarmingly came to us to say that she had been informed by a GP at the GHA that they didn't have the necessary equipment to diagnose scabies and she'd been misdiagnosed and had to seek a private diagnosis. So I ask, is the Hon. the Minister aware of what it is, which equipment it is in particular that is necessary? My understanding is that it's simply a magnifying glass.

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Has that been provided to the GPs now?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, once again, I do not know what is required in order to diagnose scabies. I am told that the GPs have the necessary equipment. If that equipment is a magnifying glass, I am sure they have a magnifying glass.

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However, the information that I have available to me is that the clinicians have whatever it is that they need in order to be able to properly diagnose scabies.

Madam Speaker: Does the hon. Member have any questions in relation to the schedule or would she like some time to look at it? You have one?

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, I can see that in January 2025 the number rose to 57, which is the highest that has been seen in the past 12 months, 57 cases. Could the Hon. the Minister clarify whether that was considered to be, in terms of Gibraltar size, an outbreak of scabies?

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Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, an outbreak is considered when five or more patients become infected within the same ward in a healthcare setting or residential services. I am very happy to confirm that there was no outbreak in January 2025.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Could the Hon. the Minister confirm what constitutes a public outbreak?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, the definition of outbreak is an outbreak in a ward. There is no definition of a public outbreak.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: I rephrase then, were there any outbreaks in schools? The information received was that there were outbreaks within certain schools.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, the Director of Public Health consistently monitors this. Again, to reiterate, the numbers provided are the number of the individuals infected and their close contacts. So, the Director of Public Health is on top of each and every case and then monitors their close contacts in order to control any contamination of scabies.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, perhaps the Hon. the Minister has information, but could the cases that were confirmed not be separated from close contacts? Is that something that the data does?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, as I confirmed in my answer, due to the manner in which the diagnosis and the treatment of scabies is electronically coded, it is not possible to differentiate from the figures provided the number of actual diagnoses.

Answer to Question 371

March 2024	48
April 2024	51
May 2024	33
June 2024	20
July 2024	20
August 2024	14
September 2024	30
October 2024	29
November 2024	40
December 2024	35
January 2025	57
February 2025	29

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q372/2025

GHA–

Cerebral palsy specialised adult service

Clerk: Question 372, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Does the GHA have a designated team which offers specialised services for adults with cerebral palsy?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, the GHA does not have a designated team providing specialised services for adults with cerebral palsy. However, support is offered in accordance with NICE guidelines when clinically indicated. In cases where the GHA is unable to provide the necessary specialist services, patients are referred to tertiary providers.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Could the Hon. the Minister give examples of cases in which patients are referred to tertiary providers?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, whilst I do not have details of the breakdown, what I am assured is that there are a few such patients that are provided for in the UK. Most of the patients

1775 that have cerebral palsy are dealt with in the GHA by a multidisciplinary team and all of the care is provided for within the GHA in Gibraltar.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

1780

Q373/2025
GHA–
BACP Registered Counsellors

Clerk: Question 373, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Are GHA counsellors registered with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy? If not, what governing body are they registered with?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, all GHA counsellors are registered with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Are regular assessments carried out to ensure quality control, Madam Speaker?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, the BACP registration must be renewed every 12 months, so yes.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: What do those assessments entail?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, unfortunately I am not a GHA counsellor either, so I am unsure of what exactly the assessments entail for GHA counsellors. Again, if the hon. Lady wishes to have a specific question, I am very happy, with notice, to provide her the answer as I always do.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, we have just heard that the BACP must be renewed every 12 months, then surely the Hon. the Minister must have been provided with information as to how that renewal takes place and therefore who and how those assessments are undertaken.

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Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, the information I have is that the registration is renewed every 12 months. Who does it? What do they do? The tests that the counsellors are required to undergo. Unfortunately, that level of information is not a level of information which I have, but again, as I have just stated, if the hon. Lady provides me with notice of the question, I am very happy to provide her with the answers that she seeks.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q374/2025
GHA–
Physiotherapy services – Child to Adult transition

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Clerk: Question 374, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: At what age do service users transition from child to adult physiotherapy services? Is the transition process planned ahead of time to ensure a smooth transition?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, service users transition from child to adult physiotherapy services at 18 years old.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, I am grateful, but is that transition process planned ahead of time is part of the question to ensure that the transition is smooth between both services?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, OT and physio submit therapy programmes and manual handling programmes, so the process, I am informed, is a smooth process.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, the information that I am getting is that it is not indeed a smooth process and it appears to be across the board that the transition from child services to adult services within the GHA is not by any means smooth. The same thing we have heard recently with the diabetes services. So Madam Speaker, I ask the question, what information is being provided to young people, to an 18-year-old who is transitioning from a child service to an adult service, and how often is that reviewed?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, as I have confirmed, the OT and the physio submit their therapy programmes and manual handling programmes as part of the process to support any carers. The NICE guidelines from the UK are the guidelines that are followed here. If the hon. Lady is asking specifically of service users attending St Martin's School, these leave at 16 and undertake a two-year transition process into St Bernadette's, in which case they are supported throughout.

NICE guidelines are followed with two transition meetings the year before the child leaves St Martin's School for parents and professionals to ensure a smooth and planned transition.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q375/2025

GHA–

Mental health support– Child to Adult transition

Clerk: Question 375, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Is there any mental health support available to support a young person in their transition from child to adult services within the GHA?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, yes ma'am.

Hon. J Ladislaus: What is it that is available to support a young person and is that for an indefinite amount of time?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, young patients receiving support from Gibraltar Young Minds undergo a structured transition period into two adult services, ensuring a seamless integration between the two. Inter-service collaboration takes place within a multidisciplinary

1865 team prior to adulthood, preventing any disruption in care. Additionally, the mental health liaison team provides support for both children and adults in crisis.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Since when has this service been available to service users?

1870 **Hon. G Arias - Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, I don't have the start date of the service.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Is the start date something that the Hon. Minister could provide?

1875 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Of course, Madam Speaker. If notice of the question is given, I am happy to provide that information.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

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Q376, 377/2025
GHA—
Vaccancies

Clerk: Question 376, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

1885 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Have the following vacancies within the GHA which were not filled in 2024 been filled?

- 1890
1. Public Health Information Analyst
 2. Occupational Therapist Senior
 3. Consultant Cardiologist
 4. Registered Nurse Cardiac Catheter Laboratory
 5. Charged Nurse Victoria Ward
 6. Resuscitation Officer
- If not, and reflecting the information provided in answer to Question 234/2025, why haven't the vacancies been advertised again?

1895 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 377.

1900 **Clerk:** Question 377, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: For what reason or reasons is it GHA policy to advertise vacancies internally unless specialist knowledge is required?

1905 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1910 **Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez):** Madam Speaker, in answer to Question 376, the current status of these vacancies are as follows. Public Health Information Analyst remains vacant and will shortly be advertised. All Occupational Therapist Senior two posts have now been filled. The Consultant Cardiologist post has now been filled. All Registered Nurse Cardiac Catheter Laboratory posts have now been filled. The Charged Nurse Victoria Ward post has now been filled. And the Resuscitation Officer post has now been filled. In answer to question 377, non-specialist vacancies and vacancies that are considered promotions within a particular

grade are initially advertised internally by the GHA. If no suitable applicant is found, these may then be advertised externally. This allows for career progression within the service. Specialist vacancies are advertised internally within the GHA and also externally.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: As to Question 376, in respect to the Public Health Information Analyst, where has that vacancy been re-advertised? Is it within the GHA again or has it gone externally?

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Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, in reply to my answer, sorry, the answer to my question stated that the post remains vacant and will shortly be advertised.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Where is it the intention to advertise it? Internally or externally?

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Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, the usual policy will be followed.

Hon. J Ladislaus: For the avoidance of doubt, is the usual policy to advertise internally as the Minister has just indicated? And then if it's not filled, externally?

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Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, let me re-read the answer to Question 377. Non-specialist vacancies and vacancies that are considered promotions within a particular grade are initially advertised internally by the GHA. If no suitable applicant is found, these may then be advertised externally. This allows for career progression within the service. Specialist vacancies are advertised internally within the GHA and also externally.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: How long would it be before that vacancy is advertised externally?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, as long as it's deemed appropriate by Workforce.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Is the Hon. the Minister satisfied that that is good planning for future because it seems to be that there have been various gaps within the service in terms of the professionals not being in place when somebody has retired of late and given that there are shortages worldwide of healthcare staff, is the Hon. the Minister satisfied with the policy currently in place?

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Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, whilst I appreciate that the hon. Members opposite have pre-prepared questions, it must indeed have been very, very disappointing to have realised that indeed from six posts that they were asking about, five were already filled. So actually, I am satisfied that Workforce is performing their function and I am satisfied that Workforce is filling the vacancies as and when they are required. So Madam Speaker, let me recap.

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The hon. Lady opposite asked me about six posts. From those six posts, five of them were filled. I understand the disappointment.

However, I am very, very satisfied that Workforce is filling the vacancies as and when they are required. In fact, the Public Health Information Analyst is a new post that was created last year because the GHA now recognises the importance of data. In fact, Public Health Information Analyst full stop were introduced by the GHA quite recently.

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We are looking to collate as much data as possible. Therefore, the Public Health Information Analyst posts are very important posts which the GHA has recently created and is going to advertise shortly. These posts are new posts or fairly new posts within the complement.

Therefore, I am very satisfied that Workforce is performing its function and filling the posts as and when required.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, we have heard recently how there are shortages worldwide for example in respect of nurses, in respect of psychiatrists and we still hear that the GHA policy yet is to advertise only internally. I understand career progression and I am 100% behind the career

1965 progression of our people within the GHA but surely it gives competition if that is also advertised externally particularly when there are such great shortages of healthcare workers.

Does the Hon. Minister agree with that statement? Because there are gaps in the service, Madam Speaker.

1970 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, I am not sure that we need to read the answer to my second question a third time but as I have previously stated, specialist vacancies are advertised internally and also externally. As I have also explained within this very session of Parliament, the GHA now has access to NHS jobs. The access to NHS jobs ensures a far greater, cheaper, platform to the GHA in order to reach a wider audience so that the vacancies may be filled.

1975 So Madam Speaker, I entirely agree that the vacancies should be advertised externally. That is in fact Workforce policy to advertise the vacancies externally once they have been advertised internally and specialist vacancies are advertised internally and also externally. When we say externally, as I have explained within this same session of Parliament, we now have access to a platform which is called NHS jobs.

1980 The platform which is called NHS jobs allows us to access professionals from the NHS where we now put our adverts. So we now have a far wider pool from which to access professionals.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, given that the post of Public Health Information Analyst appears to have remained open for over a year and is still unfilled I ask again, is the Hon. Minister happy with the policy as it currently is? Because clearly, if we have no set time frame within which that vacancy can remain simply internal, before it is put out externally then there are gaps in the service left.

1990 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, the time frame within which vacancies are advertised internally and externally is set by Workforce and the time scales are such that they are set by Workforce. Now, when these posts come out, as I have confirmed, the vacancy will be shortly advertised. I am therefore satisfied that Workforce is currently fulfilling its job and once again, Madam Speaker, I am very sorry to disappoint the hon. Lady in that five out of the six vacancies
1995 that she was seeking to confirm have actually been filled.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, just to clarify, I am delighted that five of the six have been filled but the question was specifically in relation to these because we saw a schedule in this respect recently. It applies across the board, I ask the question and the policy applies across the board and
2000 there are gaps across the board in respect of other sectors not just specialist areas, for example a nurse on a ward, there are gaps within those, so therefore I ask the question, what has been done in respect of forward planning because this doesn't seem to be very forward planning.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, as I have previously explained, the compliment is determined by the GHA by the Director of Nursing, the compliment is determined by the GHA by the Medical Director. The compliment is the compliment, as I have previously explained in previous sessions of Parliament and I am satisfied that Workforce brings out the vacancies as and when they are required.

2010 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q378/2025
GHA–
Ambulance crews Portacabins

2015 **Clerk:** Question 378, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon J Ladislaus: Since when have the GHA's ambulance crews been housed in the portacabins located around the back of St Bernard's Hospital?

2020 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): The GHA's ambulance crew have been housed in the portable cabins located at the rear of St Bernard's Hospital since March 2020.

2025 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, are there plans to move the ambulance crews any time soon out of those porta-cabins because my understanding is that the annual cost of those porta-cabins is over £36,000, so that's now amounted to over £150,000 over the course of five years. So does the Hon. Minister perhaps have an indication as to when those porta-cabins will be vacated?

2030 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, we're looking at options.

Hon. J Ladislaus: What are the options that are being considered?

2035 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, when we decide on a viable option we will explain it in Parliament.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q382, 383-385/2025
GHA–
Sleep Studies

2040 **Clerk:** Question 382, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Are sleep studies currently being undertaken as normal and are new referrals being accepted?

2045 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 383 to 385.

2050 **Clerk:** Question 383, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Which clinic at the GHA carries out sleep studies and what specialists are involved in undertaking a sleep study and the interpretation of its results?

2055 **Clerk:** Question 384, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

2060 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** How many sleep studies were carried out by the GHA over the past 12 months, broken down by month? Please provide a breakdown between patients that were seen for follow-ups and those who were new patients on a waiting list for sleep studies to be undertaken and were being seen for the first time.

Clerk: Question 385, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

2065 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** How many masks for use with CPAP machines did the GHA provide to service users in the past 12 months, broken down by month and monthly cost?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

2070 **Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez):** Madam Speaker, in answer to Question 382, the sleep service is currently limited to providing a review appointments for existing patients. The position for a Respiratory Physiologist has been approved and advertised and the service will resume accepting new cases once a position has been filled.

2075 In answer to Question 383, all adult sleep studies are conducted locally by the Respiratory Clinic within the Respiratory Department. The specialists involved are an enrolled nurse, a Nurse Practitioner, a Consultant Physician and a Respiratory Physiologist. The sleep study tests are performed by a Nurse Practitioner and a Physiologist or by a Physician if need be, who formulates an appropriate treatment based on the findings. Referrals for the paediatric sleep studies are made by ENT specialists or the Paediatricians.

2080 Appointment scheduling is coordinated by the nursing staff in Rainbow Ward, who contacts parents to arrange suitable dates. The sleep studies are conducted overnight on the ward and the results are subsequently reviewed and discussed with the ENT team. In answer to Question 384, I now hand over a schedule with the information requested.

2085 In answer to Question 385, on average each user requires three masks per year. The GHA has spent a total of £12,254 over the past 12 months on procuring these masks. We were unable to provide a monthly breakdown of costs as these masks are held at the GHA as a stock item.

Madam Speaker: All right, we can come back to 384 in a little while. Any supplementaries on 382?

2090 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, here is a case in point from what we have just been discussing a few questions prior. Since when has the GHA had knowledge that the Respiratory Physiologist, I believe it was, was going to retire?

2095 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, as I have explained to this house on previous occasions, at budget time the GHA puts to HMGOG the budget that it needs and the breakdown for the complement that it requires. The breakdown for the complement has not included a Respiratory Physiologist. The Respiratory Physiologist position has been subsequently approved.

2100 Now, when the position, when the budget is put together and the complement is put together, as I have explained in previous occasions, HMGOG provides the GHA with the budget for the complement it requests. In that complement there was no Respiratory Physiologist. The Government is satisfied that each and every clinical post that was requested by the GHA on the last occasion was provided to the GHA on the last occasion.

2105 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, we have just heard also that only review appointments will now be undertaken. Can the Hon. Minister clarify what it is that individuals who are still on that waiting list are meant to do in the interim and how long it is going to take for them to be seen?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, the procedure to recruit a Respiratory Physiologist is now underway so we do not expect it will take very long. In the interim, Madam Speaker, if there is an urgent need, the individual is sent outside Gibraltar to a tertiary centre.

Madam Speaker: Anything on 383?

Hon. J Ladislaus: I have none on 383, Madam Speaker, but I do have questions in respect of the schedule to 384.

Madam Speaker: Is the Hon Member in a position to deal with the schedule?

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, we have seen a significant drop, particularly since November 2024 to date, of the amount of new studies that are being conducted. What is the reason behind that?

My understanding is that there are over 200 people on that waiting list and it dips significantly from November where 17 studies were carried out to 3 in February and now we have the added pressure that the physiologist is now going to retire. So what is the reason for the significant drop in the amount of patients being seen in the past few months?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, the Respiratory Physiologist is not going to retire. The uptake of the service on other clinicians has increased and it is because there has been an increase in other services that have been provided that this service has seen a decline. So what is happening is that we are now recruiting a Respiratory Physiologist in order to focus solely on this service.

As I pointed out, it is sometimes the physician that reviews and reports the sleep study. So the physician's time has been otherwise taken up. The services provided by the Nurse Practitioner has now been taken up elsewhere, but it isn't that there has been a decrease in the complement or it isn't that the Respiratory Physiologist is retiring. It is that we are now recruiting a Respiratory Physiologist.

Hon. J Ladislaus: So Madam Speaker, if we are now recruiting, who is it that was undertaking these sleep studies then?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, as I have confirmed, the results were reviewed by the Physician if need be and the relevant nurse. So we are now recruiting a Respiratory Physiologist to undertake the service.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, what is it that individuals who, for example, suffer from sleep apnea are meant to do again in the interim? For example, there might be people who rely on vehicle driving in order to carry out their jobs. What is it that they are meant to do?

And how long is this going to take? Because it is quite concerning to members of the public who have actually voiced concerns various times to me. Not just one, but various.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, as I have confirmed, if there is an urgent need for a sleep study, the individual will be sent to a tertiary institution. The recruitment is underway for a Respiratory Physiologist in order to fill this void.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Does the Hon. Minister have an update as to how many people there are left on that waiting list as of now?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, if specific information is needed, I would need notice of that question. I am very happy to answer that question once specific notice has been given.

2160 **Madam Speaker:** Anything on 385?

Hon. J Ladislaus: Yes. In respect of the CPAP machines, has the provider changed within the last few months by any chance?

2165 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Not as far as I am aware, Madam Speaker, but I would not wish to confirm that without notice of the question.

2170 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Could the Hon. Minister perhaps undertake to look into this further? I am receiving reports that these CPAP masks that are being provided are of lesser quality than they used to be. Some service users are being forced to fund these out of their own pockets given that they are not doing what they are supposed to.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:
Madam Speaker, we should receive that information. We would be happy to look into it. I am very happy to look into that, but we have not received any such notice of that question.
I would expect that the consultant and or PALS and or the Complaints Department would receive such information.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 385

ANSWER TO QUESTION 384

Date	Follow Up Studies	New Studies
March 2024	4	19
April 2024	5	18
May 2024	2	17
June 2024	2	17
July 2024	7	17
August 2024	1	9
September 2024	7	3
October 2024	5	16
November 2024	2	17
December 2024	0	7
January 2025	4	3
February 2025	7	3

2180 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q386, 387/2025
GHA–
CT Scanner

2185 **Clerk:** Question 386, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: What alternative is available to the GHA in the event that the GHA CT scanner is malfunctioning?

2190 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 387.

Clerk: Question 387, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

Hon. J Ladislaus: How many times in the past six months has a GHA CT scanner broken down? Please provide a monthly breakdown including the cost of repairs and how long the scanner was down for.

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, in answer to Question 386, there are a number of contingency plans in the event that the GHA's own CT scanner is unavailable, the selection of which is largely based on clinical indication. Patients that require their scans on the same day or as an emergency have been transferred to GibMed, *Quiron Palmones*, *Scanner Sur* in *Algeciras* and *Xanit Benalmadena*. The GHA can also access CT scanners in *Estepona* and *Malaga* and *Jerez*.

In addition to this, there is the option of patients being assessed via an alternative modality such as ultrasound scanning which is rapidly available within St Bernard's Hospital. In answer to Question 387, I now hand over a schedule with the information requested. In addition, please be informed that any repairs undertaken to the GHA's CT scanner is covered by the Managed Equipment Service, the MES contract. Thus, there is no additional cost incurred as a result of the breakdown.

Madam Speaker: Anything on 386?

Hon. J Ladislaus: In respect of the servicing of the machine, are spare parts or technicians readily available to fix the machine? How long on average would spare parts, for example, take to order? Or technicians take to be on scene in order to see to a machine?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, Philips have committed to have all the relevant parts which usually break down in a CT scanner, available on site. So they do not have to order the spare parts. We now have a system whereby all of these parts are available in Gibraltar on the same day. The technician to fix the CT scanner is normally given priority by Philips to come out of Gibraltar immediately. So we would expect the technician to come out as soon as possible from Philips.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, in respect of the schedule, I see here that from January 2025 to 12 March 2025, the scanner broke down for a total of 19 days. Is the Hon. Minister satisfied with that service? It seems to me that the scanner has been broken for a significant period of time over the past couple of months.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, the Philips spare parts are now on site, as I have said. In order to be able to fix the scanner immediately, were there to be any issues? In addition, the Medical Devices Committee in the hospital is looking to advise on what action they would take in order to do that.

Given that we currently have entered an MES contract, the way that the MES contract works is that we have availability of funds to play with within the life of that contract. What we can do and what we are looking to do is to possibly bring forward the availability of a second scanner within the cost of that Philips MES contract. That is the beauty of having this MES contract in place.

2245 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, when would the decision be made as to whether the second scanner is going to be procured?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, when I am advised as such by the Medical Devices Committee in the hospital.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, since when has the GHA had spare parts available on site in respect of this machine? It did take 10 days to be fixed between 24 February and 5 March 2025. Since when has that been the case? 10 days seems an inordinate amount.

2255 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, I am informed that this has been in place for numerous months. However, the part that broke down would be one that was not held on site. Philips has now increased the number of spare parts that are available on site in Gibraltar.

What I would stress is that there were contingency plans in place available for patients within this period. It was not that CT scans were not available during this period.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Is the scanner still under warranty?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, the way the MES works is that it is not a warranty per se but it is a service contract within the life of the contract. The way that the MES works is that any equipment provided by Philips is serviced by Philips during the existence of that contract.

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Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, given the volume of breakdowns recently, is the replacement of the machine something that has been considered at all?

2270 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, as I confirmed moments ago, we would expect that to be considered by the Medical Devices Committee in the hospital. It is a clinically led decision as to whether or not they would require a second scanner. I am aware that there is discussion which is ongoing at the GHA.

2275 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Just to clarify, the second scanner, my understanding initially when the Minister said a second scanner, was that we were going to have two scanners available at the GHA. Would the second scanner replace the first scanner or is it a second in addition to?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, my understanding is that. It would be a second scanner in addition to the scanner which is currently available at St Bernard's.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION 387

Date Reported	Date Fixed	Number of days
02.01.25	09.01.25	8
21.02.25	21.02.25	1
24.02.25	05.03.25	10
12.03.25	12.03.25	Resolved same day

Madam Speaker: Next question.

2285

Q388, 389-393/2025
GHA–
Public access defibrillators

Clerk: Question 388, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

2290 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** How many public access defibrillators are there in Gibraltar?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

2295 **Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 389 to 393.

Clerk: Question 389, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

2300 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Do all schools in Gibraltar have a public access defibrillator located in their vicinity?

Clerk: Question 390, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

2305 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** How are the locations within which to place public access defibrillators decided upon and by whom? What factors are taken into consideration?

Clerk: Question 391, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

2310 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Are all the public access defibrillators across Gibraltar currently in good working condition? How are malfunctioning public access defibrillators identified?

Clerk: Question 392, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

2315 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Are there formal maintenance arrangements in place in respect to the public access defibrillators? If so, please provide details as to who carries out the maintenance. How often this is undertaken and maintenance costs?

Clerk: Question 393, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

2320 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Since the first public access defibrillators were made available across Gibraltar, how many defibrillators have had to be replaced and at what cost?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

2325 **Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez):** Madam Speaker, in answer to Question 388, there are 30 public access defibrillators currently located around Gibraltar that are maintained by the GHA. In answer to Question 389, all Government schools under the Department of Education's AED programme, in collaboration with the Cardiac Association, St John's Ambulance and the Gibraltar Health Authority, have an AED located nearby. Three schools, St Mary's, St Paul's and the College of Further Education, do not currently have an AED within their premises, but
2330 have access to one within 100 metres. These schools will receive their own AEDs as part of the programme's second phase.

In answer to Question 390, the location for public access defibrillators are determined collectively by stakeholders. Key factors considered include population density, for example, residential areas, public gathering spots such as beaches and sports centres, ambulance response times and ease of access, proximity to existing AEDs to ensure optimal coverage, history of cardiac
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incidents in the area, and environmental conditions to ensure AED longevity and accessibility. This strategic approach ensures AEDs are placed where they are most needed and can be accessed quickly in an emergency.

2340 In answer to Question 391, all public access defibrillators managed by the GHA are in good working condition. Any malfunctions trigger an automatic alert which is reported to the Gibraltar Ambulance Service.

2345 Additionally, GAS conducts monthly inspections of all of these defibrillators to ensure that they remain operational. In answer to question 392, there is a formal maintenance programme in place, led and managed by the Gibraltar Ambulance Service Station Officer. A visual inspection is conducted monthly. If an AED triggers an alarm, it is reported by the public or it has been used, it is immediately assessed and managed to ensure that it remains in operation. Given that the work is undertaken by GAS staff themselves, the cost of the maintenance of the AEDs is not broken down separately and is part of the overall budget for GAS.

2350 In answer to Question 393, in 2010, 10 automated external defibrillators were installed across Gibraltar under a GHA initiative. Since this date, all new AEDs have been donated by charities or purchased outside of the remit of the GHA, so we do not have a cost breakdown.

2355 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** We have just heard a second phase of the programme. Can the Hon. Minister clarify what is meant by that second phase of the programme? What is going to happen under that phase?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: I expect that the defibrillators will be extended to different sites.

2360 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Does the Hon. Minister have more information as to how many will be extended?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: No, ma'am.

2365 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** In respect of the locations within which defibrillators are placed. Is the Hon. Minister aware whether those are placed within 10 minutes of reach, for example, nearby residential areas like estates? My understanding is that 10 minutes is the golden time within which a defibrillator should be used to increase the chances of somebody's survival after a heart attack.

2370 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, I have explained the criteria on which the AEDs are located around Gibraltar.

2375 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** I will be corrected if I am wrong, but my understanding is that the nearest AED in respect of, for example, the area of St Joseph's, St John's Court, Knight's Court, in respect of that area, because I live in that area is about 10 minutes, and that is at a sprint, which is up to St Joseph's School. That has been verified by somebody who has undertaken that sprint before, to the school and back. It is very tight.

Is the Hon. Minister aware that that densely populated area may not have an AED available nearby? Like that area, there are other areas as well.

2380 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, as I confirmed, there are 30 public access defibrillators around Gibraltar, and the location of these defibrillators is assessed by stakeholders and factors include population density, ambulance response times, etc. Could there be more? There could always be more, and there could always be more that are readily accessible.

2385 However, the advice that we receive from clinicians and the advice that we rely on is that these are the optimal locations to have these AEDs in place.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Are there plans to review where those AEDs have been placed, and if so, are those plans regularly reviewed?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I am not sure whether those plans are regularly reviewed. There are stakeholders in place, and the Cardiac Association, the GHA, and St John's Ambulance usually monitor this. There are 30 public access defibrillators that are maintained by the GHA.

That does not mean that there are 30 public access defibrillators available in Gibraltar. There are many more public access defibrillators available in Gibraltar that are not maintained by the GHA and, for example, are on private property. The location of the public access defibrillators are determined by stakeholders outside HMGOG's control, and as I have previously confirmed, there is a second phase of such defibrillators where they are going to introduce more defibrillators across Gibraltar.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, moving down to the Question 392, which is in respect of maintenance, we have heard that there is a formal maintenance programme in place. My understanding is that some time ago the question was asked as to who provided maintenance, and the answer was that it was the ambulance staff, but that a formal programme was being looked into. Can the Hon. Minister confirm what that formal programme is and when it was put in place?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, whilst I am sure we all appreciate the time spent in Parliament and we would wish to elongate this as much as humanly possible, I will once again repeat the answer that I gave to the hon. Lady's question. In answer to Question 392, there is a formal maintenance programme in place, led and managed by Gas Station Officers. A visual inspection is conducted monthly.

If an AED triggers an alarm, is reported by the public or has been used, it is immediately assessed and managed to ensure it remains operational. So in answer to the hon. Lady's question, these tests are carried out monthly.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, in respect of whether a defibrillator is found to be malfunctioning, can parts be replaced? And if so, are those parts readily available or does the whole defibrillator have to be replaced?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I feel it is necessary to stand here and explain the remit of my role to the hon. Lady. I am the Minister with responsibility for the Gibraltar Health Authority. I am unaware of the intricacies of maintaining public access to defibrillators, in much the same way as I don't know what the breakdown of our asthma pathway is.

I do not know what it takes to fix a public access defibrillator. And indeed, I do not believe that any member of the public would expect the Minister for Health to know how to fix a public access defibrillator. I can change a wheel on a car, but I cannot fix a public access defibrillator.

So, if specifics are required by the Lady, and if the hon. Lady would wish me to answer the question, I am very happy to provide the information to the hon. Lady. However, I do not know how to fix a public access defibrillator and I cannot provide that information in this session, Madam Speaker.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, I have not asked the question as to whether the Hon. Minister is able to fix a public access defibrillator. I would be very impressed if that was the case. And it would certainly save the GHA money if the Hon. Minister was able to.

But, in terms of the question that was asked some time back as to whether there was a formalised maintenance programme, it seems to me that it hasn't changed from when the question was asked to now. So, what is it that the maintenance programme entails? I understand that there is also a map online.

Is that map part of that maintenance programme? Is that reviewed consistently? What is it that it entails? Surely the Hon. Minister should have information, given that these are life-saving devices.

2440 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, these devices have auto alerts. They automatically alert GAS when they are malfunctioning. So, GAS go round on a monthly basis, checking them.

They do also make a sound, I am informed, once they are malfunctioning. So, if any member of the public knows of any defibrillator that is making a sound, I would urge that they contact the GHA and let them know that the public access defibrillator is making a sound. As to
2445 the 30 public access defibrillators that the GHA maintains, as I have informed the hon. Lady, these are inspected on a monthly basis to make sure that they are functioning. That is the extent of the information that I have available, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Alright, I think we can move on now. Is that the end of Oral Questions?
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Clerk: Answers to Written Questions. The Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to table the answers to Written Questions. Number W49 to W60 of 2025 inclusive.
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Clerk: Suspension of Standing Orders. The Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

Hon. Dr J J Garcia: Yes, Madam Speaker, I beg to move under Standing Order 7(3) to suspend Standing Order 7(1) in order to proceed with the Government Statement.
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Members: Aye.

Madam Speaker: Those in favour? Those against? Carried.

2465 **Clerk:** The Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition and I discussed this during the break and I have since shared this statement with both himself and with my shadow in education. There has been talk around the town about an incident in WestSide School this afternoon. They have been exaggerated to the extent that some have said that there were knives and potential terrorism.
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I want to dispel those rumours completely and I am going to read out a statement that will shortly be issued as a press note by the Government. Westside School was put on alert for a short period of time this afternoon as a precaution following reports of trespassers in the building. Established protocols were put into place and the trespassers left shortly after.
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The RGP and the school's Senior Leadership team are confident that there are no concerns for the safety of pupils and staff as a result of this incident. All children were totally safe at all times and security arrangements worked effectively and properly. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

2480 **Madam Speaker:** Would any member of the Opposition like to ask any questions for the purposes of clarification?

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Yes, Madam Speaker. First of all, can I welcome that statement and by the Minister, he did indeed share that statement with me. We discussed it outside. He then shared the statement.
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I welcome the fact that he shared the statement and I welcome the fact that he has made the statement today because in the same way as the chatter reached the Government and of course the Government would receive official information, the chatter reached members of the Opposition as we were on our way to the House this afternoon and I am certainly very glad to hear that there was nothing more untoward and that all children are safe and that was the prime concern that both sides of this House have and the Government have our support in making sure
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that that happens. I just ask the Minister perhaps to consider one issue which is because I do not think it is in the interest of anybody for us to discuss the security arrangements of our schools across the floor of this House in public and I am certainly not asking him to do that but, perhaps, the Minister would consider to review the security arrangements given that there were trespasses given the statement that he's just made in this House. We are certainly glad that the outcome was what it was but it may cause therefore a degree of enquiry as to the security arrangements going forward at that school and any other school because we live in a global society where things have happened in schools and I am glad this is not that kind of situation but I am sure Members on that side as indeed the Members on this side would be concerned that we learn lessons from things that have happened and we improve the situation if we can.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes If I may, Madam Speaker, I welcome that positive and constructive comment from the Hon. Leader of the Opposition. Steps have already been taken to review the security arrangements and are going to be implemented immediately, as the Hon. Leader of the Opposition says, I do not think we should discuss this across the floor I am willing to share that with both himself and with my shadow for education and most certainly we take this very, very seriously and we will act as we have said.

Clerk: The Order of the Day.

Madam Speaker: I presume we are moving to an adjournment shortly but before we do that and before I propose the adjournment as hon. members are aware it's a requirement under section 69(1) of the Constitution that estimates of expenditure for the next financial year be circulated to hon. members on a confidential basis not later than the 30th of April. Since the House will shortly not be scheduled to meet until May, I am proposing that the provisions of the Constitution will be deemed to have met if the estimates are circulated to all Members before the end of April. So I propose we should follow that trend and is that agreed by all Members?

Members: Aye.

Hon. Dr J J Garcia: I have the honour to move that this House should now adjourn *Sine Die*.

Madam Speaker: I now propose the question which is that this House should now adjourn *Sine Die*. I now put the question which is that this House should now adjourn *Sine Die*. Those in favour? **(Members:** Aye.) Those against? Passed.

This House will now adjourn *Sine Die*.

The House adjourned at 6.02 p.m.