



# PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

**MORNING SESSION: 10.00 a.m. – 12.10 p.m.**

**Gibraltar, Friday, 28th February 2025**

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# The Gibraltar Parliament

*The Parliament met at 10.00 a.m.*

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

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

## Questions for Oral Answer

### EDUCATION, THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

**Q93-4/2024**

**Schools –**

**Number of pupils; Pupils with special needs –  
Supplementary Questions**

**Clerk:** Meeting of Parliament Friday the 28th of February 2025. Answers to oral questions continued.

5       **Madam Speaker:** All right let us begin with taking supplementary to Question 94 from the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

10       **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Yes, Madam Speaker, I will take supplementaries to 93 and 94 together if I may.

15       **Madam Speaker:** Yes, the hon. Member is quite right.

20       **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** May I say as I rise that I am so pleased today to see a whopping majority on our side. It is a rare event, so I thought I would celebrate. Can I ask the hon. Member on 93 and 94, and in case anyone is tuning in now and was not tuning in yesterday, I asked the hon. Member to give us statistics on the number of pupils in schools and then the number of pupils in special needs.

25       The reason I asked the hon. Member this question at 31 December 2024 is because those statistics were not available online. What was available online was the close of statistics to, or at least to 2023 in terms of the total number of pupils and the total number of pupils in 2023 was 5,858 and the number of special needs was a fairly high number.

30       Now, the hon. Member has given us the statistics which suggest, I am trying to find the sheet and making sure that I am working from the correct sheet, the answer he's given us is that there's 5,858 in total, and that works out to around, and the special needs are around, just bear with me because I have got the right statistics. When I worked out the percentages, the percentage of special needs children in our school is around 38% if you work it out in terms of the number of pupils that there are. Now, can I just ask the hon. Member how these statistics are calculated because it just seems like a high number.

35       We have had these exchanges in part before, but this time I framed the question very specifically to deal with the number of pupils rather than a collection of special needs because

there may be pupils that have a number of special needs, and I appreciate that when you're trying to collate statistics, there might be an element of double counting. That is why I framed my question very clearly this time in terms of how many pupils are there and how many pupils with special needs. Now, when you correlate the statistics in terms of the numbers that the hon. Member has given me, it looks like the number of pupils that have special needs in Gibraltar is in excess of 30%.

That seems an extremely high number, well out of sync with the UK. I mean, in the UK, 13% of pupils have special needs. So, can I ask the hon. Member to comment because is it either that the statistics, the answers that he's given me are not really per pupil, and therefore it is the correlation of statistics that is wrong, or is it that we have an issue in Gibraltar that we need to discuss?

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, they may have a whopping majority in quantity, but certainly not in quality. Madam Speaker, I totally understand the, the supplementary posed by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition and the concern that he has expressed. These figures have been provided to me in answer to the question, so I believe that they do refer to number of pupils.

The fact that it appears that we have over 30% of pupils identified with, as we now call them, supported educational needs seems to be a reality, but we must remember that this embraces a wide range of supported needs, and they could be what perhaps in layman's terms could be quite mild needs to the more specific needs requiring greater intervention and support. I am not sure that the percentages are directly comparable. I do not know how the UK works out their percentages, or works out how they define supported needs, and if the methodology is different, or if the way they collate the statistics is different, then the percentages clearly are not comparable.

It is no secret, and we have discussed this across the floor of this House many times in the past, that the number of children that are being deemed to have these needs has increased. I think it is a reflection of a number of things. The hon. Member will recall that we commissioned and published a report, I think it was last year, which looked at some of the possible causes of this, but it seems to me that it is a reflection certainly of the situation as the professionals that assess these needs have provided me.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Well, can I ask the hon. Member to perhaps have a further discussion, because if I just give him the concern that I have, so if there are 5,828 pupils, and there are 2,239 children with special needs, that is 38%. In the other statistic that he gave me; it would be even higher. Now, unless we are calculating things completely differently, it just does not seem to me that a simple gloss-over explanation would work.

I think we need to perhaps understand it a bit more because I appreciate the dichotomy in the way that these things are described, whether it is supported needs or special educational needs, but there are statistics available on what is at least in the UK Government site called special educational needs, which I think is the same thing, and it talks about there being, and there is a very clear chart that talks about an increase of special educational, supported educational needs, and a correlation between the student population growing, and the concern in England is that it is grown from 11% to 13%, but how can it be that in Gibraltar it is 40% of students with special educational needs, and if the hon. Member is going to take the position that I've been given this information, and it must be correct, well then, I think, does he agree with me that it then engages the discussion of why are our students requiring so many more needs than the UK average?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I do not think that my reply could be described as glossing over. I think I gave quite an extensive reply. Madam Speaker, I will certainly go back to the officials who prepared this answer in case they have not interpreted the question in the way that the hon. Member intended it to be interpreted, and I will write to him to clarify that, and I am very happy for him to remind me next week if he has not received a reply before, and as I said

earlier, because of the fact that we had seen an increase in these needs, we commissioned a report which we published last year which covered some of those points, and I will remind him of those in my reply to him when I've clarified this with the officials who prepared the answer.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Yes, I would be grateful for that, because I was actually hoping that the hon. Member would get up and say there was a simpler explanation, perhaps, because from where I sit, I look at it and I think there's two possible explanations for this. Either the statistics that the hon. Member has given me in answer to my question are calculated on a completely different basis and there's an element of double counting, and if so, that would be a reasonable explanation. It wouldn't give me an accurate answer, so I would still ask him to provide me an accurate answer, but at least it would be one explanation.

The other possible explanation, which is that in Gibraltar, for some reason, our students need much more special educational needs, supported needs, than they do in England, well above the UK average by a significant number, that would give us higher concern, and that is why I repeat that, and I am sure the hon. Member agrees, does he agree, that if it were the second issue, it would be a matter of concern and it would be a matter that I am sure across the floor of the House we would agree would need special enquiry in Gibraltar, not just to understand the trend of the increase in special educational needs, but why these things are happening in a much more detailed way than the study that has been commissioned before.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the increase in support of special needs is a matter of concern anyway, and this has been said publicly in this House and elsewhere and resulted in the report that was commissioned. I think, Madam Speaker, there is another third option as to the possibilities, is that our threshold for defining supported needs may be different to the UK, but we are speculating here, I have undertaken to go back to the officials to look at the data and to give a comprehensive reply to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q189/2025**  
**Motorcycle driving test –**  
**A2 licence for motorbikes between 125cc and 400cc**

**Clerk:** Question 189, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, is it possible to undertake a motorcycle driving test in Gibraltar for an A2 licence for motorbikes between 125cc and 400cc?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, yes, it is.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Okay, I will be rushing down there afterwards with my 250cc. That is not the reason I asked for the question, but the reason is this, I will just explain to the hon. Member the dilemma which has been put to me, that exists.

There are different classifications of licences, from AM to A, and A is the sort of biggest type of motorbikes, A1 being the 50, what would normally be the 50cc, but it is up to 125cc. When you consult the, that is the licence category, so you can, and as I understand it, and with the A motorcycle licence, it is motorcycles that are above 600cc and that, in effect, the A2 licence ranges

from 125cc right through to 600cc. When you consult on the Government website, on the DLVA website, and indeed on the test vehicle site, the tests, it says, for A2 are only available for motorcycles with a cubic capacity of at least 400cc and an engine power, etc. So that suggests, I am told, that the issue arises in this way, that the way that it is described, you can get a test for an A2 licence if you have a motorbike between 400 and 600cc, because it says very clearly at least 400cc, leaving a lacuna of motorcycles that cannot be tested for A2 licences between 125 and 400. If the Minister is not aware of that lacuna, that has been put to me, has raised concerns from a number of people, can he please look into it?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I have the regulations in front of me now. It may be that it is a law that certainly I've inherited. I will need to look into this.

My officials tell me that it is possible to grant, to do a driving test for this, but if the hon. Member has raised concerns and I am not briefed on that detail, then certainly I will take it back and reply accordingly.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Yes, and I would be grateful if he did that, because I am told that it is not only affecting motorcycle dealerships, it is also affecting people who are buying bikes, people who have engaged with the DLVA. I have not on a personal basis, I am just repeating the issue and raising the concerns, and therefore it would be very helpful if he agrees that the matter be looked into one way or the other, and it is either a misunderstanding or genuinely there is a correction to be made.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Madam Speaker, I am surprised if there is a big issue because when there are big issues, they normally come to me from members of the public and so on, and this is not something that has been identified to me. I think that yesterday in answer to questions from the Hon. Mr. Origo, there were references to the legislation which we inherited in relation to vehicle licencing, and I undertook to take a review. I have already today asked my officials to do a whole review of the licencing legislations, so apart from those points that were made yesterday and today, I am sure we will pick up anything else that is inconsistent, but I will clarify this particular point.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q190/2025**  
**Bus service –**  
**Extension of hours**

**Clerk:** Question 190, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, are there plans to expand the bus service after 9pm on Sundays to Thursdays?

**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, not at this stage, although the bus service is under continuous review with the aim to improve it further.

180 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Can I ask, not at this stage, why? Is it a cost issue or because the Government thinks that there does not need to be a bus service after 9pm on Sundays to Thursdays?

185 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** It is a bit of both, Madam Speaker. There would be a considerable cost, and we have to balance the benefits against the cost. The night service is not that heavily used, even at weekends, and therefore we fear that we might go into the whole cost of the exercise, and it would not be used sufficiently for the cost-benefit balance to be in the right direction.

190 We did do this over the Christmas and New Year period with considerable success, but that tends to be a time where people may be drinking more, may be more mobile at those times of the evening but even then, there was not such a high usage except on key days. Therefore, it is something that we are reviewing.

We are willing to consider it if we feel it is going to be tremendously beneficial. I would love to have it, absolutely love to have it, but we have to balance the cost against the benefits that we would derive.

195 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Member says it would be a considerable cost. How much would it cost?

200 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I could not give the specific figures because it would depend on which routes were open in the evening, how frequently they would go. This is an exercise in itself but considering that there would be a considerable cost in the overtime of drivers, it would be something that would be quite expensive. I have the figures, I do not recall them right now, of what it costs over the Christmas period, and it was considerable.

205 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** So, an extension to provide a bus service after 9pm on Sundays to Thursdays has not actually been costed.

210 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** We have the ability to provide costs for every specific route and every specific driver, but we have to carry out an analysis, and I have said in my answer that we are reviewing the bus service as a whole, we have to carry out an analysis of which routes we could justify keeping on that late at night. Any cost which is not justified is a cost, as I am sure the hon. Member's opposite, who do not like us spending too much taxpayers' money, would question. Therefore, we have to analyse it completely before we take that decision.

215 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Yes, I understand that, and of course it is all a value judgement exercise, and it is about value for money, but I was trying to enquire because the hon. Member said in his answer to my original supplementary, which is it is an issue not just of perhaps the service, the demand itself, but also it is about cost, considerable cost. So, I was trying to assess whether the Government has actually got a cost but it looks like, in fact, the Government has not done a costing of it, it is just making a judgement call, I guess, on the possibility that it would be expensive, and really doing it against that backdrop, because there is no specific cost.

225 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** That is not a logical way of describing it. We have to assess, first of all, the needs that the community has for that kind of service. We have to assess what uptake there would be.

230 We have to look at what routes we would want to present, and how frequently those routes would have to be worked. Therefore, until we have carried out that analysis, which I have said we are doing because we are reviewing the whole bus service, I cannot give him a cost, because it may be one bus every hour in one route, or it could be four buses an hour in every route and until we have that analysis, it would be disingenuous of me to just give a cost, just to pull a figure out of my pocket, in order to satisfy the question that the Hon. Leader of the Opposition is asking. I

am not going to give a figure, we are analysing the whole bus service, and when the time comes, if we decide to go forward with an evening bus service, I am hoping that the Opposition will not question why we are incurring that cost.

235 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I really was not asking the hon. Member to pluck a figure from his pocket, just to satisfy me. I was trying to probe as to whether there was any assessment behind the considerable cost headline that he put out there, and the answer to that is clearly not, because there has not been a costing, and it is being judged against a review of the bus service, and that is fine. Can I ask, can he give us a bit more information on when he thinks that review of the bus  
240 service will be concluded and is it looking at an extension of routes, sorry, of timings on every single of these routes, or is it just specific routes that might be more popular, and so on?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Speaker, not a direct supplementary, but I am happy to answer. We are looking at the whole of the bus service, including the possibility of evening buses, including the  
245 introduction of new routes, and including the extension of some of the existing routes. It is a general exercise which will have its cost implications, which have to tie up with the possibility of an evening bus service, and therefore it would be too simplistic to just try and give a figure for that, because we have to look at the whole programme that we are looking into.

250 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q166/2025**  
**Personal light electric transports/bicycles –**  
**Accidents**

255 **Clerk:** Question 166, the Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, can the Government confirm how many accidents were reported in 2024 involving, (i) personal light electric transports, and (ii) bicycles?

260 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. Minister of Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Royal Gibraltar Police that the number, of traffic incidents logged by them in the calendar year 2024, involving personal light electric transport and bicycles, are as  
265 follows. Personal light electric transport, 14, bicycles, 13.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, can I ask the Hon. Minister whether he considers that we have done enough by way of adequately protecting these vulnerable road users in light of the statistics provided?  
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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Member will get to know when he is here for a bit longer that whenever I am asked am I doing enough, the answer is always going to be no, because I always want to do more. Having said that, we are very conscious of the need to increase safety for all road users, however they are using the roads, and hence our recently published  
275 review of the STTPP, on which there are questions further down, so we continue constantly to review how we can improve safety on our roads.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, and I commend the Hon. Minister for striving towards always continuously improving, and that is admirable. If I may just take the supplementary down a bit



280 further, whilst it may not seem obvious, my understanding is that some of these bicycles, in particular e-bikes, can often be modified and reach quite high speeds. Looking at the statistics provided, my understanding is that when these vehicles get into accidents, they habitually crash into other road users such as cars or motorcycles.

285 Is it the Government's intention to mandate a requirement for these methods of transport to have insurances like other road users in Gibraltar?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I must add that, happily, none of the instances that the police have reported to me, according to them, resulted in any significant injury. Madam Speaker, we are looking at the question of insurance. It is not simple, but this is certainly being looked into.

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**Hon. G Origo:** Finally, Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Hon. Minister having confirmed that he is looking into the issue of insurances. By way of a separate point, many concerns or complaints have been raised on this side of the House, and we can see sometimes the same being reposted on social media, how some of these transport users, in particular the personal light electric transports, often what appears to be flouts some of the highway code rules. In particular,

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This may or may not be some of the reasons why these accidents may be occurring. So, can I put to the Hon. Minister whether the Government has any plans for these types of transport users to carry out some kind of theory or practical exam so as to ensure that they are also aware of the highway code and therefore operate their vehicles correctly as do other road users?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, as with everything else, enforcement is important and the enforcement of these laws are down to the Royal Gibraltar Police, and I know for a fact that there are people who are fined for such infractions. Madam Speaker, we are actually in the process of preparing some guidelines which we want to publish for personal light electric transport users, and we are looking at the possibility of offering some kind of online training which would be more accessible. So yes, absolutely, we are looking at that.

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**Hon. G Origo:** And by way of final point, on that issue, is he saying that he is considering issuing some type of guidance test which will be chosen by the individuals to take on a voluntary basis, or is this going to be mandated for those people who are going to be using these personal electronic vehicles on a road?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, we have not taken a decision on that.

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**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q167/2025**  
**Bicycle parking app –**  
**Roll out**

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**Clerk:** Question 167, the Hon. G Origo.

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**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, can the Minister confirm when the bicycle parking app will be rolled out?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, there is no date as yet.

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**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, may I ask the Hon. Minister, is the app in the process of development or has that not even started?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, there have been instructions given and it is in the process of development. One of the reasons why it has not been developed yet is that we are adding more and more bicycle parking, and it is going to be out of the day very, very quickly, but they are working on it.

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**Hon. G Origo:** By way of final supplementary, on the point on the parking base, one issue that has been raised on this side is that it appears sometimes many drivers of these e-scooters, particularly the ones which are rented, are being used to leave them in these parking bays. I do not know if the Hon. Minister is aware, but sometimes these e-scooters have a central locking system. They're placed where the parking bicycle bays are and therefore prevents other bicycle users from being able to use those bays. Has this been raised with the Hon. Minister and if it has, is he considering a way on how to deal with this issue?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, again, it is not a logical supplementary, but I can answer that this point has not been raised with me. I am happy to discuss with the hon. Member, see if there is anything that I can take up, particularly with the provider of these scooters.

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**Madam Speaker:** The Hon. D J Bossino had a question.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** The development of the app, is that being done in-house or is it being farmed out to a private entity?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** At the moment it is being dealt with in-house.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Given that the Hon. Minister prefaces his answer with the words at the moment, does that belie an intention on his Department's part to farm it out at some point in the future or is it something that is being considered?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker, I was just stating the fact at this point in time it is being developed in-house.

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**Hon. D J Bossino:** The Minister will understand that, again, he qualifies his answer on that basis, which suggests that there is a possibility that in the future it may go private. Is that within the realms of possibilities as far as the decision-making process in respect to this particular app is concerned?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, there are several options open. It can be fully developed in-house by our Digital Services. Sometimes they have a lot of work, and some work is then given to a private entity that works with Digital Services and IT&LD.

At this point in time, we have not reached that step. I think we can complete it in-house, but if we can't, then we may have to engage somebody else if there are other priorities which may be greater than the bicycle parking app.

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**Hon. D J Bossino:** If I may, Madam Speaker, in the event that, as the Hon. Minister has explained, a decision is made that it has to be done on a private basis, can he advise whether this particular project would be going out to tender?

380 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, this is totally speculative.

**Madam Speaker:** Hypothetical question. If this happened, would that happen is a hypothetical question.

385 **Madam Speaker:** Any other supplementary? Next question.

**Q168/2025**

**Grand Parade Parking –  
Accommodating nearby residents**

390 **Clerk:** Question 168, the Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Has the Government done anything to accommodate residents who live nearby and relied on the parking spaces at Grand Parade whilst resurfacing works have been ongoing?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the resurfacing works at Grand Parade were carried out over a three-day period, commencing on 12 February and completed and released fully back for public use on the evening of 14 February. The actual resurfacing work took two days, with the repainting taking a further day to complete. It must be noted that just about half of the parking spaces were released back to the public a bit earlier, on Thursday 13 February, and the remaining spaces a day later.

400 We must acknowledge, Madam Speaker, that these types of works caused some inconvenience, but this was kept to an absolute minimum. In order to assist residents in the area further, all parking restrictions within Alameda Estate for cleaning purposes were suspended while the works at Grand Parade were ongoing.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, whilst I appreciate that these works were done very quickly, as stated by the Hon. Minister, I must note that whilst at the same time the resurfacing works were taking place, we also had the repairs to the cable car, as was noted yesterday, which also took a considerable amount of parking bays. We also learnt yesterday that at times, in peak periods, we also lose tens, if not hundreds, of parking space to tourists who do not adequately park in the correct spaces, and normally these are taken up zonal parking from the residents in the area. Would the Hon. Minister not have thought it appropriate to allow a concession of some kind to these residents to park in perhaps the next nearest zonal area whilst these works were ongoing? I say that in light of the fact that, as he is well aware, some people were affected by these parking restrictions, and it does have a cost effect on these persons who are unable to find parking in the region of £300. So, could I put to the Hon. Minister that perhaps when resurfacing works of this kind take place, that he does provide these kinds of concessions, in particular to the assistance of the residents?

410 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the concession that was requested was the non-implementation of parking restrictions within the whole of the area, so that people did not have to move their cars, and as I explained, it was over in a couple of days. I was in touch with residents, and they were in fact grateful that we had made that concession. The fact that the cable car did their works, private works, was a coincidence.

425 I think that overall, the residents of that estate are very grateful that we have resurfaced half of Grand Parade, they were calling out for this, and we have been able to deliver this.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

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**Q169/2025**  
**Devil's Tower Road –**  
**Traffic congestion**

**Clerk:** Question 169, the Hon. G Origo.

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**Hon. G Origo:** Given the recent traffic congestion experiences of earlier this month at Devil's Tower Road, what options are the Government considering in order to alleviate traffic flow issues in this area?

**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 option of opening the runway crossing is the main measure that provides for alleviating traffic in Devil's Tower Road when it becomes necessary. Because of the Kingsway Tunnel, this currently happens only in exceptional circumstances, such as the recent fire at the former Coviran premises.

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**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, and if I may, on the point the Hon. Minister makes with respect to the opening of the runway, my understanding is that this is MOD property. So, may I ask the Hon. Minister where he has been given any guarantees by the MOD that as and when we need to reopen the runway, that they will allow this to do so? Because as he well knows, the recent fire that took place and the accident also a few weeks ago that took place in the Kingsway Tunnel did cause a bit of a traffic havoc in Devil's Tower Road and it was not only until a couple of hours later that the runway was opened. So, does the Hon. Minister have any guarantees from the MOD that they would be able to open the runway more swiftly in order to alleviate these traffic concerns?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the MOD has always cooperated when they have asked, they have been asked to make this available. So, I do not see that there is a problem. The specific detail of what happened on that day I am not aware of, but they have never indicated that they would not allow the traffic to resume.

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**Madam Speaker:** Yes, the Hon. C Sacarello.

**Hon. C Sacarello:** Thank you very much. It is Friday after all. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just following up from my hon. Friend's questioning, I think what we are asking on this side of the House is, Madam Speaker, will there be a delay in the future as there was this time? What was the delay attributable to?

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**Madam Speaker:** In terms of the question, will there be a delay in the future? I am not going to allow that, but I will give the hon. Member the opportunity to rephrase that.

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**Hon. C Sacarello:** Thank you. I was rephrasing it with a second limb anyway, so I will just stick to that. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The delay that took place was apparently two hours. Was that attributable to having to negotiate with the MOD, or was that a delay in decision-making of local services?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the question was, what options is the Government considering in order to alleviate? I have said that the option is there. If the hon. Member had asked the question, why was there a delay, then I would have had the answer to that but I do not envisage any problem in the future, and that is what answers the question that I have been asked.

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**Hon. C Sacarello:** So, would the Hon. Minister, following perhaps a period of time to find out, be happy emailing us with the details as to the delay?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I would ask the hon. Member to email me to ask me the question and then I will reply as I always do.

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**Hon. D J Bossino:** Given, if I may, given that the question was posed on the basis of what options in the plural, are the Government considering in order to alleviate traffic flow in these particular circumstances, is there anything, from what I gather from what the Hon. Minister has said, is there anything beyond the runway access point which the Government is considering to address any potential events happening of this nature in the future? Are there other options?

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In effect, what the Minister is saying is that they are only considering that one option as a measure to alleviate traffic congestion. Is that the case?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I really do not understand the hon. Member's logic sometimes. We used to have Devil's Tower Road and the runway and no tunnel. Now we have Devil's Tower Road and the tunnel and the runway.

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So, what else does he want us to provide? A flyover, a helicopter shuttle service with a Chinook that can carry the cars. I do not really know what more the hon. Member would want us to do.

We have the option, when there is an emergency such as the fire in Coviran, or an accident in the tunnel, to open the runway. How many alternative routes are we expected to have? I honestly think that it is a numb question really, Madam Speaker.

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**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

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**Q170/2025**  
**Road markings –**  
**Maintenance**

**Clerk:** Question 170, the Hon. G Origo.

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**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, can the Government confirm what entities are contracted for the regular maintenance of existing road markings in the following years, 2022, 2023 and 2024?

**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, there is an existing contract for all road markings in Gibraltar which is held by the paint shop Mar Company Ltd. All road markings in the years 2022, 2023 and 2024 were therefore carried out by the paint shop Mar Company Ltd.

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**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, may I ask the Hon. Minister what the process which was deployed in order to award these contracts? Were they put out to tender at the time? From my understanding and research, I have not seen any press releases or tender notices which were put available in recent years for these road markings.

525 So, I ask the Hon. Minister whether he is aware or not if this was publicly put out to tender, because I understand that the highway section of the Technical Services Department is the one whose responsibility is to engage in these contracting works. So, I just wanted to understand a bit of the process that was engaged to award this.

530 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Member would have to ask former Members of the Government opposite as the contract was entered into in 2009.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

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**Q171-3/2025**

**STTP –**

**Net zero emissions goal; Review of recommendations; Entity that carried out the review and cost**

**Clerk:** Question 171, the Hon. G Origo.

540 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, under the STTP, the Government announced an ambitious goal of net zero emissions for the transport sector. Does the Minister still consider this achievable?

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

545 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 172 and 173.

**Clerk:** Question 172, the Hon. G Origo.

550 **Hon. G Origo:** Is the Government satisfied with the progress made under the STTP given the number of recommendations the review highlighted which still require analysis before implementation?

**Clerk:** Question 173, the Hon. G Origo.

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**Hon. G Origo:** Can the Government provide details on the recently reviewed STTP, who carried out this review and at what cost?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. Minister of 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 Climate Change Act 2019 sets ambitious targets for emissions reductions, aligning Gibraltar's goals with global efforts to combat climate change. The Government remains fully committed to these targets, recognising that while achieving net zero emissions for the transport sector is by no means easy or easily attainable, it is a challenge we are determined to meet. To support this commitment, the Government has established a net zero delivery body to assist in driving and coordinating efforts towards meeting the goals.

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We continue to pursue this goal through measures that mirror the efforts of other forward-thinking communities across the globe, including promoting active travel such as walking and cycling, expanding renewable energy usage, improvements to public transport, rolling out electrical vehicle infrastructure and trialling alternative, more environmentally friendly fuels such as hydro-treated vegetable oil or HVO. The Government remains steadfast in doing its part,

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following best practises and adhering to the highest emissions standards, for example with our Euro 6 standard bus fleet and fully electric postal delivery service, ensuring that our policies contribute meaningfully to a sustainable and environmentally responsible future for Gibraltar.

The Government is satisfied with the progress made to date under the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan. The 2025 review highlights that significant strides have been achieved, while of course also acknowledging that more remains to be done. We remain fully committed to working through the targets set out in the plan and advancing further improvements.

The aim of the review was also to guide the next steps in our ongoing efforts to enhance Gibraltar's transport network. It is also important to note that the STTPP is a live, dynamic document, with objectives that evolve in response to technological advancements and changes in society's needs. Furthermore, the STTPP has a longer lifespan than the seven years that have elapsed, with its vision extending to 2027 and beyond, reflecting its role as a continuous, long-term strategy for sustainable transport development.

The review of the STTPP was conducted in-house by the Ministry of Transport's technical team, utilising existing resources and expertise within the department. As a result, the review was completed at no additional cost to Government. The technical team consists of officers qualified in environmental science, transport planning and construction project management.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker and if I may take my supplementaries in turn.

I will start with Question 171. May I put to the Hon. Minister, with respect to attaining zero emission targets in respect of the transport sector, I note that in recent answers to questions the answers provided served to highlight the vehicle registration in Gibraltar seems to be on the rise. If I may be critical, in this respect, the STTPP plan in its original form was aiming, as one of its objectives, to reduce the number of cars on the road. It appears to be that vehicle registration is still on the up.

How is it that if vehicle registrations are still on the rise, and they are largely compromised of petrol and or hybrid electric vehicles, that the Government proposes to reach this net zero target?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I have made very clear that it is a challenge and I think that the figures that I have provided in the past have shown that the increase in hybrid vehicles is considerable and that already reduces emissions and the electrical vehicles are still lagging behind, but the hon. Member will see some initiatives coming very soon, which are expected to boost that.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, if I may now go to Question 172, which concerns the satisfaction of the Government with respect to the STTP. May I ask the Hon. Minister what has been done with respect to, and I narrow my question to, improvements on traffic issues at junctions and access to city centre improvements? These were two main themes and features of the original STTP of 2017.

Having read the 2025 review, I have gone to the sections which considered the original measures and the updates and what I can see that the person who has carried out this review has done a wonderful job of using a thesaurus to find synonyms to explain how nothing has been done in respect to these areas for the past eight years. I can give some examples, with respect to Coral Road, the measures that were proposed, the updaters, this requires a study.

With respect to Glacis and Bayside Road, this necessitates comprehensive study. With respect to reversal of traffic flow, examination of the impact needs to be carried out. Other synonyms such as exploration of feasibility necessitating further analysis for the study required exploration.

Can the Hon. Minister not agree with me that all these words, synonyms, serve to highlight that nothing has been done in respect of these two specific issues, which I drew at the start of my question? (**Hon. D J Bossino:** Here, here here.)

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I am surprised at the hon. Member's criticism of the diligent officers of the transport team who have prepared this plan. Obviously, other people saying here, here, I am disappointed that other Members of the Opposition clearly are disrespecting the hard work that has gone into this. I am sure that the vocabulary of these excellent officers does not require them to refer to a thesaurus in order to compile a report.

Madam Speaker, I have already said it is work in progress. We are satisfied with progress. We have to do more.

The report clearly sets out where we have moved forward and where we still have work to do. And I have nothing further to add. I am glad that the hon. Member has read it. I hope he will keep on reading it and see how he ticks off all these different things as we progress them over the coming years.

**Hon. G Origo:** Finally, Madam Speaker, if I may take us to Question 173, which concerns the recently reviewed STTPP and I think the Hon. Minister confirmed that this review was done in-house. My understanding was that the original STTPP in 2017 was done by a combination of in-house and expert consultation.

I believe a firm, Mott Macdonald, was used at the time for this review at a considerable cost to Government. Is it now the Hon. Minister saying that we have the necessary in-house experience in order to not require expert consultation in this area, given that the review was done in-house?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Absolutely, yes, ma'am.

**Hon. G Origo:** Then if I may put to the Hon. Minister, why have we not used experts on this occasion? What was the rationale for having used them in the first instance given that he is of the opinion that we have the necessary expertise in-house, why not have done it in-house in the first place and not have this cost to Government?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, very simply, the expertise of our team has increased, more people have come into it and they have developed, like good public officials develop, and they now have the ability, as they have shown in this and in other work that my ministry has published and will continue to publish, that they have the expertise and the ability to do it using local Gibraltarian resources and without having to pay large amounts to external agencies.

On occasion, when we do not have that expertise, we have to do it, and it is the correct thing to do but when we do have the expertise, we have a responsibility to use them and use taxpayers' money without having to dish out money to external agencies.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q174/2025**  
**Keightley Tunnel –**  
**Car crash**

**Clerk:** Question 174, the Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Given the recent accident involving a car crash with the concrete blocks in Keightley Tunnel, does the Government have any plans to make the pedestrian walkway safer?

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



**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, there are medium-term plans to provide a raised walkway but the Government in addition is carrying out a review of the tunnel to see whether a quicker solution can be found.

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**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q175/2025**

**Upper town escalator –  
Maintenance persistent issues**

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**Clerk:** Question 175, the Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** What is the Government doing to resolve the persistent issues with the Upper Town Escalator?

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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 defects and their causes have been assessed, remedial works costed, and it is hoped to carry these out in the coming financial year if the House votes the necessary funds.

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**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, if I may, and I am grateful to the Minister for his answers, that consideration of how to reintroduce this escalator is being considered, because my understanding is from complaints that have been raised to us is that this escalator has been in-operational for quite some time. If I may refer to the original press release issued in 2013 when this escalator was introduced, the press release stated that this escalator was to be operational at all times with a view to increase accessibility for tourists and residents in the area. In response to the concerns which relate to the reasons for breaking down the escalator, some of which concern vandalism and others water ingress, the then Hon. Minister Balban at the time and now bicycle mayor of Gibraltar commented that a long-term maintenance programme was going to be put in place.

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From my analysis, I have not seen whether this maintenance programme has already been developed, so can I ask the Hon. Minister whether such a maintenance plan has now been finalised?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, well, as I say with the proviso that I gave in my original answer, the repairs are carried out, then there will be a continual maintenance programme.

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**Hon. G Origo:** May I ask, Madam Speaker, has the Hon. Minister given consideration on how to deal with the water ingress issues which are affecting the escalator? My understanding is this escalator is out in the public air and is susceptible to rain on every other given occasion. So, is the Hon. Minister considering how to address this issue? Are we going to cover it with a roof or something of the kind?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the water protection is one of the key features and there are sections of it, I believe, without having all the plans here in front of me, that they will be covered.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

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**Q176/2025**

**Apes den –  
Rockfall**

**Clerk:** Question 176, the Hon. G Origo.

725 **Hon. G Origo:** Can the Government provide details on the results of the assessment carried out by the Technical Services following a rockfall by the road of Apes den?

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

730 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the rockfall occurred on the 3rd of February 2025, following very heavy rain falling throughout the previous night and during the early afternoon. The rockfall was assessed by the Technical Services Department and was determined to be very minor in nature. The road was nevertheless closed as a precautionary measure for a period of 24 hours after which it was reopened.

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**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, whilst I respectfully understand that the Hon. Minister has pointed out that the rockfall on this occasion was a minor one and it is one which is habitually caused by excessive rainfall, can I ask, because I do not think he addressed the point in his answer, whether he has been able to address the issue and in effect done anything to prevent rockfalls of this nature happening in this area in particular, not least because it is a very popular tourist hotspot and it also houses many of our local macaques.

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the Technical Services Department did not consider there was a requirement to take any further action. In other areas there has been action taken, like the providing of wooden beams to stop the rocks or the stones. Usually what happens with the rains in the upper rock, it is not large rocks, it is smaller stones. Obviously, we need to prevent that happening, but that was not considered necessary by the Technical Services Department on this occasion.

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750 **Hon. G Origo:** So can I take it from the Hon. Minister that he is satisfied that in respect of this particular road, Apes Den, that such a concern should not be one that is going to reoccur in the future, based on the answers he's given, that there are no further recommendations or necessary works to help alleviate the situation in the area?

755 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** The Technical Services team was satisfied that there was no immediate danger. That does not mean that there would never ever be a single stone falling off the side of the slope on that particular area, but the Technical Services team was satisfied.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

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**Q177/2025**

**Historical sites –  
Interpretation panels**

**Clerk:** Question 177 of the Hon. G Origo.

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**Hon. G Origo:** Can the Government confirm who has been contracted to install the 28 new interpretation panels at various historical sites, and at what cost?

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

770 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, MAD Maintenance, in conjunction with Cubic Stone Publishers, have been contracted to design, print, manufacture and install the new interpretation panels. Of these, 20 have been funded by the Government at a total cost of £32,940 and eight have been funded by the Parasol Foundation at no cost to the taxpayer.

775 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, and if I may, the Hon. Minister said that there is a contract in place with MAD Maintenance for the installation of these panels. Can I ask whether this contract also includes the maintenance of these panels or was it just for the installation?

780 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** The installation, Madam Speaker, the maintenance would be done in-house.

785 **Hon. G Origo:** Can I ask the Hon. Minister whether he is aware if these interpretation panels can be found online and are they advertised anywhere else apart from the physical panels which are located around Gibraltar?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, they are accessible online on the Heritage website.

790 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the Hon. Minister's confirmation. I did manage to come across these interpretation panels on the Heritage website but one thing that led to my confusion and after several attempts of trying to locate the correct version, it is my experience that having looked at the Heritage websites that these interpretation panels were predominantly reposted and restated in Spanish and not in English. I, on my third attempt and having looked at the website, found that there is a very small link halfway through the page which will take you to the interpretation panel in which it is reposted in English but the predominant message on the interpretation panels are reposted in Spanish.

795 So, may I ask the Hon. Minister why this is the case? Not least because, as he well stated, these panels are being reposted on the Gibraltar Government's website.

800 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Member clearly knew the answer to the question he asked and therefore I put it to him that he should not have asked it. He knew that they were available online. It appears from what he's telling me that the link may go first to the Spanish version rather than the English version.

805 That will be a glitch that can very easily be resolved and if that is the case, we will check it out and we will make sure that the link first goes to the English one. There is nothing wrong in having a version in Spanish. In fact, if we could have it in other languages, we would but obviously, there would be cost in translating but I will make sure that the link first goes to the English version.

810 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, if I may, the point in having asked my question wasn't trying to elucidate a trap for the Hon. Minister. From my experience, as I was looking at the website, it was difficult for me to having found the English version without having tried to enlarge the picture. So, the purpose of my question was trying to elucidate whether I was actually on the right website because it was not my understanding that this would have been something that the Hon. Minister would have supported having a Spanish translation to dominate the front cover of the page.

815 In my experience, I thought maybe I wasn't looking in the right area. It has been confirmed that I was in the right page, and I expect that the Hon. Minister will have time to consider and look

whether we can restate it in different languages and if I may urge that the first one is reposted in English.

**Madam Speaker:** Did the Hon. Minister have anything to add?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I do not think that was a question. I thought it was an explanation as to why he had asked the question, which I accept.

**Madam Speaker:** The Hon. C... The Hon R M Clinton, my initials today are not functioning!

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. If I may ask the Minister, he mentioned that eight of the panels have been sponsored by the Parasol Foundation. May I ask how that arose specifically because although I am aware of the Parasol Foundation providing monies for certain other projects, I was not aware that there was some kind of involvement in interpretation signs. I am just trying to understand why there is an involvement of the Parasol Foundation in this particular project.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the Parasol Foundation does a lot of good work for Gibraltar and clearly has an interest in its heritage, given their contribution, for example, in this building. So therefore, I am not surprised that they have supported this. I could not tell the hon. Member exactly. I am just trying to see whether in my list... Ah, yes, I can tell which are funded by the Parasol Foundation. Yes, they have funded a number, of course, a number of them on the Upper Rock and considering that they funded the Mediterranean Steps and Charles V Wall, it was consistent and therefore, they felt that this actually went to almost as a follow-on from their original sponsorship of those projects.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I am sorry for not having picked up on this earlier. Can I just, by way of clarification, ask the Hon. Minister whether this project was put up to tender? If so, how many applicants were there?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** I do not have that information here. I believe it went through the quote system.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

#### Q178/2025

#### Gibraltar Bus Company Drivers Working Group – Selection of members

**Clerk:** Question 178, the Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Can the Government confirm how the members of the Gibraltar Bus Company Drivers Working Group were selected?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the group members were selected by the drivers themselves who approached the Ministry and Gibraltar Bus Company Limited Management as they wanted to address various

issues encountered and wanted to find solutions. General meetings of all the drivers will also be held regularly to ensure all views are expressed and taken into account.

870 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, may I ask the Hon. Minister how many members form part of this working group?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** The extended working group, which is all the drivers, is all the drivers. I think we're talking about 50 or so... The group that approached management to set up the more intimate working group, which will represent the others, I believe from my attendance at their  
875 first meeting was seven or eight, but I am working from memory.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, if I may, I am grateful that the Hon. Minister as confirmed that the members of the group were selected by the employees of the Bus Company because concerns were raised on this side of the House that perhaps the members of the working group were not  
880 very representative across the board but I suppose I have the Hon. Minister's assurances that they had selected the Members themselves. So, this point must have been dealt with.

But we have a separate point to understand that once the working group is designated to look at how to improve the conditions for the bus drivers themselves, can I ask the Hon. Minister how the working group is reconciling the interests of the drivers and also that of public service users,  
885 who I think also should be informed and part of this conversation?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, we have an excellent group of drivers who are very committed to the public service. Clearly, when you have so many, there may be one or two that perhaps are not up to the standard. I am not referring to any specific cases. They are all very  
890 responsible. We have some very good reports on the drivers. They are looking like any other employee would be looking at their own conditions and it is in our interest to improve the conditions because if you have good working conditions and the staff is happy, clearly the service they are going to provide is better. I do not think there is a conflict between the two.

895 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

#### Q179/2025

#### Dogs –

#### Registration statistics as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024

900 **Clerk:** Question 179, the Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** How many registered dogs were there in Gibraltar as at the 31st of December 2024?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the number of registered dogs as at 31st December 2024 was 4,580.

910 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, may I ask the Hon. Minister my understanding and he may correct me if I am wrong, is that dog owners in Gibraltar are required to register their dogs when they acquire them. Can I put to the Hon. Minister, how is the Government ensuring that all new dog owners are complying with this mandatory licencing requirements?

915 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Madam Speaker, by regular, what we call dog patrols, where dog owners who are seen walking dogs are asked to provide their information and they are checked. In cases where it is found that the dogs are not regularised, then action will be taken. Normally, it is the Environmental Protection and Research Unit and sometimes it is the Environmental Agency, there are patrols who check that.

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**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, may I ask the Hon. Minister, how often these checks are carried out? From my research, I could see that one instance in 2022 with 149 checks were carried out, 15 fines were issued, representing a 10% non-registration.

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I think I have answered a question regarding the number of patrols in the not-too-distant past. I should ask the hon. Member to check Hansard. It is done on a regular basis.

**Hon. G Origo:** Can I ask the Hon. Minister, whether he is happy that this system is adequately working to regulate in this area? As I understand, many concerns have been raised in the past that many seem not to be complying with these licencing requirements and then what happens is that this then renders the DNA sampling mechanism that we have futile because in one hand, we have people who are not registering their dogs and then when their dogs commit dog fouling, they are unable to be fined because they are not in the register.

935 How is this fair for those persons who then go and register the dogs? And on the unfortunate occasion where the dog does commit some dog fouling, they get fined for having complied with the rules.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** I am not taking that, Madam Speaker, as an implication that people should try and avoid the system. Madam Speaker, the law is there. People are required to do it.

940 We expect people to be law-abiding. If they are not law-abiding, the normal process is that you carry out checks and if you are caught, then you are fined or warned depending on the circumstances of the case. The checks are carried out on a regular basis and I wish everybody would just go ahead and register them regularly, but what we can do is we legislate, and the enforcers enforce.

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**Hon. G Origo:** By way of a final supplementary point, may I ask you, Hon. Minister, whether the Government is considering any other measures other than these spot checks?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, it is very difficult to determine what else could be done in the same way that if you do not renew your MOT, for example, you may or may not be caught, although we have improved that actually tremendously, but it is very difficult in the case of dogs to ensure. At the moment, the method that we are using is the one that I have explained.

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**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, if I may, following on that point with the comparison to the MOT, in that instance, for example, if I do not renew my MOT, I will not be able to get private insurance for my vehicle. One would prevent me from doing the other, which would lead to them having no insurance and committing further infractions. Perhaps one way of looking at this is introducing a mechanism where if registered owners go to, for example, the RSPCA, that one of the things that they do is check if the dog is registered or not.

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I think the hon. Member is referring to the Gibraltar Veterinary Clinic, which used to house the RSPCA, and they have a database, so it could be checked against them, but I would have to find the dog and go and ask them whether that particular dog is registered. It is not my job to do that or the hon. Member's job to do that. We have the enforcers who do that and go out on regular patrols and challenge and will find a repeated offender could

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well have sanctions which would be higher or could well perhaps not be allowed to register the dog again. I mean, there are all these different things, but the hon. Member's main thrust of the question is how do we determine whether a particular dog is registered? The answer is not by asking the dog, but by asking the person who has control of the dog at that particular time. It could be that there have been complaints from other laws on noise of barking dogs, and then if the Environmental Agency is required to attend at premises, then as a corollary of that, they would ask for the dog's registration, and then that could also be proceeded with. So, there are a range of possibilities.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question, we have had five.

**Q180/2025**

**Wastewater treatment plant –  
Negotiation with preferred bidder**

**Clerk:** Question 180, the Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Can the Government provide an update on the negotiation with the preferred bidder for the construction of the Wastewater Treatment Plant?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, discussions and assessments are ongoing with the preferred bidder for the construction of the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, and if I may refer to the Hon. Minister, a few last year, if my memory serves me correctly, I note I put a similar question to the Hon. Minister in which he confirmed that an advanced work contract was being developed and should be coming out in the coming months. It is now two years since this company was designated the preferred bidder, and eight months since the Hon. Minister gave his last reply. Can I ask the Hon. Minister how far he thinks we are from concluding the negotiations?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, negotiations are very complex, as I have said here before. I have to keep a certain distance from this because it is a tender process, and the discussions are being led by the tender board and I am not part of the tender board.

I am told when I have asked for an update that they are sorting out just a few technical details in order to be able to proceed but I am not involved in the detailed negotiations, and it would not be correct for me to be involved in the detailed negotiations because it is an independent tender board.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, may I put to the Hon. Minister, would he not agree with me that it is somewhat difficult to convince members of the public to go green, to recycle, to reduce waste, protect the environment, when on actual fact the Government, and critically if I may, is not leading by example, not least because we continue to pump raw sewage in our oceans and we have been in a negotiation stage where they prefer a bidder for the better part of two years. Can I put it in those terms to the Hon. Minister whether he can do everything in his power to try and expedite the negotiation process, not least because then we are trying on the one hand to convince the public to go more green, but yet on its behalf, it is not doing everything it can to comply with its obligations.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I do not agree with the first part of the hon. Member's statement and his assessment of that situation. As for the second part, absolutely, I am doing everything in my power to urge a conclusion by the tender board of the discussions.

1020 **Hon. G Origo:** If I may finally, is the Hon. Minister able to disclose part of the issues which are holding up this negotiation, because I know that there has been some time in which this preferred bidder has been engaged in the negotiation process. Is it a matter of costing or is it related to more technical issues with respect to the construction of the plants, for instance?

1025 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, in very broad terms, there are commercial and technical issues under discussion, but as I have said, I am not involved in the discussions it is being dealt with by the independent tender board. If I were involved directly, I would be criticised by the Members opposite for interfering with an independent tender.

1030 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q181/2025**  
**Northern Morocco/Tangier Chamber of Commerce –**  
**Meetings scheduled**

1035 **Clerk:** Question 181, the Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, can the Minister confirm whether any further meetings have been scheduled with both the Northern Morocco's and Tangier's Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services, together with the details of the possible commercial links which were discussed?

1040 **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 start with my prepared answer, but as I have just come back from Morocco, I am going to add one or two things that are, very recent. The contacts resulted in a delegation from the Ministry of Tourism attending a travel trade fair in Tetouan in December last year. Contacts continue via my office and that of the Gibraltar-Morocco Business Association, with which we work very closely.

1045 Several initiatives are also under discussion, all of which carry the support of my department. Madam Speaker, I can say that apart from the work that we have done over the last couple of days, or the beginning of this week, which were directly related to academic links between the Gibraltar University and the university base at Tetouan, there are a number of other initiatives going forward, and there are meetings being set up with the directors of Tangier Med, which as we know, is that large port just across the strait, and other enquiries from businesses in Gibraltar that are being channelled through my office to continue contacts with different entities in Morocco.

1055 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, if I may ask the Hon. Minister, by way of supplementary, he commented that they are looking at commercial links, which in answers that he gave, concerned educational commercial links. Having referred to some of the press releases, I noticed that some of the discussions with these groups were considering and reminiscing about the days in which closer links were had in the past, including one which involves daily ferries and regular trips. May I ask the Hon. Minister whether it is in the Government's plans to introduce daily ferries to Morocco or Tangier, as was envisaged in these discussions?



1065 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, this subject was dealt with at length by the Chief Minister at a recent meeting of the House. I have nothing further to add on that.

1070 **Hon. D J Bossino:** If I may, the Hon. Minister refers to a number of businesses, as I understood it, which have approached, I think he used the word channelling these requests. Can he give us some insight as to the nature of those businesses that are approaching his department for this particular purpose and I hope that the question is logical enough for the Hon. Member to answer.

1075 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I congratulate the Member opposite for the logical question that he has asked, and I am, very happy to attempt to answer it. Madam Speaker, clearly, I have to answer in very broad terms. I cannot discuss anything that might in any way indicate the commercial nature.

1080 They are related to transport, they are related to goods, they are related to establishing businesses on both sides of the straits. I do not think I should go any further because they are commercially sensitive, but because the hon. Member has been so healthfully logical, I am happy to give him more detail behind your Chair.

1085 **Hon. D J Bossino:** May I also ask, piques my curiosity and interest, because the Hon. Minister in his response made a reference to the most recent visit to Morocco, which was linked to, in fact, I think that was the cause in his absence in the earlier part of this particular meeting of the House, in relation to the University of Tetouan. Can I ask why he was accompanied by the Minister for Housing, in respect to which I do not see any immediate relevance? Oh, she is the Minister for the University, is that the case?

Okay, I've had the answer from my hon. Colleague. Clearly, there was no logic in that question.

1090 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** For the purpose of Hansard, the hon. Member should note that the Hon. Patricia Orfila is also Minister for the University of Gibraltar and was critical in being present during that visit. The hon. Member may, in fact, wish to ask in a future session of Parliament for a list of the people I met that is already being compiled, and I look forward to reading it in the Chamber.

1095 **Madam Speaker:** The Hon. G Origo have a question.

1100 **Hon. G Origo:** Grateful, Madam Speaker, and I am sorry, I may have missed it when the Hon. Minister gave his first answer. Part of my question asks whether any further meetings have been scheduled. I do not know whether, in his answer, the Hon. Minister confirmed whether any dates are planned in the future, or are these further meetings going to be carried out on an ad hoc basis?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** There is no set date. The Muslim community is now going into Ramadan, so obviously it will not be within the next month, but sometime after that.

1105 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q182/2025**  
**Vocational/BTEC courses –**  
**Breakdown of costs**

1110 **Clerk:** Question 182, the Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government provide a detailed breakdown showing how much has been paid to whom in respect of all costs incurred in this current academic year related to the delivery

1115 and provision of vocational and or BTEC courses for students registered at Bayside School, Westside School or Gibraltar College?

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

1120 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the information is provided in the schedule that I have handed over. The hon. Member should note that this refers only to those vocational courses that are run by external providers, as costs for the other courses in all three of our secondaries are embedded in the running costs of these institutions.

1125 **Madam Speaker:** All right, we'll move on to the next question and revert to the schedule in due course.

**ANSWER TO QUESTION 182**

Academic year 2004-2025 (September 24 to date)

		Music Instructor	PT Instructor	CVQ BTEC Performance fees	Equipment
Gibraltar Academy of Music and Performing Arts	Full time Tutor for BTEC Music Performance Sept 24	£2,558.00	£324.00	£2,520.00	-
Gibraltar Academy of Music and Performing Arts	Full time Tutor for BTEC Music Performance Oct 24	£2,558.00	£594.00	-	-
Gibraltar Academy of Music and Performing Arts	Full time Tutor for BTEC Music Performance Nov 24	£2,558.00	£594.00	-	-
Gibraltar Academy of Music and Performing Arts	Full time Tutor for BTEC Music Performance Dec 24	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Academy of Music and Performing Arts	Full time Tutor for BTEC Music Performance Jan 25	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Academy of Music and Performing Arts	Full time Tutor for BTEC Music Performance Feb 25	-	-	-	-

Mayfair on Main	Vocational Hair & Beauty Course Sept 24	£ 2,914.07	Monthly course fee
Mayfair on Main	Vocational Hair & Beauty Course Oct 24	£ 2,914.07	Monthly course fee
Mayfair on Main	Supply of equipment for vocational courses Oct 24	£ 2,196.82	This is paid annually one off fee
Mayfair on Main	Vocational Hair & Beauty Course Nov 24	£ 2,914.07	Monthly course fee
Mayfair on Main	Vocational Hair & Beauty Course Dec 24	£ 2,914.07	Monthly course fee
Mayfair on Main	Vocational Hair & Beauty Course Jan 25	£ 2,914.07	Monthly course fee
Mayfair on Main	Vocational Hair & Beauty Course Feb 25	£ -	to be processed
Mayfair on Main	Vocational Hair & Beauty Course Mar 25	£ -	not received

1130

**Q183/2025**

**British Dyslexia Association –  
Annual reviews/inspection of schools**

**Clerk:** Question 183, the Hon. E J Reyes.

1135 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Given Government's commitment to conduct annual reviews or inspections of schools by the British Dyslexia Association, why have none been carried out in the last three academic years?

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

1140 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the schools do not apply the British Dyslexia Association reviews or inspections as they follow the methodology of the British Psychological Society under the guidance of our educational psychologists.

1145 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I believe there was an agreement and understanding that a selection of schools would be sort of have a review, perhaps an inspection is a bit too strong a word on selective schools on an annual basis that was arranged with the British Gibraltar branch or group in respect to dyslexia.

1150 I have asked a previous question which was converted to written answer were Minister said that none had been carried out in the last three academic years. Maybe I have got some of my details wrong.

Has any type of review or inspection by either the British Dyslexia Association or by other groups that the Minister is referring to now, have those been carried out in the last three years or has nothing at all been actively happening in the last three years?

1155 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I gave answers yesterday in relation to how many tests have been done and so on. I answered to some of the questions that ran over from the January session. Absolutely, what is happening now is that thanks to the representations of the Gibraltar Dyslexia Association, dyslexia assessments are now down standard, and they are embedded within the work of the educational psychologists.

1160 The approach of the British Psychological Society, which is a professional body, is slightly different to the British Dyslexia Association and the psychologists have chosen to carry out assessments based on the recommendations of the society. But I can assure the hon. Member that dyslexia assessment and dealing with dyslexia is totally embedded in our schools under the supervision of the educational psychologists.

1165 **Hon. E J Reyes:** I am extremely grateful for that explanation. Yes, and it is good news to hear. As the Minister has been saying, these sort of testing's and so on have been carried out.

1170 Despite all that good work being done, which I take is being done in-house, so we call it locally by local based psychologists, educational experts and so on, has there been any input, any reviews, any sort of inspections, if you want to use again that word, carried out by a body like from the United Kingdom coming into Gibraltar to help or to assist or even guide those who are conducting all these schools here locally? Has anything of that happened in the last three years?

1175 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** I do not believe specifically, but I think that once again, we have developed local expertise. We have UK trained educational psychologists who are very competent. Teachers are very aware of the issues regarding dyslexia and how to deal with dyslexia and are very aware as to how to diagnose dyslexia, how to deal and support children with dyslexia and they are UK trained. I believe that we are in a good place in relation to dyslexia.

1180 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, and may I perhaps, I can finish off with this. I know that in schools, we have got local schools have in-services and as and when the Director of Education and so on, as and when she feels certain areas need to be honed upon or updated and so on to ensure the teachers are as up to date as possible, then the subject of dyslexia is brought in. Has there been an element as well of those local, let us say the educational advisors and so on, or the educational psychologists, have they been able to have access to attend courses in the United Kingdom so that

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they are as up to date as possible with the ever-developing problem of dyslexia, which we tend to be equally sharing with the United Kingdom?

1190 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, if any of the educational psychologists or any of the teachers feel that there is a course that they could benefit from, then that facility would be made. I do not recall any specific courses in the last couple of years, I may be wrong, but certainly if it were felt that it would be useful and a good way of spending taxpayers' money, then those courses would be supported.

1195 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q184/2025**  
**Safety helmets –**  
**Compulsory use for the protection of children**

1200 **Clerk:** Question 184, the Hon. C Sacarello.

**Hon. C Sacarello:** Will Government consider legislating for the compulsory use of safety helmets to ensure the protection of children when riding their bicycles on our roads?

1205 **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, legislation to that effect is being drafted and is at an advanced stage.

1210 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Minister for that reply and I am very happy to hear that legislation for the compulsory use, I assume, of helmets is being drafted and is at an advanced stage. Could the Minister please confirm if that is just for children or if that is for adults as well?

1215 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I answered the question which related to the protection of children. So that is my answer. Madam Speaker, will Governments consider legislating for the use of safety helmets to ensure the protection of children when riding their bicycles and I have said, we are drafting legislation to that effect. So clearly, we are talking about children.

1220 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I won't pursue that line of questioning despite a very basic question. So, the reason I brought this up is following several incidents that have been reported to me, and I have also experienced ourselves with youngsters on the roads and we have seen increasing numbers of them in groups driving around rather recklessly and without helmets.

1225 So, I did a little bit of research, including a report from Headway, which has been peer reviewed by the British Medical Association, Association of Paediatric Emergency Medicine, etc., in which it states that a cycle helmet can reduce the risk of serious head injury by almost 70% and fatal head injury by 65%. Would the Minister be able to confirm, just for the record, if the intended legislation, which is at an advanced stage, is for the compulsory use for children up to the age of  
1230 18?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I am glad to see that the hon. Member supports this initiative. It is controversial, but I can say that I am discussing this with the Sustainable Transport Action Group. In fact, I was due to have a meeting with them today.

1235 It depends on what time we finish here, whether I will have, or we postpone it. At the moment, we're looking at 16 as the age, but this is subject to discussion, which is why we have not quite published it yet.

1240 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Thank you very much for that extra information. With regards to your comment on controversial, I see it as no more controversial than wearing seatbelts was back in the day and skiing helmets as well. Nowadays, everyone wears ski helmets to ski before no one ever did.

1245 Similarly, even when legislation for seatbelts was imposed in Spain before Gibraltar, people used to reach the border and take their seatbelts off to say they were very uncomfortable, but now people wear them as a matter of course. So surely this is just a matter of shifting culture, shifting approach, and hopefully in time the right decisions would be made. Would the Hon. Minister agree with me that that is the right direction of travel to take?

1250 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I have said that we are drafting legislation. We are discussing it with the group. The fact that it is controversial is a fact.

It does not mean that I believe that it is rightly controversial or not. I am just saying that it is a subject. The whole question of bicycle helmets is controversial, but nevertheless, we are working in that direction.

1255 **Madam Speaker:** The Hon. R M Clinton had a question.

1260 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Sorry. Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Minister may recall that his predecessor who is now the erstwhile mayor of bicycling in Gibraltar, or cycling, I do not know what the correct term is, was actually against the introduction of helmets on bicycles on the basis that it would discourage cycling.

Now, personally, I congratulate the Minister that he is drafting legislation. I think it probably is a common-sense approach but can I ask the Minister, given his predecessor's determination that it was contrary to the promotion of cycling, what is it that has prompted the Minister's department to draft this legislation?

1265 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I cannot answer for what the department did in my predecessor's time. This has been assessed in discussion with the Sustainable Transport Action Group, and this is the direction in which the Government is now proceeding.

1270 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

#### Q185/2025

#### Car parks and Public areas –

#### Assessing performance of contracted third parties

1275 **Clerk:** Question 185, the Hon. C Sacarello.

1280 **Hon. C Sacarello:** What value does the Government place on the monitoring, reviewing, and assessing the performance of the third parties it has contracted with on matters directly affecting the public, such as: car parks; the cleaning of public areas; including the cemetery; schools' maintenance; and the like? Could the Hon. Minister detail this Government's policy on performance monitoring in this area?

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

1285 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, a great deal. There is constant and continuous review of performance in relation to all contracted services. In some cases, such as cleansing and planted areas, there is an officer whose specific role is the monitoring of those contracts.

1290 In other cases, the monitoring is done by departmental officials through on-site visits, meetings, etc. The frequency of these meetings varies and can be weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly, or at greater intervals depending on the service and the performance.

1295 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Madam Speaker, thank you to the Minister for that reply. Could the Minister confirm if each and every contract carries with it KPIs, Key Performance Indicators, that govern their performance over the period?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Many contracts do. It would not be applicable to all contracts. Some contracts do not, but many of them do.

1300 Certainly, whether there are KPIs specifically listed, there will be schedules which set out very clearly the duties and responsibilities of the contractors, and those are monitored.

**Hon. C Sacarello:** Thank you for that. Finally, just one question on the officers. I think you referred to them as the officers to monitor. How many monitoring officers are there, and are there different ones for different sectors?

1305 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I specifically mentioned two. We have a cleansing superintendent who monitors the cleaning contracts, and we have an officer who is a Planted Areas Officer who monitors the planted areas, the horticultural contracts. The other contracts are monitored by the desk officers in those particular areas in different departments.

1310 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q186/2025**  
**Senegal programme –**  
**Nature of the quote**

1315 **Clerk:** Question 186, the Hon. R M Clinton.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, can the Government advise further to its Press Release 71 of 2025, what is the nature of the quote Senegal programme as regards the recycling of textiles?

1320 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

1325 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the Senegal programme is managed through the Eco Park. The textiles are received and sorted, and what is not acceptable for recycling is turned into rags for cleaning slops in ships and used in garages. Recyclable textiles, once sanitised and disinfected, are sent to Senegal for reuse.

1330 Upon arrival, approximately 50% of the textiles are given to local shops and businesses to resell. This is part of an outreach programme to help families generate business and become self-sustainable and above the poverty line. The remaining 50% of the textiles are given directly to charities for those who cannot afford to clothe themselves.

The Eco Park closely monitors the whole process and receives documentary confirmation of the end use of the textiles.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, grateful to the Minister for his answer. It certainly sounds like an interesting programme. I have seen documentaries about how textiles are recycled. They have actual, depending on the nature, whether the garment can actually be reused. The buttons are separated, and obviously there is use made of the textiles, which obviously we would not like to see ending up in landfill sites because these still have a continuing use but can I ask the Minister, in terms of logistics, how will this get to Senegal?

I mean, will there be a regular shipment every month, every so many months? Is there an intention, is the Minister aware as to whether any statistics will be made available in terms of, I do not know how this is measured in terms of volume or tonnage of textiles? It would be interesting from an ecological point of view just to see how Gibraltar is progressing in terms of textile recycling.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, this would go by ship to Senegal and yes, we would be requesting information and statistics.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** One last question, Madam Speaker, if I may. In terms of the cost of the shipment, the programme, this will be met by Eco Park itself. Will there be any cost to the Government?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Madam Speaker, there will be a cost as there is for every waste stream. There is a cost depending on tonnage.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Sorry, Madam Speaker, would the Minister be able to share with the House an approximation of what that cost is expected to be? I imagine there will be a contract.

There will obviously be an arrangement between Eco Park and Senegal. The Government, I guess, will have a contract with Eco Park. Is that correct and can the Minister give some indication of what the incremental cost might be per tonne?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, there will be contracts. There may already be between the Eco Park and the Government in order to deal with these textiles. I would need to have notice of the cost.

**Madam Speaker:** All right, before we proceed on to the next questioner, let us take any supplementaries to Question 182.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** I am very grateful, Madam Speaker. I do have a couple of minor queries that I hope will have very logical answers. In the Minister's schedule, when it comes in respect of the cost for the vocational hair and beauty course, he listed there on the two last lines, in respect of the month of February, there is sort of a dash that says to be processed. I take it that that is because it is a sort of, let us call it the treasury system and the payment has been made and therefore the Minister has not listed there and then in respect of the March, we are not receiving, yes, because the March, March in itself proper does not start until tomorrow. Can I start with that first part there, just a confirmation that it is in the system and therefore that is why the Minister has not chosen to give us a figure until the actual payment is made.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Madam Speaker. This is the February invoice. It will have been received, and it will be in the system, but the money has not gone out yet, which is why there is no sum there and, there would not have been an invoice for March yet.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, Madam Speaker, I got that. Therefore, following exactly that same logic, when it comes to the Gibraltar Academy of Music and Performing Arts, when we come to September, October, November, I even see the same payment is made there monthly, yet



1385 December 24, January 25, February 25, all we have is a dash. So, there is no explanation useful like the one given at the bottom, where it says to be processed or not received. It just dashes there and on the extreme right-hand side, in respect of equipment, again, it is just a dash.

Whereas for the hair, we saw that October 24, there was a payment made for equipment with even a helpful note. This is paid annually on a one-off fee.

1390 So why is there a dash and no other explanations? I know the Minister sort of relied on his civil servants to provide the information, but he could have been a bit more insistent because it does not quite complete the picture of what we asked for when we gave notice of questions.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, no equipment is paid. So therefore, we could even do without that column.

1395 I believe the answer may be, subject to my confirming it, that the invoices are presented in a quarterly basis, which is why there may be three months missing. So, if it is quarterly basis, then the first three months of the academic year, September, October, November, will have come through but the rest of the academic year, it may not have come through yet. I would have to confirm that, but that seems to me the likely explanation.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, I am grateful. We will keep it as we accept that it is a likely explanation, but we will keep on pressing the Minister. Maybe one day he does have the full explanation.

1405 The breakdown clarifies, in respect of the music performance, it clarifies the payment made for the music instructor PT, one takes to be a part-time instructor. But the CVQ BTEC performance fees, can I get a clarification? Is that in respect of the registration, because it happens in the month of September, is that in respect of the registration of the student, or is it because a performance has taken place, and therefore we pay fees, like one pays fees for performing rights and so on.

1410 I may have a very vivid imagination, but I am not sure whether it is in respect of performance rights that one has to pay for registration of students.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I think the hon. Member knows that he alluded to our friendship yesterday, that he does not have to keep on pressing me for answers. I normally will give him the answers, but he can keep on reminding me that I accept, but pressing is no, there is no need for that. It is a perfectly legitimate question, which will have a perfectly logical explanation. My word of the day, logical.

Madam Speaker, those are in fact registration fees, for the course, so that explains that particular entry.

1420 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, I do not want to waste any more time. I am very grateful for those answers, and I think we have clarified as much as we can today. Just a small comment to ask, Minister.

1425 Please do not delete that column of equipment, because although there is nothing there, if one looks in the past, in the previous year, there have been expenses. In fact, it follows suit, and verifies what the Minister said, that was a one-off purchase, which we hope would have a good lifespan, but it could well happen, you know, it has happened with all musical equipment, and so there may be some breaks and so on. So therefore, I would rather have a column, that instead of a dash, the Treasury could have filled in the figure zero, and therefore it keeps a better and accurate record.

1430 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the question is, can we keep the column? The answer is yes, ma'am.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

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**Q187-188/2025**

**Upper Rock –**

**Entities receiving a proportion of entrance fees; Fee increase date**

**Clerk:** Question 187, the Hon. D J Bossino.

1440 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Please provide a full list of the entities, and or individuals that receive, or will receive a proportion of the entrance fees, to the Upper Rock, to include in respect of which sites, and details of the amounts.

**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 188.

**Clerk:** Question 188, the Hon. D J Bossino.

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**Hon. D J Bossino:** When is it expected that the fees for the Nature Reserve will increase?

**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, in relation to Question 187, as there are active discussions, with several of these entities, it would not be appropriate, to provide details here at this stage.

In answer to Question 188, on the 1st of April.

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**Hon. D J Bossino:** I must say that I am slightly disappointed, with the answer, because the Hon. Minister, did provide some information, in his interview to GBC, when the World War II tunnel, recently refurbished site, was opened on the 4th of February. When he said that the Government pays, I mean, he rarely does this, so he must have been thinking, as he was speaking, I mean, I think he was getting a bit nervous, proportion of the Upper Rocks entrance fees, to, to, and then he goes off on a tangent as a contractual fee. So, which then, and then he goes on to say, which actually means, it is not a taxpayer's money, it is a tourist money, that is coming into Gibraltar and being used to improve our facilities.

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What is preventing him at this stage? He says that they are in negotiations, but can I ask him, at what stage does he think he will be in a position to provide, what will be very important information, to this House and to the public, where he seemed poised, to provide this information, to the general public in the GBC interview, but then obviously resisted the temptation.

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, poised, because it is information, that I will very happily, put into the public domain, at the correct time. The hon. Member will realise, that if we are talking to a number of entities, who replied to a call for expression of interest, and dealing with the details as to how we are engaging them, it would not be in anybody's interest, least alone the public interest, for us to publicly say, what we are discussing, with each different entity, because they're going to compare and contrast and therefore, once the negotiations are completed, we will very happily, share that information.

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**Hon. D J Bossino:** Perhaps the Minister can assist. The Hon. Minister refers to the expressions of interest. Is he referring to the expressions of interest, which again was a subject of some controversy, in respect of the upper rock?

So, in other words, is the answer to this question dependent on when the Hon. Minister will make an announcement, as to the successful party, as respects to that particular EOI?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** However, this is something that, perhaps requires a bit more time, and maybe a discussion with him.

1490 The way I understood, the way he had answered the question, was that for example, in respect of either the World War II tunnels, or indeed the Moorish Castle, were yesterday he said, that that was the beneficiary, of private investment, and not taxpayers' money. Is it the case that these, and these are being run, presumably, well they are being run, we know for a fact, by different companies. One is Wright Tech Limited, for example, and the other one is, I cannot remember the name at the moment, well the Gibraltar Museum, and then Fortress Attractions, and the rest of it.

1495 Is it the case that these entities, is that the expectation, does not need to tell me, what they will receive, but is it the case, and that must be a logical conclusion that one arrives at from reading his full interview, is it the case, that they will be expecting to receive a proportion of the nature reserve entrance fees in order to make good their investments, in respect of these sites?

1500 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Well Speaker, I really think that, if I were to answer that question, because it is not as simple as it has been put, I would be crossing the barrier between being safe in commercial negotiations and being unsafe, so therefore Madam Speaker, I will not provide further information, of these particular negotiations.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** I hear what the Minister, is saying, and I understand, why one should not, need not push further, and I think he has said, in respect of the EOI, that all the full details, will come through, once that is announced, and he is nodding his head, but I would be grateful, if you would confirm my understanding of this. In respect of what I understand, from the information, that I have received, is the case in respect, of the collecting company, which is presumably, on contracts from the Government, assigned the task of collecting the entrance fees, when you access the Upper Rock, can he provide information, as to which company that is, the information that I have, and I have been shown a screenshot of a payment that is made by tourists, and it shows a company, an entity shall we put it, with a name Java Gibraltar, does he have, sorry Jura, I keep on saying Java, it is Jura Gibraltar, can he say whether that is correct, and whether this is a locally registered company, because the searches that we have carried out, suggest that it is not.

1510 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I have been asked, in the questions supplied, at the correct time, to provide a full list of entities and or individuals, that will receive, or receive, or will receive a proportion, of the entrance fees, I have said that I would not answer that because there are current negotiations. I do not see any relevance there to the question that the hon. Member has just asked by way of supplementary, and when the fees are going to be increased, and therefore I do not think that that is an acceptable supplementary.

1525 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Madam Speaker, with the greatest respect to the Hon. Minister, the question related to entrance fees. His more legitimate reply would have been, I do not have that information in front of me and I wasn't prepared by way of expected supplementary, but the question does relate to entrance fees, and all I am asking him to do, is to confirm which entity, company, or other arrangement, is responsible for the receipt of entrance fees which is in fact, the subject matter of this question in the Order Paper. So, that argument, and that point is simply not available to the Hon. Minister.

1530 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I am afraid I do not agree. I think what the Hon. Member is referring to, is the management of the ticketing system, which is a completely different issue, to the substance of the questions that have been asked.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Whichever entity manages the ticketing system, is presumably, also a beneficiary of the entrance fees, is it not? Therefore, I think it is a relevant question, but if the Hon. Minister, if I can assist him, if the Hon. Minister, is suggesting, that I need to ask a separate question and he will provide the answers, then I will do so, in the next session of the House. Maybe that resolves the current situation.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I think the hon. Member, should ask a specific question, at the appropriate way.

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

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, in relation to Question 188 about the increase in nature fees, and I appreciate the Minister may argue that, perhaps I should table a specific question on it, but we have had discussion in the past about the walking fees up to the upper rock, and I just had a quick search I think a walking fee now is about £25 for an adult, which will include access, to all the sites, but I have actually witnessed families who have parked their cars near Lathbury Barracks, a family of four or five, with children, who then reach, the Jew's Gate ticket office, and effectively get asked for over £100, when there is no way they can reach all the various sites in the time they have, in an hour, they cannot reach, you know, the upper galleries, they are unlikely to go, up to the top of the rock, I mean, has the Minister considered whether there can be, just a pure walking ticket, where people can pay a reduced fee, just to enjoy the environments of the upper rock, without going into the sites?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes ma'am, we are actually reviewing the possibility of introducing, different types of tickets.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes, I had a supplementary, in respect to Question 188. The Hon. Minister, I think the response was that, there would be an increase in April, as I understand the regime, and I think it is set out in subsidiary legislation, there is an operator fee, and another, I do not know what it is termed, can he, is he able to indicate to this House, by which amount it is expected that those fees will increase in April, as he said. I think currently, the two operator rates is £13, and for others, it is £19.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker the operator rate at the moment is £13, and for independent travellers it is £25 pounds, not £19, and on the 1st of April, these are due to go up, to £17, and £30.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** That is quite a significant hike, I think in both respects, but is he able to give an account, as to what reaction, or otherwise has been, from the tour operators if I can put it in those broad terms, I am not suggesting it is just the tour operator rates of those who may be impacted by that particular increase, but actually generally, I mean to operate, presumably taxi drivers, has there been any, are they, are they fine with this?

Is it going to have an impact on the business, because clearly, if the underlying cost goes up, then the service that they provide, would have to go up, and then, that has the potential, I would have thought, of making the access to the nature reserve less attractive. It may defeat the purpose, that the hon. Member, wants to achieve.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, whenever a cost to you goes up, you are not going to be happy, and therefore, there have been representations from some of the operators, we are in active conversation with them. In fact, we were going to be meeting this morning at 11, where we were going to present all the improvements, coming to the Upper Rock, which, I believe justify, the increases. However, this has always been the position of the operators, in the past, whenever

1590 the fees have increased, and they have always been concerned that there is going to be a drop in  
sales, and the figures show that there is not a drop in sales. In fact, sales, continue to steadily  
increase, as the product, continues to improve. Clearly, they are going to be concerned, but I think  
they need not worry, that the product that we will be offering, will be such, and in comparison to  
other destinations elsewhere in the world, I think we will remain highly competitive but as I say,  
1595 Madam Speaker, the meeting I was going to hold, with all of them today, has had to be postponed,  
because we were sitting here.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Presumably, the meeting would have been simply, a venue in which the Hon.  
Minister would have imparted to them that the increase will happen, irrespective. The hon.  
1600 Member will not be persuaded otherwise he has already said that there will be an increase and  
he has, I think, has he indicated by which amount the increases is going to take effect. Now,  
beyond April, is the Minister contemplating, and I will explain to him why I am asking this, is the  
Minister contemplating increasing it further, is it within his plans? Because, again, at the tail end  
of this segment, of his interview, with GBC, he says, there was a question on fees, and the question  
1605 was, are they going up in effect? She said, they are there for the time being, we may, depending  
on how we see things, increase it a little bit more, and then I will think we shall leave it at that for  
a while. So, does that explanation apply to the April increase, that the Hon. Minister is referring  
to, or does it also apply to other increases, increases that he may be considering, beyond April?

I have heard of a date in the region of sort of September that the Hon. Minister may be  
1610 considering to hike the fees further.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, we have to remember, that these are, charges to non-  
locals, and non-residents. Local residents will continue to access the sites free of charge. I think  
that distinction has to be made, to avoid any confusion.

I think it is important, we have an incredible product in Gibraltar, where we are investing even  
1615 more, which will improve even more, and I think it is important that we should maximise how we  
monetise it and therefore, if we are able, to attract external money, not taxpayers' money, money  
from people coming to Gibraltar, which we can then dedicate to continuous improvements, then  
therefore that is a name that we should all share. Therefore, we are considering a further increase  
1620 in September, but as I explained in the interview, I am happy to explain, here again, if there is a  
concern in the industry that the current increase, will mean that, that our figures will drop, I  
suspect that is not correct, then perhaps we have to consider whether we increase in September,  
or we will increase by a little bit, or we defer to next April, and that is the kind of information that  
we have to have, before we make a final decision, on any further increases. We do not want to,  
1625 and we will not put the cost of our tourist product, beyond the range that my hon. Friend will be  
able to sell, as he is doing so extraordinarily well throughout the world, but we have to remember,  
we have a product that people want to enjoy, that people want to come to Gibraltar, that they  
are willing to pay, and therefore that is good income, and legitimate income, that will help the  
community as a whole.

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**Hon. D J Bossino:** Anyway, I mean his hon. Friend, to his right, is very ably assisted by a very  
effective CEO clearly, and we can and will indeed make, a value judgement, as to whether, what  
the Hon. Minister postulates as a very positive thing, the you know, extracting from the nature  
reserve fees, this investment, such that we can have an improvement, I mean we will have a view,  
1635 and a judgement call in relation to that, but given that he has already indicated that there is a  
possibility, he has said in the affirmative, when I put it to him, that there is a possibility, that there  
will, there could be increases in September, but he will need to speak to the operators, on the rest  
of it, but he has not pitched it, at any particular level, and there is still a question mark, as to  
whether he will, or whether he not. Does he not appreciate, that that can have also in itself  
1640 inherently, a damaging effect in terms of the marketing opportunities, and marketing efforts of  
these tour operators because they are have to sell these tours, now, if not before, but they are

doing so, with the uncertainty, as to whether there will be an increase, which they will have to pass on, to the potential purchasers, of those tickets, so does he not appreciate, that that in itself, also raises a significant difficulty, for those individuals, and businesses operating in this area.

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I can see his point, but I do not necessarily agree with it, because of the way in which we have come to the position in which we are now. Madam Speaker, and the reason why we have not gone firm on a September increase, is because we have discussed with the operators, and we have decided that, whereas we have thought, that we were definitely going, to have an increase in September, that out of deference to them, and to their concerns, we will continue to discuss it, and look at it jointly, and the other thing is that, and the operators know, that any operators, that have already pre-booked, at an existing lower rate, those rates will be accepted, until such time, as those bookings run out, and they are aware of that. Clearly if they have already sold tickets, we are not going to suddenly increase it, but they will have to show us, legitimately, that these have been pre-booked in some way, but we are in fact, the message I am trying to get across here, Madam Speaker, is that we are actually, in active discussion with all the operators, in order to ensure that the product improves, that the cost is realistic and does not prejudice the business, I think at the end of the exercise they will be very happy with the way that these things develop.

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**Madam Speaker:** All right, I am going to allow one more supplementary, I think we have exhausted this topic, enough. I know that the Hon. C Sacarello had asked, to ask a question, and so has the Hon. D J Bossino, so I will allow you to discuss, as to who is going to ask the question.

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**Hon. D J Bossino:** The Hon. the Minister always claims that he is not a politician, but actually, listening to him and after so many years, I think he very much is, everything is fine, everything is hunky-dory, he is going to be speaking, so but I get, on this side of the house, a completely different story, and a completely different...

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**Madam Speaker:** A question, otherwise, I am going to give the floor to, the Hon. C Sacarello.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** The Hon. the Minister, and I alluded to it, I think in one of the supplementaries, the Hon. the Minister, in yesterday's session, referred to the context of the Moorish Castle, that it would not result, in any expenditure, to...

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**Madam Speaker:** I am not going to revert to yesterday's supplementaries, or a question, on any of yesterday's questions, or supplementary, so strictly in relation to this.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Absolutely, Madam Speaker, and it relates to this, and it relates to the entrance fees, and the potential beneficiaries of those entrance fees. Is it the case, can he answer this, in terms which will not prejudice the negotiations that he is referring to? Can he say, when he said yesterday, that the investment is out with the...

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In other words, there will not be a reliance in respect of that particular project on Government, on taxpayers' money, and he said, the Hon. Minister said, there would be, as a result of investment. Can he say that the investment, is in effect, exclusively going to be drawn from the entrance fees because, again, the logical explanation that one arrives at, from the answers that he gave to GBC back in February, where he said, these things are happening in the Upper Rock, we are seeing an improvement, and you know what? This is brilliant, because a taxpayer, is not paying a penny and it is all coming from the entrance fees, therefore, it is being paid by tourist money. So, using that logic, and I would apply it to the answer he gave yesterday in respect of the Moorish Castle, I simply ask him, to answer the point I have just made.

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1695 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** First of all, I do not know whether to take the hon. Member's, recognition, that I am finally a politician as a compliment. I think I will take it as a compliment, and it might mean, I do not know whether he is going to like what I hear, that I might stay in politics longer than I thought, and longer that he might wish for me to stay in, but there we go, that is a separate issue altogether, which we can discuss some other time.

1700 Madam Speaker, I think this would be, dangerously close, to discussing issues, in relation to the contracts, that I have already said, I am not going to, dwell on any further.

**Madam Speaker:** All right, is that the end of the questions?

## Questions for Written Answer

1705 **Clerk:** Answers to Written Questions, the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

**Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J Garcia):** Madam Speaker, I have the honour to table the answers to Written Questions W30, to W48 of 2025 inclusive.

### Adjournment

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

1715 **Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J Garcia):** Madam Speaker, I have the honour to move at this house do now adjourn *sine die*.

**Madam Speaker:** I now propose the question, which is at this house do now adjourn *sine die*. I now put the question, which is at this house do now adjourn *sine die*. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Passed.

1720 This house will now adjourn, *sine die*.

*The House adjourned at 12.10 p.m.*