



# PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

**AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.00 p.m. – 6.40 p.m.**

**Gibraltar, Thursday, 27th February 2025**

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# The Gibraltar Parliament

*The Parliament met at 3.00 p.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

**CHIEF MINISTER**

**Q270-272/2025**

**Disability Benefit – Criteria**

**Disability Benefit – Application/Assessment**

**Clerk:** Questions to the Hon. the Chief Minister.  
Question 270, the Hon. A Sanchez.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, I apologise, I think my colleague has been unfortunately delayed, but I gladly ask a question with your leave on her behalf. Could the Government confirm the date of the most recent review of the criteria for awarding disability benefits to child applicants?

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I will answer with Questions 271 and 272.

**Clerk:** Question 271, the Hon. E J Reyes on behalf of the Hon. A Sanchez.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Could the Government confirm the date of the most recent review of the criteria for awarding disability benefit to adult applicants?

**Clerk:** Question 272, the Hon. E J Reyes on behalf of the Hon. A Sanchez.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Could the Government confirm whether every disability benefit application submitted is referred to the relevant panel for assessment?

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Department for Social Services that the most recent review of the criteria for awarding disability benefit to child applicants was in November 2020, and the most recent review of the criteria for awarding disability benefit to adult applicants was in July 2015. Madam Speaker, all disability benefit applications submitted to the Department are referred to the relevant panel for assessment. However, in exceptional circumstances, such as end-of-life applications supported with medical evidence, the Director of Social Security can expedite the approval and award of the benefit.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, if I recall correctly, when my hon. Colleague was discussing this, the Question 270 was in respect of the child applicants, and the one of 271 was in respect of the adult applicants. In reviewing the criteria, are they both viewed and taken as collective, or are there any differences in criteria to be applied?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I understand that there are many common elements, but they are, in the end, different criteria. That is why there are two different standards.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Grateful for that, Madam Speaker. I think it is best if I leave my hon. Colleague to pose further questions in the future should require any other clarifications.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question. Yes, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can I just ask in relation to the reviews of the criteria, which is Question 270, will the Government be publishing that particular criteria? I think when we last looked, the criteria was not publicly available.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** No, Madam Speaker, I understand that last time we debated this matter. The criteria was not publicly available. I have not received advice suggesting it should be made publicly available.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, will the Government perhaps reflect on that position? Because clearly, this is criteria that is governing the application of people who make applications for disability benefit. It would be important to them to understand on what basis applications are considered, granted or rejected.

There is, as far as we understand, a possibility of appeal of further review of the disability decision. But again, unless people are aware of the criteria for the original decisions in respect of this matter, it is difficult for them to form a view as to whether or not an appeal should be made. So, can I ask the Government to perhaps reflect on that position in the interest of making it more known to people the basis on which these things are done?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Madam Speaker, this matter has been ventilated in the past and the Government has already taken a view and nobody has advised us to take a different view. The hon. Gentleman, as far as I can recall, has even taken legal proceedings, which would have resulted in the Government being required to publish the criteria if he had succeeded in those proceedings, which I seem to recall did not proceed to trial and were resolved in another manner.

In any event, Madam Speaker, the criteria is known to individuals because the criteria was changed by this Government. Before, it was very simple. When they were in Government, they ought to be able to benefit from any of these disability benefits. An individual had to be born with a disability. So, the assessment was simply, were you born with it? Yes or no.

The criteria is now different and hon. Members are aware of what the criteria is, which is, does this affect your ability to lead a normal life? How that is scored by individual practitioners who may be on the panel, etc., is not something that the Government has advised we should be objectively publishing. The position has not changed.

That is why I said in my original answer that the Government has not been advised to change its view in that respect. The hon. Gentleman knows that when a Government determines not to publish a criteria, it is in order to ensure that people are not able to manufacture their submissions in a way that is designed simply to meet the criteria, but are objectively assessed by those who know how the breakdown of the assessment against the criteria is assessed, looking at the facts that they manifest when they arrive, that is to say, the reality of their situation, without being able to mould it to what

might be the published criteria in any particular way. That, in our view, we are advised, makes for a more objective assessment of the reality manifesting in the life of the individual applicant, rather than to give them the list of things that they need to tell a panel in order to have the panel be more likely to accept their application.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q273/2025**  
**EU Commission –**  
**Investigation**

**Clerk:** Question 273, the Hon. R M Clinton.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Further to Question 481 of 2024, can the Government advise whether the investigation by the EU Commission has concluded? If so, how has the balance of the £23,454,019.50 received in 2022, less the £9 million released in 2024, i.e. approximately £14.5 million being applied?

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, the £23.5 million received on 30 September 2022, represents funds received in favour of His Majesty's Government of Gibraltar, pursuant to the judgement issued by the European Union's General Court on 6 April 2022, in relation to Commission decision EU2019/700 of 19 December 2018 on the State Aid SA34914 [2013/C], implemented by the United Kingdom as regards to the Gibraltar Corporate Income Tax regime. The balance of approximately £14.5 million remain in abeyance, pending the outcome of EU decision C (2022) (7665) confirmed by letter of 31 October 2022, seeking to extend the State Aid investigation in case SA34914.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Chief Minister for the detailed answer. Fully as said, can I take it then that the EU Commission investigation has not concluded and that the £14.5 million remains, as he said, in abeyance?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Madam Speaker, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave a few moments ago that addressed exactly that.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Well, Madam Speaker, I am sorry to admit that I am not a lawyer, so maybe I did not fully understand the significance of all the case numbers, etc. All I really seek to know, Madam Speaker, is whether the £14.5 million effectively still held in reserve and has not been used by the Government in any way.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Madam Speaker, of course acknowledge the fact that the hon. Gentleman suggests that because he is not a lawyer, he could not understand everything to do with the numbers that I referred, which are just the case numbers, which are the reference numbers for the case names. I am surprised he did not understand the bit that I read, which was in plain English. I will read it again, Madam Speaker. The balance of approximately £14.5 million remain in abeyance.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Yes, it remains in abeyance, and I think the next words were, because there was a letter from the Commission extending the state aid investigation, and I believe the Hon. Chief

Minister referred to a date sometime in late 2022, October 2022 or something like that. What we are asking for is, does the Government have information about the progress of that investigation and when it would be concluded so that there will be a decision on the release or otherwise of that money?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, what I said after that, I will read that again too, was pending the outcome of EU decision in case number 2022-7665, which is confirmed by a letter of the 31st of October 2022 seeking to extend the state aid investigation in that case. Madam Speaker, the Government is not a party to that case.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Yes, I appreciate that the Government is not a party to the case. My question had been whether the Government had information about the progress of that investigation, not whether the Government was a party.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Madam Speaker, I would have thought that given the answer I had provided a moment ago, the hon. Gentleman would have worked out that because we were not a party to the case, we do not have the information in relation to the case.

**Madam Speaker:** Next Question.

**Q274/2025**

**Import Duty**

**Clerk:** Question 274, the Hon. R M Clinton.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Can the Government advise the amount of import duty collected in the following month being January 2025?

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, as we are now in the final quarter of the year, the Government will wait until the end of the quarter to provide figures in order to ensure that they are reliable.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q275/2025**

**Government - Owned Companies**

**Clerk:** Question 275, the Hon. R M Clinton.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Can the Government provide a schedule advising the full name and principal activities of the following Government-Owned Companies, Gibraltar Development Corporation-owned and Savings Bank-owned companies, namely: GDC [directors] Ltd; GCP Investments Ltd; RMB Investments Ltd; ES Ltd; GAR Ltd; GRP Management Company Ltd; GSBA Ltd; GBIC Ltd; GOC [secretaries] Ltd; GEP Ltd; GSTR Ltd; GUT Ltd; GSF Ltd; GIC Ltd; and KIJJ Parkings Ltd.

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, as I made clear in answer to Question 641 of 2024, the GSLP Liberal Government that I lead has published more information about Government-owned companies than any other Government in the history of our nation. We have published that which the law requires that each company must file, so that in relation to Government Companies, Members of the public have access to the relevant information without having to pay a fee. That is much more than the party of Members opposite ever did when it was in Government.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, they did not even publish that which the law they passed required them to publish. I will nonetheless now go even further in providing transparency to our people that they never provided whilst in office and I will provide a schedule of the information requested which the hon. Clerk is now passing. Usher is passing, sorry.

**ANSWER TO QUESTION 275**

Company name	Principal Activity
ES Limited	Its principal activity is to operate the Gibraltar North Mole Power Station.
GAR Limited	The principal activity of the company is the ownership and management of assets.
GCP Investments Limited	Its principal activity is the ownership and management of assets.
GDC (Directors) Limited	The Company provides directorship services to other entities that are ultimately controlled by the Gibraltar Development Corporation. The Company is not remunerated for these services.
GEP Limited	The principal activity of the company is to oversee the development and construction of schools. The primary objective of the company is not the generation of profit as the company does not generate turnover from commercial activities.
GOC (Secretaries) Limited	The Company provides secretarial services to other entities that are ultimately controlled by HM Government of Gibraltar and the Gibraltar Development Corporation. The Company is not remunerated for these services.
GRP Management Company Limited	The company has been dormant since incorporation on 27 January 2012.
GSBA Limited	The principal activity of the company is the ownership and management of properties.
GSF Limited	The principal activity of the company is the ownership and management of properties.
GSTR Limited	The Company's principal activity was to enter into a contract for the construction and development of short-term rental accommodation. Following the completion of the properties in 2019, it was then made available to students attending the University of Gibraltar and the wider business community on short-term lets. The renting and rental process has been outsourced to a third-party, Europa Residence Management Limited. The Company has also invested in residential units in Clemence Suites as well as several floors of car parking spaces in Ocean Spa Plaza all of which the Company has rented out on a short-term basis.
GUT Limited	The principal activity of the company is to operate and manage the Kingsway tunnel.
KIJY Parkings Limited	The company has been dormant since 2015.
<b>Not Government owned companies</b>	
RMB Investments Limited	
GBIC Limited	
GIC Limited	

**Madam Speaker:** All right, does the hon. Member wish to postpone supplementaries or is he in a position to ask them? All right.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Chief Minister for the schedule, especially the principal activities, which is not something we have had until today. But the main piece of information I had asked for was in respect of what do the abbreviated names stand for and I do not seem to see that on this list and perhaps I would be grateful the Chief Minister would explain why the full names do not appear on this list.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am told those are the full names.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** So, Madam Speaker, the Chief Minister will recall the exchange he had with the Leader of the Opposition last week in which he indicated that, of course, a company of initials has to have a word relevant to each initial when the company is incorporated. So, on that basis and indeed reading Guidance Note 4 of Companies House which talks about sensitive words and expressions and I quote, names of letters or abbreviations or letters for any names that include singular letters which contain any form of abbreviation within the name, Companies House will always require a signed letter in writing from the applicant explaining clearly what the abbreviation stands for or what the particular letters in the name stand for. So, Madam Speaker, in order to comply with this guidance, the Government must have provided such information. So, therefore, I ask again, Madam Speaker, what do the initials for these companies stand for?

I mean, I have had this exchange with Sir Joe back in March 2018 and I guess that the G probably stands for Gibraltar in most of them. But surely, Madam Speaker, given that the Chief Minister was content to disclose that Gibraltar AquaGib Holdings which is actually GAH Limited, that was the abbreviation for Gibraltar AquaGib Holdings, what is his problem explaining what the abbreviated names stand for? And it is a requirement of Companies House. Can he please provide the information?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman seems to be confusing different concepts. His question asked for the full name and principal activities. Actually, at Companies House and the registered full name of each of these companies is what I have given him.

When you file a name, the name, which is an abbreviation, you have to inform Companies House what it stands for. But the name of the company does not change. The hon. Gentleman is asking me to give him the meaning of the initials as he now appears to accept I was right about when I was debating this matter with the Leader of the Opposition some weeks ago.

But that is not the name of the company. The name of the company is the name as appears. If he wants to know what the initials mean, if you ask me a question I would be delighted to tell him.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Chief Minister for the clarification and would he then basically provide the House with comfort that if I do file such a question in the next session, he will provide the information requested in respect to what each initial stands for?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, that is a hypothetical question. Once it is filed, of course, I will take advice and being consistent as I always am in my position, he can expect that he will have an answer, which will be in keeping with what I have said to the House today. But I would have to see the question before I can tell him what I am going to answer.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.



Q276/2025

## Private Sector Property – Rentals

**Clerk:** Question 276, the Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Please list all private sector property rentals entered into by the Government and GDC to date, giving the date and length of the lease, annual rental and the Department or Agency which is or is expected to be in occupation.

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I now hand over the schedule with the information requested.

**Madam Speaker:** Right, we will move on and come back to this one for supplementaries. Next question.

## ANSWER TO QUESTION 276

Department / Agency	Private Property Rental	Date the lease was entered into	Length of the lease	Annual rental fee
AUDIT OFFICE	Unit 3.13 World Trade Center	23/03/2017	21 years	£10,286.50
	Unit 3.26 World Trade Center	23/03/2017	21 years	£26,256.64
	Unit 3.28 World Trade Center	23/03/2017	21 years	£23,795.08
	Unit 3.30 World Trade Center	23/03/2017	21 years	£83,282.78
STATISTICS DEPARTMENT	Unit 3.22 World Trade Center	23/03/2017	21 years	£38,974.70
	Unit 3.24 World Trade Center	23/03/2017	21 years	£31,590.70
CIVIL STATUS & REGISTRATION OFFICE	Units 3A, 3B, 4A and 4B Lease Place	04/01/2023	9 years	£217,680.00
ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT	Suite 3A,3B,4A & 4B Town Range (Lease Place)	18/04/2023	9 years	£214,680.00
INCOME TAX SOCIAL INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS DEPARTMENT	Suite 1B,2A & 2B 50 Town Range (Lease Place)	24/08/2021	4 years	£181,080.00
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	Suite 1A 50 Town Range (Lease Place)	24/08/2021	4 years	£33,600.00
DIGITAL SERVICES	44 Town Range AND 10 Victualling Office Lane	30/09/2021	150 years	£1,135,214.16
EMPLOYMENT	323A & 323 01 Main Street	31/01/2014	12 years	£124,707.50
GIBRALTAR REGULATORY AUTHORITY	No.3 Convent Place	01/01/2025	12 years	£60,000.00
TOURISM	2nd Floor, Building 4, Eurotowers, Europort Road, Gibraltar	05/01/2023	10 years	£178,500.00
GOVERNMENT LAW OFFICES	Unit 4.3.03 Eurotowers, Block 4, Europort Road	12/03/2020	6 years	£29,200.56
OFFICE OF CRIMINAL PROSECUTIONS & LITIGATION	Natwest House, Suite 6, 57/63 Line Wall Road	19/12/2019	12 years	£123,858.00
HM CUSTOMS	8th Floor Natwest House, 57/63 Line Wall Road	19/12/2019	12 years	£123,858.00
HOUSING DEPARTMENT	Unit 25, Harbours Deck	19/12/2022	on-going	£120,448.00
HOUSING WORKS AGENCY	ICC Units 9.3a,9.7A,B,9.8 & 9.9	07/03/2022	12 years	£97,934.64
	ICC Units 9.6,9.12 & 9.13	22/12/2022	12 years	£93,036.72
MINISTRY FOR EQUALITY, EMPLOYMENT, TOURISM & CULTURE	Suite 10, 10th Floor ICC, 2a Main Street	01/10/2021	12 Years	£181,286.76
MINISTRY FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, CIVIL CONTINGENCIES & SPORTS	John Mackintosh Hall	27/08/2021	14 years	£125,000.00
TBC	Suite GE, Ground Floor, Regal House, Queensway	12/08/2020	8 years	£81,872.00
TOURISM	80A Queensway	08/09/2023	21 years	£1,047,200.00
TREASURY DEPARTMENT	Gibraltar Heritage Trust : The Main Guard, 13 John Mackintosh Square, Gibraltar.	19/03/2023	2 Years	£7,800.00
	19C 01 Town Range, Blake House	28/02/2014	9 years	£75,842.96
CHILD PRIMARY CARE				
PRIMARY CARE CENTRE				
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT & TECHNOLOGY				
FINANCE & PROCUREMENT				
BUSINESS AND THE OFFICE OF FAIR TRADING		01/12/2024	18 years	
TOWN PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL		29/11/2021	21 years	
DIGITAL SERVICES		29/11/2021	21 years	
FINANCE CENTRE		01/12/2021	21 years	
GAMBLING DIVISION		12/01/2021	21 years	£1,948,200.00
GIBRALTAR CO-ORD CENTRE FOR CRIMINAL INTELLIGENCE & DRUGS		01/12/2021	21 years	
GIBRALTAR ELECTRICITY AUTHORITY		01/06/2024	1 Year	
GIBRALTAR FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT		01/12/2021	21 years	
MINISTRY FOR EQUALITY, EMPLOYMENT, TOURISM & CULTURE		29/11/2021	21 years	
MINISTRY FOR EQUALITY, EMPLOYMENT, TOURISM & CULTURE			21 years	
MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, TRADE & INDUSTRY		01/12/2021	21 years	
FACILITIES	St Bernard's Hospital			£5,200,000.00
GHA FACILITIES	New Harbours - Archive Storage Rent	NO LEASE		£178,950.20
GHA FACILITIES	GHA Portable cabins	NO LEASE	Dec-24	£36,690.00
GHA FACILITIES	Covered storage area	01-Oct-23		£90,000.00
GHA FACILITIES	Marquee at Coaling Island		Mar-25	£7,200.00
GHA FACILITIES	Rock Vaults	01-Aug-24		£4,356.00

Cont...

CONTINUED ANSWER TO QUESTION 276

GHA ACCOMMODATION				
Dept / Section occupying rented property	Address of Property	Date lease commenced	Length of lease	Monthly rental fee
Nursing	406 Atlantic Suites	15/02/2025	14/02/2026	£1,175.00
Speech & Language	507 Atlantic Suites	18/09/2024	12/09/2025	£1,590.00
Ambulance	611 Atlantic Suites	28/02/2025	19/02/2026	£1,175.00
Pathology	806 Atlantic Suites	04/02/2025	03/02/2026	£1,175.00
Nursing	1004 E1	05/02/2024	04/02/2025	£1,375.00
Medicine	312 Eurotowers	23/08/2024	24/02/2025	£1,400.00
Speech & Language	314 Eurotowers	04/11/2024	03/11/2025	£1,365.00
Nursing	401 Eurotowers	01/07/2024	30/06/2025	£1,300.00
Medicine	411 Eurotowers	01/05/2024	30/04/2025	£1,350.00
Nursing	506 Eurotowers	01/01/2025	02/07/2025	£1,420.00
Nursing	510 Eurotowers	01/01/2025	30/06/2025	£1,300.00
Nursing	514 Eurotowers	02/09/2024	01/09/2025	£1,150.00
Medicine	732 Eurotowers	14/04/2024	13/04/2025	£1,350.00
Medicine	805 Eurotowers	28/03/2024	27/03/2025	£1,200.00
On- Call Staff	807 Eurotowers	29/04/2024	28/04/2025	£1,350.00
On- Call Staff	906 Eurotowers	16/12/2024	15/12/2025	£1,250.00
Medicine	907 Eurotowers	30/03/2024	29/03/2025	£1,350.00
Medicine	911 Eurotowers	01/01/2025	31/05/2025	£1,300.00
Nursing	1110 Eurotowers	24/02/2024	23/02/2025	£1,250.00
Nursing	905 Forbes	03/04/2024	04/04/2025	£1,200.00
Vacant - Reserved for Locum - Pet Friendly	1 Rocio House	01/01/2025	31/12/2025	£1,275.00
Medicine	2 Rocio House	01/01/2025	31/12/2025	£1,995.00
Occupational Therapy	3 Rocio House	01/01/2025	31/12/2025	£1,275.00
Nursing	4 Rocio House	01/01/2025	31/12/2025	£1,375.00
Medicine	5 Rocio House	01/01/2025	31/12/2025	£1,975.00
Nursing	307 Westone	15/10/2024	14/10/2025	£1,400.00
Ophthalmology / Medicine	402 Westone	13/04/2024	13/04/2025	£1,450.00
Physiotherapy	404 Westone	23/10/2024	24/10/2025	£1,130.00
Nursing	405 Westone	19/11/2024	18/11/2025	£1,150.00
Pathology	406 Westone	18/10/2024	17/10/2025	£1,050.00
Pathology	408 Westone	18/10/2024	17/10/2025	£1,050.00
Speech & Language	412 Westone	10/09/2024	09/09/2025	£1,050.00
Nursing	702 Westone	09/04/2024	08/04/2025	£1,500.00
Pathology	711 Westone	01/04/2024	31/03/2025	£1,200.00
Nursing	705 Carrara Euro City	01/06/2024	31/05/2025	£2,200.00
Ambulances	501 Carrara Euro City	09/05/2024	02/05/2025	£1,300.00
Nursing	601 Carrara Euro City	09/06/2024	08/06/2025	£1,350.00
Radiography	701 Carrara Euro City	26/04/2024	25/04/2025	£1,300.00
Nursing	809 Carrara Euro City	03/05/2024	02/05/2025	£1,300.00
Nursing	909 Carrara Euro City	03/05/2024	02/05/2025	£1,300.00
Nursing	1001 Carrara Euro City	03/05/2024	02/05/2025	£1,300.00
Medicine	1201 Carrara Euro City	23/05/2024	22/05/2025	£1,300.00
Medicine	1112 Ocean Spa Plaza	01/05/2024	30/04/2025	£1,300.00
Medicine	7 Park View	07/09/2024	06/09/2025	£1,600.00
Medicine	39 The Arches	22/12/2024	21/12/2025	£1,250.00
Nursing	13 Willis Road	01/04/2024	31/03/2025	£1,200.00
Nursing	112 Arengo's Garden	01/09/2024	31/08/2025	£1,650.00
Director General	202/203 Arabian Seas	01/09/2024	31/08/2025	£4,550.00

#### Q277-278/2025

#### Civil Status and Registration Office – Change of location & Costs

**Clerk:** Question 277, the Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** When will the Civil Status and Registration Office move from its current address at Joshua Hassan House and which address will it move to?

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I will answer with Question 278.

**Clerk:** Question 278, the Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** What will be/is the total cost(s) of the refurbishments of the premises which the Civil Status and Registration Office will be moving to?

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, the CSRO is due to relocate to units 3B, 4A and 4B at Leanne's place shortly. An announcement will be made when it is ready to do so. It is a complex process involving the transfer of secure systems, some of which require specialist expertise from visiting professionals.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Is the Hon. the Chief Minister able to provide to this House details of the... I am just thinking very carefully how to pose the question given the experience that we had in relation to

the Queensway, to the other property where we have the resulted in the motion in respect to misleading, the current monthly rental. Which current in a sense that it has been agreed.

I am assuming that the rental is not yet being paid. But what is the agreed figure in relation to the monthly rental at the property at Leanse place that he has referred us to?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Madam Speaker, I do remember that motion. It was the motion that resulted in the historic view of this House that the Leader of the Opposition had in fact been the first politician in our democratic history to be found to have misled this House. But in relation to the detail of the question that the hon. Gentleman is asking me, I refer him to the answer I gave a few moments ago.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** I do not at this moment recall, based on the answers that he gave, anything in that the Hon. the Chief Minister provided by way of an answer which would prevent him from providing information, which I assume is information which would be available to him. It may not be available to him now, but it would be made available to him if he were to put an enquiry as to what has been agreed with the landlord at Leanse Place. So, he is shaking his head.

So I would ask him again, whether given the explanation I have given, whether he would reconsider his answer and provide information as to what the agreed rent is in respect of this property at Leanse Place.

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

**Hon. D J Bossino:** I am grateful to the Hon. Chief Minister. Is it the case that the answer is as provided in respect of a previous question in the schedule?

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Right. Okay. Okay. And that is something that I will need to consider, Madam Speaker. In respect of the second question and the two that he has bunched together, which is Question 278, which talks about the total cost of refurbishment, does he not have that figure available to him now? Because I do not think that he answered the question.

He answered the question in a roundabout way when he says that there are certain technical things that need to be dealt with before... Well, that is how he answered the question. I was going to add before he is able to answer the specific question that I posed, is he able now, this afternoon, to provide details as to the expected cost of refurbishment at Leanse Place?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** I am very pleased that at last the hon. Gentleman realised that I had given him exactly the information that he was requesting, and I was telling him where it was. I had given it to him a few moments ago. He is the one who told you he was going to continue having him receive the schedule.

So, he had the schedule. The rent is set out in the schedule that I gave him. And so therefore, Madam Speaker, I am surprised that despite having told him on three occasions, he had not worked out that I had actually given him, to the penny, the amount that he was asking about.

I cannot give him, Madam Speaker, right now, the refurbishment cost because the refurbishment has not finished yet. And so I do not want to give numbers which may turn out not to be correct because I would not want them, once again, in error, to try to persuade the public that I am somehow misleading the House because things might turn out to be more expensive by the time the refurbishment is over and once again find that they have a motion that they bring with great fanfare turned against them on issues as sensitive as whether the House is being misled or not. So, at this moment, I cannot give him a figure for the refurbishment because, as I told him, it is not over.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Sorry, Madam Speaker. Just one question arising from the schedule. In terms of St Bernard's Hospital, I know there is the annual rental fee of 5.2 million. But I seem to recall that the Government announced that they had terminated the, or come to, or were going to exercise the breaking clause in the arrangement of the Royal Bank of Scotland and take on the, or basically make whatever payment was required to terminate that arrangement. Can the Chief Minister advise whether that has happened or is it that the old arrangement is still continuing?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I think the hon. Gentleman may be right. The rental cost of 5.2 million a year, in other words, please just focus this, the rent of 5.2 million a year, which hon. Members agreed for the property at Europort, is no longer rental. And I think therefore that should not be on this list because we exercised the break clause.

We got Gibraltar off the hook for the 5 million a year of rent that hon. Members opposite had agreed for that building. And now we pay the financing costs, I think, to a Government company. So this one is now in a Government company, as I believe.

So it should not be there as third-party private property. The hon. Gentleman is right. The 5 million they agreed to pay as rent is no longer paid by the Government to a third party.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes, one has now had an opportunity to consider this schedule, which Madam Speaker, as normal, grants us the courtesy to have a bit of time to consider and then to pose questions on it. But given the way that the Hon. Chief must be nervous, he must be nervous. I gauge that and sense that from him because he is playing his usual games.

Now, it appears that there are, in effect, what appear to be, in effect, two office spaces, or they seem to be very closely, I imagine because of the unit numbers, we will need to consider this a bit more carefully, which are assigned to the Civil Status and Registration Office, which is the Government's office, a subject of this question. In relation to that, they are paying in excess together of £400,000 an annual rental fee. Now, the question is, in respect of both those leases, one dated 4 January 2023 for nine years, and the other one dated 18 April 2023 for nine years, in respect of premises which have not yet been occupied, can the Hon. Chief Minister confirm my understanding, or correct it otherwise, that these payments are currently already being made?

In other words, that the Gibraltar Government is making these payments by way of rent, presumably on a monthly or quarterly basis, to the landlord of those particular premises?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Madam Speaker, I am very pleased that you continue to give hon. Members the courtesy of time to consider a schedule. You are not the first speaker to do so. They are not the first Opposition to have the benefit of that, and I am surprised that we should want to labour the point quite so much.

But I want to assure the hon. Gentleman that I have absolutely no tingling in my central nervous system when he gets up to ask questions, but he is right to say that he does stir my emotions. I am always amused, bemused, and entertained by him. I have been amused, bemused, and entertained by him since I met him when he was 12, and I continue to be amused, bemused, and entertained by him.

He seems to amuse, bemuse, and entertain himself, Madam Speaker, and he should continue to at least provide, as the head of light entertainment at the BBC used to say in Ronnie Corbett's time, that amusement, bemusement, and entertainment for many years, Madam Speaker. Perish the thought that he might actually ever have to make a decision or be in a position of power, but amusement, bemusement, and entertainment, we are all very pleased to receive from him. Madam Speaker, yes, I can confirm that the Government, as I understand it, but I would be corrected if I am wrong by those who prepare these answers, is paying the rent for the property that is not yet occupied.

The hon. Gentleman has been, I was going to say one of Her Majesty's Council for Gibraltar, that would be the wrong way of referring to him, Madam Speaker, has been a lawyer for many years, and

being one of Her Majesty's Council means a KC, he is not. So a lawyer, yeah. He has been a lawyer for many years, Madam Speaker, and he should know that you start to pay rent when you rent the property.

Landlords sometimes give you a bit of time, a bit of rent-free period, before you are liable for the whole rent whilst you are refurbishing, exactly as happened at number 80A Queensway, where we got a period which was rent-free, and which led to them not being able to do their math right. But Madam Speaker, it would be remarkable that the Government was to be in occupation of a property and not pay rent for it, and it would be remarkable for the hon. Gentleman to think, unless his view of the world is so simplistic, that it would be impossible for anyone ever to entrust him with serious decision-making, that you can move a Department like the Civil Status and Registration Office, which involves, in this day and age, complicated machinery and secure systems, as you move a gym. And so on the day that you enter into the rental agreement, you carry the treadmill and the bicycle in, you pull the curtain, and you ask people to start enjoying the new premises.

This is a very secure system that has to be moved. It is taking time to move that system, to provide security and security guarantees, a word that is a lot in the news, thank God, not in relation to Gibraltar, security guarantees to those who provide the other end of that system, the United Kingdom. And therefore, Madam Speaker, yes, the Government is paying the rent, although it is not yet in operation, but in occupation, because as the hon. Gentleman knows, the tenant is in occupation from the moment he gets the keys and starts to work on the property.

Madam Speaker, nothing could be more normal and less remarkable, but I have no doubt that there will be a reason why the hon. Gentleman will amuse me, bemuse me, and entertain me in his retort to what I have told him.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Many of the things that the Hon. Chief Minister has said, one can take it on one's chin, and in fact, everything he says, one's skin is sufficiently developed, having been in this House now for some time, to be able to withstand that. And indeed, I have known the hon. Gentleman long enough to understand and to assume what he says, and simply just brush it off. But I must say that a lot of what he has said, a lot of what he has said, is not only, quite frankly, pathetic, but nasty, because he has spotted certain belts, which are inaccurate in some cases, but in all cases, and he cannot resist but hit below it.

Now, in relation to the rent, which is what we are questioning him about here and now, can he at least say, and he alluded to it in his response, whether in respect of those, I assume, two leases, yes, two leases, dated, as I said before, start dates of 4th of January and 18th of April 2023, there was an element of a rent relief period.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Madam Speaker, I have been here longer than him. I have been here since 2003, and in that time, I have been called many things. The gentlemen that represent the GSD have called me unfit to govern, but that was on the cusp of the people of Gibraltar returning me to be their Chief Minister for four times.

I have said that he is amusing, bemusing, and entertaining. I mean, the uncouth GSLP, Liberals, I do not think they are determined to be uncouth because they are Liberals, but we in the GSLP were always determined to be uncouth by their standards, by the landed gentry's standards, say that we are bemused and entertained. They say that we are unfit to govern, and now that I am pathetic and that I hit under the belt.

And nasty as well. Oh, we did not say it when he was standing up, Madam Speaker. So I know that he sometimes forgets the bits that he wants to say.

So pathetic, nasty, and under the belt, okay? Pathetic, nasty, and under the belt. Because I have said that I am giving him the information that this is a very complex move.

Well, I mean, Madam Speaker, by the mouth dieth the fish as to who is more uncouth. Madam Speaker, I am told by those who prepared the schedule that they fear that there is a double entry. And in fact, in respect of Leanse Place, it is actually only £214,680 a year that there is a double entry.

So, I cannot tell him whether there was a rent-free period. That wasn't part of the question. If he wants to know, he can ask me a question.

And I will, of course, seek to provide the information subject to seeing the question when it comes because otherwise, I would be committing myself to answer a hypothetical, which I cannot do. However pathetic, nasty, and under the belt I may be. And however, amusing and entertaining the question might be.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Okay, Madam Speaker, I mean, this is a type of question which I honestly did not expect and really, I should know him well enough. I should know him well enough that he simply cannot help himself.

All I am asking was for factual information. I was quite pleased when he passed the schedule through respect to Question 276, and one would leave it at that. But it is not possible with him and he always manages. When I come in to these sessions, I always think, no, just ask my questions, get the answers and move on.

But it is impossible with the hon. Gentleman because he squirms around playing his usual games. Now, I have two further questions, but I will split them in order to be faithful to the hon. Madam Speaker's direction in that regard. In respect of what, the hon. Gentleman has just said, can he then, given that there is a mistake in the answer to which he referred me to when I asked the following Question, 277, he said, well, the hon. Gentleman needs to refer to the answer I gave the hon. Member a few moments ago, playing his usual games.

And in fact, the answer that he gave was actually inaccurate, given his own admission right now. Can he at least state what this information, i.e. the line which refers to a date, a start date for release of the 4th of January, 2023, with a length of lease of nine years, with an annual rent of £217,680 relates to, because as it stands now, and he has said it stands in error, as it stands now, the record will show that this is being paid to the relevant landlord, and I will do the relevant searches to who the landlord is, but I would invite him to provide me with that information, but he need not do so, is occupied by the CSRO.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman has now remembered your direction, which I gently prodded him to remember this morning, and is splitting questions up into two. And I am a little concerned that for somebody who has on so many occasions sought and failed to obtain high office, he should still say that after 40 years, he knows how old we are, we met when we were 12, after 40 years, he says I can still surprise him, 40 years of being friends, old school chumps, as he says, and opponents, and I can still surprise him, and he still comes here to ask me something he does not expect me to answer in a particular way, but I do, and I swarm around, I mean, I think like I fly like a butterfly and I sting like a bee, Madam Speaker, as the results of the Election have shown. But if after 40 years, you have not been able to work out how your opponent is going to deal with you, good luck ever dealing with the Spanish, let alone the Europeans, or indeed, Perfidious Albion, as the United Kingdom is sometimes referred to.

You cannot deal with me, Madam Speaker, it is a good thing that people of Gibraltar decided that they should sit over there, and we should sit over here, that is all I can say. Madam Speaker, I have corrected the record as soon as I have been told by those who prepare the answers for me. I can see that it is the same, it is the same hereditaments that are being dealt with, one referred to as units and one referred to as suites, which is probably why those who prepared the answers for me were not able, were a little flummoxed by it because there was a slightly different amount payable.

And so I have provided all the factual information that I have, Madam Speaker, and in the process, I have not been surprised to be called pathetic and under the belt, although I was surprised to

additionally be called nasty. I do not know who the landlord is, if the hon. Gentleman wants to know, he can ask me a question, he does not have to do a search, I will tell him who the landlord is, but I do not have it here, I just know it is a private landlord.

**Madam Speaker:** I think we have spent enough, one more and then I am done.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** I am very grateful. I mean, there is one further inaccuracy in what the hon. Gentleman said, because we are now 53 years of age, so we have known now known each other for 41 years. Now, he makes references, pugilistic references to, I think, Muhammad Ali, which I think are totally irrelevant, and I certainly do not identify any of that in him and in his time in Office.

But in order to make absolute, to make absolutely sure that we have at least, perhaps not accurate or inaccurate information in relation to this, is he, at least what we, I think, ought to try and obtain is fuller information in relation to that particular lease, Madam Speaker. Is the Hon. the Chief Minister, able to say in relation to the lease, which I understand from his replies, is the pertinent one, which is the one which is extracting from the Government exchequer an annual payment of £214,680 to that particular landlord. In relation to that, I will take him to his word that if I do ask a question in a future session of the House, he won't rely, as I think he tried to rely, in the context of the other property, the Bassadone property in the dockyard, where he said, well, it is publicly available information and therefore the question ought not to have been posed because it breaches that particular standing rule. Is he able to say whether there are any rent review provisions, and if so, the nature and the detail of those?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** No, Madam Speaker, I am not going to commit to answering a question in the event that the information is publicly available. If the lease is registered, the hon. Gentleman is right, then he should just search the lease because those are not my rules, not my attempt at obfuscation, not my inventing it as we go along. It is the rules of the House that have applied since this House was constituted and it would be inappropriate of me to provide the answer.

Indeed, it is possibly also true that it would be inappropriate to permit the question, but that would be a matter for you, Madam Speaker. So, depending on what the question is, Madam Speaker, I will take advice on whether it is in keeping with the rules of the House that I should answer or not. And Madam Speaker, the second part of the question that he asked, now blatantly ignoring your earlier ruling to keep to one question in supplementaries, is whether there are rent reviews.

I do not have all of these leases with me. I have not been asked about that in the main question and so therefore, if the hon. Gentleman wants to have an answer to that question, then subject to how he phrases it, he would have an answer if one can be prepared in keeping with the rules of the House.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** That is not correct. The question was asked. The question dealt with annual rental. Annual rental must include, and that information ought to be available to the Chief Minister in answer to an obvious supplementary question as to whether it includes any rent reviews, because if the rent reviews tend to go up, that would have an impact on the annual rental during the course of the nine-year lease.

So it is absolutely an answer that the hon. Gentleman ought to have available to him. I should have simply brushed it to one side as he has done, on the basis that the question was posed. The hon. Gentleman has simply not answered it.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** With respect to the hon. Gentleman, he needs to be less nervous and less upset and more abusing and bemusing. We are on Questions 277 and 278 and Question 277 and Question 278 relates to the cost of refurbishment of Civil Status and Registration Office and when it

will move from the current address. So, there is no question of that supplementary even potentially arising.

That is where we are. We are on Questions 277 and 278. I referred him to the answer to Question 277 in respect of his supplementary, which was about the rent because I told him I have given you that answer already.

So, I am afraid, Madam Speaker, he is both formally and informally, in my view, completely out of kilter with what the rules require.

**Madam Speaker:** No, we are moving on. No, no, I am not having a discussion.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** The point of order,

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. Member is raising a point of order.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes, because we need a clarification, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Take me to take me to what is being breached or what.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** The way he is absolutely right that we moved from Questions 276 to 277, 278 bunched together. What happened here was in respect of the supplementary that I asked in respect of Questions 277 and 278, the Hon. Chief Minister, hence the confusion, refers to the previous answer he had given. I thought that the answer was in respect of Questions 277 and 278.

In fact, the Hon. Chief Minister, as a result of the assistance from the Leader of the Opposition, actually admitted that the answer given was in respect of Question 276.

**Madam Speaker:** What is the point of order?

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Well, the point of order is, am I, therefore, Yes, but he simply cannot shift. And this is the point of order.

Am I therefore, by way of clarification, Madam Speaker, able to ask questions, which is the leave that you allowed me in relation to supplementary questions in relation to Question 276 arising from an analysis of the schedule? And therefore, and there I will ask questions which he has to answer in respect of the rent review relating, he is laughing, he accuses me of this.

**Madam Speaker:** Right, so I am not sure. I am not sure this is a point of order. What the hon. Member is asking for is clarification. But I do. I think that is a different issue to this being a point of order. As far as I understand, we were dealing with supplementaries to Questions 277, 278, and there was reference to information on the schedule as a result of Question 276, which has also been discussed, and which questions have also been posed.

I allowed the hon. Member one last question because we are now on 10 questions on this. That was posed. That was answered. And now we are going to move on. Not for another supplementary. No, we are going to move on.

What I propose to do, which is what I said originally, is to allow the hon. Member to consider the schedule of Question 276 and ask any supplementaries on that that do not relate to the CSRO and Leanse Place because we have dealt with that. And the hon. Member has looked at that schedule. So, I will come back to Question 276. We can have a discussion when I come back to Question 276. But now we are going to move on to Question 279.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, if I may, before I was going to say your leadership, but before, Madam Speaker.



**Madam Speaker:** If it was that, I could intervene a lot more, believe me.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Will you take a final view, if I may? Madam Speaker is right that we were on Questions 277 and 278. I had one question, a supplementary on Question 277.

We have tended to gravitate away as a result of the way that the Hon. Chief Minister answered, referring the hon. Member to his previous answer, which was not in relation to Questions 277 and 278 and my hon. Colleague has asked a number of nitty-gritty questions with reference to the schedule in relation to Question 276. And that has given the impression, therefore, that all those supplementaries are more specifically in relation to Questions 277 and 278, but it has not been really.

It has been in respect of the Leanse Place answer in relation to Question 276. So if my Learned Friend were to ask supplementary...

**Madam Speaker:** That is precisely what I have said.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Is that if my Learned Friend to my right is going to ask questions in relation to the schedule in Question 276, it would be understandable if he were not to be allowed to ask any questions in relation to Leanse Place. But perhaps my supplementary on Question 277 could be allowed because a lot of the number counting in relation to the supplementary count has been in reality in respect of Question 276. That is really my point.

**Madam Speaker:** Well, I am not sure I agree with that. It was in relation to the information provided in Question 276 as it related to Questions 277 and 278 and not in relation to Question 276 proper. I am concerned that we have spent a lot of time on this.

I know there are two questions, but jointly there has been 10 supplementaries. So even that is a lot and the length they've taken. So, we are going to move on to Question 279 and then I will come back to Question 276 later.

#### **Q279/2025**

#### **Bob Peliza Mews – Phase 2**

**Clerk:** Question 279, the Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes, when will phase two of Bob Peliza Mews be completed?

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the completion date for the second phase of Bob Peliza Mews estate is dependent on when the site is vacated by AquaGib and when an agreement is reached with the commercial warehouse owners over their relocation. In respect of AquaGib, they will be vacating the southern end of their facility by the end of March 2025. This will allow demolitions to begin immediately, as I previously indicated, in order to clear the site.

Construction of the first block in phase two can then commence immediately with completion programme to be two years from then. The remaining AquaGib facilities on the northern end of the site are programmed to be decommissioned by November 2025, at which point that part of the site can also be demolished and cleared. Construction can then also begin on the second block in phase two, with completion also programmed to be two years from the start of it.

In relation to the commercial warehouse, the original plan had been to relocate this in its entirety out of the site. However, despite agreement having been reached to provide a new warehouse on another plot on a like-for-like basis, the owners changed their requirements and requested a series of upgrades, which were not acceptable to His Majesty's Government of Gibraltar. This meant other options have had to be explored and an in-principle agreement has now been reached.

This will allow them to remain at their current location without affecting the construction of the affordable housing blocks. This will, however, affect the pensioner rental block that is part of the Bob Peliza Mews Estate, but a new location has already been identified. This will deliver at least the same number of units while still being linked to the estate.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes, Madam Speaker, there certainly has been some movement, not historically, but certainly since the last time that I raised this question in the House, which was in November 2023, which I think the Hon. Chief Minister there provided me with expected completion dates. And then there was a report by the local press, I think it was Gibraltar Chronicle, where the Government spokesman was unable to provide a definitive completion date. This was in October 2024, a year after, more or less a year after I asked my question.

I hear what the hon. Gentleman says, and I am glad to hear also that there has been a resolution, at least insofar as the AquaGib-related matters are concerned. But in respect of what is causing an obstacle to the further development of the site, which is what is going to impact on the pensioner flats, which the Hon. Chief Minister mentioned, at the end of his answer, he made a reference to an alternate location, having, I think he said, having been identified, but somehow linked to the rest of the development. Is he able to provide more precision as to the location of this particular alternative site?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Not at this stage, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** And why is that the case?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Because Madam Speaker, there are others who need to hear from the Government before the whole community hears from the Government what we intend to do.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** And is he able to provide this house with some form of timeline as to when the Hon. Chief Minister will be able to provide that type of information by way of an announcement to the general public, who I am sure are very eager to learn of when they will be able to hold those keys and enter into those pensioner flats.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Given the exigencies of accuracy, which the rules require, Madam Speaker, I do not want to delve into the realms of speculation.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

#### **Q280 and 281/2025**

#### **Harbour Views Promenade reclamation – Studies & Assessments**

**Clerk:** Question 280, the Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** What studies beyond those in answer to question 113 of 2025 have been carried out in respect of the Harbour Views Promenade reclamation?

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, we will answer with Question 281.

**Clerk:** Question 281, the Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Who have carried out the studies and assessments in respect of the Harbour Views Promenade reclamation and at what cost?

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, no further studies beyond those stated in answers to Question 113 have been undertaken by His Majesty's Government of Gibraltar. It will be for the developer to carry out any further studies necessary in order to take the project to planning stage and complete the final design. The wave study and the navigational study were undertaken by WSP Netherlands, BV, at a cost of €140,540.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** If I may, Madam Speaker, that last limb of his reply, I assume from that, that was a cost, the £140,000, that was a cost to the Government. Is that correct?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** That is what I understand, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Why do I detect a sense of lack of confidence in the Hon. Chief Minister's reply by saying that is what he understands and what is it that he needs in order to be more affirmative in his response? And hopefully, avoid his Learned Colleague, the Minister for Business, kept on referring us to it. She was angst.

She had a lot of anxiety. She did not want to, in any way, mislead the House. So if he could take a page of her book and state what is preventing him from being absolutely accurate and affirmative and more confident in providing that particular answer.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Madam Speaker, I must say, I am getting a little fed up with having a diagnosis of mental states from the hon. Gentleman. I mean, I am nervous. The Hon. Minister for Business is anxious, suffering from anxiety.

I mean, I really do not understand why the hon. Gentleman feels that he is qualified to make these determinations. It is very simple, Madam Speaker. Saying that I understand it to be the case is another way of saying that that is what I have been told in order to come here and answer him.

Because short of going into the offices of WSP Netherlands, seeing the letter from us to them, asking them to do it, then coming to our office and seeing their invoice and their report etc, none of which I have been able to do in the context of preparing for these questions because I rely on the magnificent Civil Servants and my Parliamentary preparations team, and in particular, the Chief Technical Officer who deals with these matters, who tell me these things are accurate and I therefore rely on them with no anxiety and no nervousness whatsoever.

I come here and tell him and therefore, it is accurate grammatically to say that it is what I understand to be the case.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Is it correct to assume from the totality of the answers that the Hon. Chief Minister has provided to the House in respect of these questions that in effect the reclamation as announced, which we say does not give us much confidence that it will in fact come to fruition because it simply was an announcement which the Hon. Chief Minister made in his New Year's message with what we have described as a tippex mark in the port waters, that basically, given that he is saying, the

developer is the entity and not the Gibraltar Government which will be conducting any further technical studies, that in effect, the Gibraltar Government will not be carrying out analysis and studies in terms of the wider impact of this particular reclamation will have, and I referred the Hon. Chief Minister to this point in the last session of the House, for example, to the sporting activities of the two rowing clubs which are very close to the identified site.

Or indeed to the other port related activities which are also very close to that particular site. Or indeed to the impact that there will be, for example, in relation to the traffic needs once that, should that particular site come to fruition. Or indeed be to the educational needs and all the rest of it.

Is it the case that in effect, what we are seeing here is that the developer in the course of its planning application of all the rest of it is simply going to be producing an environmental impact assessment. And that is all.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman started that very long question by saying, is it correct to assume? Now, the hon. Gentleman will know the saying of what assume does to you and me, not you, Madam Speaker, and not me, but what assume does to you and me generally. And therefore, I am not going to be persuaded, Madam Speaker, to comment on the hon. Gentleman's assumptions.

He can make as many assumptions as he like, and I am not going to tell him whether they are correct or not. But I am delighted, Madam Speaker, that he has wanted to double down on their view that this reclamation isn't going to happen, and it is just a tippex mark and that it was just something I said during my New Year's statement. I am delighted to see that they are sticking their colours to that view and that they are now once again on record in Hansard as having said so.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Well, it may or may not happen. All I am saying, all I am saying, all I am saying that we are not filled with confidence on this side of the House, because precisely, because in certainly some respects of the issues that I have raised here, and we have raised during the course of exchanges of press releases. But it is precisely because of what the Hon. Chief Minister alludes to when he makes a reference to what assuming does to you and to me, that I am asking him to assist us so that we do not end up in that particular hole or corner.

That is why I am asking the Hon. Chief Minister to provide information to this House so that it fills us with confidence. We are not confident that he is going to do it as soon as he says.

**Madam Speaker:** May I press the hon. Member for the question, please.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** So that I would ask the Hon. Chief Minister to state so that we are filled with confidence that he will be able to complete it in the time that timeline that he gave to the Gibraltar public in answer to GBC questions. That the Government has conducted the studies or at least will conduct in the future the studies in respect of the areas that I referred him to in the course of my earlier supplementary.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Madam Speaker, I am sorry to break it to the hon. Gentleman. It is not my job to come here to assist him. I come here to answer questions, Madam Speaker.

This is an exercise in transparency as in every democracy. It is not the Government coming here to do the hon. Member's job for him. If I were here to assist him, Madam Speaker, I would have told him that the things that he generically refers to as studies are not technically at all relevant, do not exist sui generis or at all. And all of the areas that he has highlighted are covered by the Environmental Impact Assessment.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q282/2025**

**State of Discussions – Retired Police Officers**

**Clerk:** Question 282, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, what is the state of discussions between the Government and retired police officers on a claim of a historic 3% abatement of salaries for retirement, gratuity and pensions?

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I will answer Question 283.

**Clerk:** Question 283, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** What is the Government's current position in relation to the claim by retired police officers in respect of a 3% abatement of salaries on retirement, gratuity and pensions?

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, the Government has engaged in discussions with representatives of the affected individuals in respect of the GSD's refusal to entertain this claim while they were in office. Their views are now fully understood and no further meetings are required to clarify the position. The Government is currently refining its initial financial projections on this matter before communicating any potential outcome to the relevant parties as soon as we are able to, which we expect to be in the next financial year.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I see. In the next financial year, can I just ask, does he mean, he means presumably a financial year 2025-2026, I assume, but perhaps he will clarify when he is next on his feet. Can I just ask him to, for clarification on the position, is it then the position of the Government that the claim will be recognised and an offer is going to be made?

Or is it the position of the Government that having now been able to assess the matter, the claim would not be met?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, on the first point of clarification that the hon. Gentleman sought from me. I said financial year, not years, so that means the next one. And I said in my answer that we will be communicating any potential outcome as part of the view that we will take.

That leaves all potential options on the table based on the advice that we might receive in respect of this 3% abatement imposition which the GSD put in place and the claims of these individuals which they refused, Madam Speaker, which we are considering.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Well, let us put this into context, shall we? Because as I understand the claim, if there were refusals along the way, presumably this is a claim that goes back a long time and to the administration of the AACR, so presumably it would not have been met by first the GSLP, then the GSD, then the GSLP, and here we are. So that is the historical context.

Can I just take the Hon. Chief Minister a bit further back? Because a couple of years ago, my hon. Colleague, Mr. Clinton, asked about this and in the context of that answer, the Chief Minister said that they had been advised that the claims by the retired police officers, because there were two claims in play and he will understand that there were similar pension structures, as I understand it, by retired firefighters and retired police officers. The claim for the firefighters was met but the claim by the

retired police officers was not and in the context of that, my hon. Colleague, Mr. Clinton, asked and the Chief Minister gave the answer that he had been advised that the claims were not affordable. Is it the position, therefore, now that different advice has been received, and the Government is reflecting further on the matter and perhaps would meet the claim?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, my speaker, the historical context that the hon. Gentleman sets out is wrong. It is not that the AACR did not meet the claim, the GSLP did not meet the claim, the GSD did not meet the claim and now the GSLP/Liberals have not met the claim. That is not the position.

He is wrong. And I invite him to correct the record. The AACR entered into an agreement on parity and part of the agreement on parity, which was agreed by the individuals, was the abatement.

There was no claim to the GSLP because the GSLP abided by parity and at that time, I do not think there were any meaningful retirements and there were no claims against the GSLP. As I understand it, this raises its head for the first time in the late 1990s and the claim is first made to the GSD and the GSD say no. So, I invite him to accept that record because it is the record I have been provided with by those who dealt with those issues at the time.

Madam Speaker, in terms of what the response is going to be, I refer him to what I said before, that any potential outcome will be communicated to the relevant parties in the next financial year, and I am not going to be drawn on whether it will be positive, negative or neutral. Otherwise, I will be communicating to the House now that which I say I cannot communicate because the Government is still determining it and we are going to communicate next year.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, in relation to his invitation to me to correct the record, well, I was trying to describe things in shorthand and I was not doing so at length. If I were to do so at length, you'd have to describe many, many things. The point that I was trying to reflect was that this matter is not something of recent creation.

As I understand it, it has been explained to me by those affected by these claims. This goes back many years because of a historic 3% abatement which was then not introduced when people were of pensionable age. There is an inherent unfairness on that.

The Government recognised that in relation to firefighters. It did not do so in relation to police officers, retired police officers. We, on this side, do not understand why there is a material difference between those matters, between the treatment of the firefighters and the treatment of the retired police officers.

Can the Chief Minister accept that there is an inherent unfairness in dealing with both sets of essential services in a different way? And is that being considered in the context of the Government's position on the matter?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** All matters are being considered, Madam Speaker, including the possibility that the hon. Gentleman is completely wrong about the way that he poses his question.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q284/2025**  
**Negotiations – EU Treaty**

**Clerk:** Question 284, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, can the Chief Minister provide an update to the House on the progress of the negotiations exploring a possible treaty for a new relationship with the EU for Gibraltar?

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, there continues to be contact at different levels between all relevant parties with the objective of concluding an agreement for a treaty between the United Kingdom and the European Union on Gibraltar's future relationship with the EU. All sides have stated that we remain firmly committed to a favourable outcome.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, that is a generic answer, of course and that has been the position of the Government. And indeed, you know, he expresses that with our support also.

Can he add anything of any material development since he last answered that question in this House? He met the Minister for Europe and last month, there have been other meetings in Gibraltar. As I understand it, the head of the Gibraltar desk may have been here as well recently.

Has there been material progress in relation to the issues that remain to be unblocked in the last few weeks?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, yes, ma'am.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Is he willing to provide any information to the House in respect of the progress of those matters and whether further meetings are planned at a political level as they were last year? I mean, he will recall that it is now 10 months since a high-profile meeting in Brussels involving the Chief Minister and the Foreign Secretaries of Spain and the United Kingdom and the European Commission. There is now a new Commission, albeit that perhaps the same people dealing with Gibraltar are still in post. But can he provide an update as to whether there are further meetings of a political nature that are planned in respect of the negotiations?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** I would be delighted to do so, Madam Speaker, but I am unable to do so. The hon. Gentleman is right that there was a meeting at Foreign Secretary level 10 months ago, but that was with Lord David Cameron, as Foreign Secretary. And there was a further meeting six months ago with the Rt. Hon. David Lammy as Foreign Secretary.

Madam Speaker, if I was able to say more, I would be delighted to say more. Nobody wants to set out in detail what will be agreed, what has been agreed and what is left to agree and what will be agreed than the Deputy Chief Minister and myself and indeed all other Members of the Cabinet when we have the opportunity of finalising arrangements. Or if we do not reach a final agreement, which I sincerely believe we will do, explain why we have not been able to reach a final agreement.

This is not something that we are keeping to ourselves because we do not want to share it with the community. We do not want any of this to be secret. Indeed, you cannot have a secret treaty once you have a treaty and agreement, it has to be public.

So it is just a question of ensuring that we assist the process of getting to that final treaty by not negotiating in public and by not saying things which might be seen by one side or the other as being inflammatory to their views or potential interests as much in Brussels as in the United Kingdom, in Spain or in Gibraltar. Many people have views on this. It is not just Gibraltar and it is not just Gibraltar and Spain.

There are many equities, as I have said before, and when one talks about Brussels, Madam Speaker, one is not talking just about the equities of the European Union as an institution and the Commission as the guardian of the treaties, but many of the Member states who have irons in the fire for reasons

that we cannot even potentially imagine, but where issues matter to them and the top table of negotiation in the European Council can be relevant.

So Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I cannot say more. I really, really wish that I could say more. It is almost five years ago, Madam Speaker, that I got up in front of the whole population of this great nation of ours and told them that I was going to pass a law for them to have to stay home.

Not something I ever expected to do when I became Chief Minister. Neither did I ever expect to say to the people of Gibraltar that the Deputy Chief Minister and I had been to meetings on international affairs of the people of Gibraltar and I could not tell them what we discussed and what we might be about to agree, other than the general parameters. It is not where I want to be.

It is not where the Deputy Chief Minister wants to be. It is not our comfort zone. We want people to know exactly what we have discussed, exactly what we are likely to be able to agree.

We want to see exactly what it is that is agreed, if it is agreed, or exactly why we have not been able to agree it if we are not able to agree it. That is what the people of Gibraltar deserve. That is what we are Elected for.

That is the sort of transparency that is important to this community. Not some of the sort of more technical aspects of transparency that hon. Members sometimes rabid on. This goes to the core of the fundamental beliefs of most, if not all, Gibraltarians and their desire to know what the future of their country is going to look like in the context of the relationship on immigration and free movement of goods with the European Union.

Because let us also be very clear, even the Foreign Secretaries of Spain, successively, since Mr Dastis, Mr Borrell, Ms Laia, and now Mr Alvarez, have said these discussions are not about sovereignty. And they have not said that at the table. They have said that publicly.

But Madam Speaker, we have to respect this thing that we call the discretion of the negotiation in order to be able to finalise the negotiation. Difficult though it may be.

I mean, going on television, Madam Speaker, and saying once again that you have made progress, that you are optimistic, but you cannot say where you've made progress, you cannot say where the final issues are, it is very difficult. It is easier to be able to say, actually, this is what's happened. This is the detail.

This is why we made this decision. This is why we made that decision. These things may look a little different to what we have been used to in the past. But this is completely sovereignty neutral. It is safe. It is secure. It is beneficial. That would be better. That would be easier.

Or say, we do not think this is safe and we do not think this is beneficial and that is why we have not done it. Or indeed, what is more complex. Although this is difficult, although this is hard, although this is different to what we have done in the past, it is nonetheless in a careful analysis set in the historical moment with Brexit and with what the alternative is, which is not what we are going through today.

What we see at the frontier of today is not the alternative to a treaty. We are not going to be always able to get into the European Union just sharing our ID cards and our passports if we do not have a treaty. The hammer will fall.

There will be the Schengen border code in full application. That thing, which the person we have called the rogue officer has once in a while done before being suspended for five months without pay, would become the norm and the measure has to be against that. Against the chaos that we saw. So this, which we present, is safe, secure and beneficial as an alternative to that, which is what no deal looks like.

Unless what has been put on the table is worse than that chaos, which we saw. That is the very difficult work that we are doing behind closed doors, keeping our colleagues informed, working very hard to ensure that all of the choices are difficult but properly made. And this is, Madam Speaker, and I can think of no better phrase than the Spanish phrase, always a choice when it comes to it of *Guatemala or Guatepeor*.



This is not easy choices when the time comes in this negotiation to say, oh, this magnificent option or this other magnificent option. It is, Madam Speaker, this manure show, I do not think I have breached any rules of the house with that phrase, or this manure show, which would one prefer? Which is the safest, most beneficial of the manure shows?

But Madam Speaker, as the Hon. Leader of the Opposition who has been Deputy Chief Minister knows, that is what Government usually is about. I mean, easy decisions are usually made when somebody wants to interact with the Government at the counter in which you interact with one of our fabulous Civil Servants. At number No 6 Convent Place, it is always this difficult option or that difficult option.

When you raise that to the international moment in the context of the United Kingdom withdrawing from the European Union and the position, the manure show, in which Gibraltar finds itself, those are the options that we are dealing with.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Yes. Well, if we get down to the nitty-gritty of analysing the manure, I think we will all have to consult the only zoologist in the room. We appreciate the difficulties here, of course, clearly.

This is an intricate negotiation and so on. Can I ask the Chief Minister, he is gone to Madrid recently. He was in Madrid. He had meetings with *Comisiones Obreras*, I believe it was. He is met Spanish politicians. I know he met Gabriel Rufián, who I have a great admiration to in terms of how outspoken he is in the political panorama in Spain.

Did he meet other political parties in Spain in the context of his visit to Madrid and under the umbrella of the negotiations?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, yes, ma'am.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I see. And did he do so on a wide basis, in other words, across the political spectrum of those parties who were happy to meet with him?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, yes, ma'am.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** In terms of the Spanish Government and the Spanish opposition?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, it would not be in Gibraltar's interest that I give more details at this stage.

**Madam Speaker:** All right. Before we move away from Chief Minister's question time, does the Hon. D J Bossino have any supplementaries on Question 276 other than Leanse Place?

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Well. There is one entry here.

**Madam Speaker:** I thought the hon. Member was going to say one question.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Thank you. So the one entry, which is on the first page, it is the final entry. And I think one assumes that the reference there, although the question asked for Government departments or Government or GDC Departments, the categorisation used there does not quite do it.

But I think one would live with it. Where there is a reference to a Director General with an address at 202 Strict 103 Arabian Seas with a monthly rental, which is the highest there, of £4,550. Is one correct in assuming that is the Director General of the Gibraltar Health Authority?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the heading to that page.

**Madam Speaker:** The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I had two questions. I am just going to make, state them quickly both, if I may. Under Government Law Offices, under NatWest House, there are two entries.

They both have the same amount and the same dates. Is that also duplication or would it be a case of two leases in respect of different parts of the property?

**Madam Speaker:** Ask that question and then I will let you ask a second question.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I have been given that there is two, but it may be a duplication. I shall ask.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Yes, we would be grateful if he did ask. And in relation to the Department of Education, St. Mary's School, in the column length of lease, it says 150 years. Can you just confirm whether that is accurate?

We had not understood that to be the case. We understood that there to be a term of a lease, which had a break clause. Cannot recall where the break clause was, which allowed the Government to then purchase it. But we certainly did not think the length of the lease was that long but perhaps he can clarify.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, there is definitely an option to purchase, I think from memory, but I will not be held to it, that it is after seven years. Yeah, but I am saying specifically that I cannot vouch for the accuracy of that. But I should check.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

## HOUSING AND THE GIBRALTAR UNIVERSITY

Q155/2025

### Location of the Site - Residents of Queen's Hotel

**Clerk:** Questions to the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University.  
Question 155, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition on behalf of the Hon. A Sanchez.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, could the Government provide the exact location of the site on Engineers Lane to which it intends to relocate some of the residents of Queen's Hotel?

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

**Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University (Hon. P A Orfila):** Madam Speaker, the Government is not in a position to confirm any intended relocation at this stage.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Sorry, can I just ask the Minister to clarify, when the hon. Lady says that the Government's not in a position to confirm the relocation, does she mean that she cannot confirm the identity of the location or that the relocation will not take place?

**Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, at the moment the relocation is being looked at.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I see. I understand from that answer that the relocation may not take place at all from that. I thought that the Government's position, as had been confirmed in public, was that the relocation would happen and that the sites were being looked at, but is she now saying a different thing?

**Hon. P A Orfila:** That is accurate, what you have just said, yes.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Sorry, I have asked the question, and I put two scenarios, so the hon. Lady needs to tell me which of those two scenarios is the accurate one.

**Hon. P A Orfila:** The one in which you said the Government had set out. We are in the process of, but we do not want to make mistakes with this, okay? We are doing it very carefully, so we get it right, which is why we have decided to really look at whether it is worth relocating some or everybody or doing it another way.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I see. Okay, that is what Peter Mandelson would call the third way, because what I said the Government had said was that the relocation would take place. The hon. Lady has got up to say that the Government's position is that it would take place maybe in part or not at all, which is almost all of them and that is why I am asking her to clarify it.

I take from her last answer, I think that she is saying that all options are on the table and despite having said before perhaps that the relocation would take place, the position is that all options are on the table, including that the relocation would not take place.

**Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, relocation has to take place.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I see, that is progress. But the hon. Lady is now reconsidering where this would go. That is how I am understanding her answer, is that right?

**Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, that is correct.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question. Yes, sorry.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** A final one, Madam Speaker. Given that the site needs to be at some point cleared because there is going to be works on the site of where the current Queen's Hotel is, does the Government expect to take this decision within a particular timescale? Is it under pressure to clear the site or is it something that it feels no pressure of time on and will take its time?

**Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, the relocation will take place when there is a suitable place to be relocated to. We are not going to put pressure into it. We want to get things right. We do not want to be accused afterwards of just dumping people here or there. We want to get it right, OK? We are going to be relocating and there is no pressure as to we want to do it as quickly as we can. But there is definitely a relocation going to take place, yes.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q156-158/2025**

**Government Pensioner – Estates & Waiting Lists**

**Clerk:** Question 156, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition on behalf of the Hon. A Sanchez.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, could the Government provide the following information regarding Government pensioner estates broken down by estate? The number of wardens per estate, the hours shifts covered during weekdays, the hours and shifts covered during weekends, the training provided to wardens and the duties of the wardens.

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

**Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University (Hon. P A Orfila):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 157 and 158.

**Clerk:** Question 157, the Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Please provide the number of people currently waiting for Government pensioner flats.

**Clerk:** Question 158, the Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** How many flats are there currently empty in all Government pensioner estates broken down by estates and the period of time that they have remained empty? Answer, the Hon. Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University.

**Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University (Hon. P A Orfila):** Madam Speaker, answer to Question 156. There are two wardens per state. The working hours during the week are from 8am to 8pm. The working hours during weekends are from 7.30am to 1pm. In-house induction training is given to all wardens upon taking up their post, which includes but not limited to, dealing with tenant concerns, responding to emergencies, logging of incidents and reporting maintenance issues and breakages of facilities. Answer to Question 157.

At present, there are 265 Government tenants who have shown an interest in the pensioner exchange flat. And answer, in answer to Question 158, the total number of empty flats within Government pensioner estates is at the moment 5. These are as follows: One in Bishop Canilla House that has been unoccupied since February 25, which is this month, barely; Three in Charles Bruzon House, unoccupied since January 25, February 25 and one in October 24; One in Albert Risso House, unoccupied since September 24; and one flat in Seamaster Lodge, unoccupied since December 24. Those that appear vacant are in the process of being refurbished and are already earmarked.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Can I just ask, I think one supplementary on Question 156. The hon. Lady says there are two wardens per estate. In discussions with those who live there, have there been any concerns expressed as to whether that is a sufficient number to deal with all the matters of maintenance that are raised in respect of the estate?

**Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, I am in constant contact with the pensioners' blocks, very especially the pensioners' blocks because I do take a concern in their issues. I have not been told that they want another warden. Sometimes they do complain that the wardens do things as quickly as they do not want them to, but certainly two wardens is more than enough.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** And just to understand it, how it works, because obviously there is the four Government pensioner estates, if I can call them that way, although they are not really described as such, so you'd have eight wardens in effect and they are sourced presumably from the Government, they are public servants. Because it is eight of them, how is it when there are vacancies or absenteeism, on the day they are filled from other officers in the Government department, is that how it works?

**Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, normally there are a few that we have on standby from Government officers, from the Housing Works. It rarely happens, very rarely. And there are two per estate and we have tried asking if they would like to rotate, but they are quite happy and we feel it is the right thing to do to keep them there because then they are familiar with the people that live there and the people that live there feel a lot more protected, if you want to use a better word, when they know that they can relate to these particular wardens.

**Madam Speaker:** Any other supplementaries on Questions 157 and 158?

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Does the Hon. Minister, in respect of Question 157, where I think she said 265 Government tenants, had expressed a willingness to exchange their flats, their current flats, presumably for a Government pensioner flat. Does she have an idea as to how quickly, and I am hesitating because I can appreciate it is not going to be an easy question to answer and if she cannot, she cannot, does she have an idea as to how an aim, because she is often fond of stating her aims and setting out what it is that she wants to achieve. Does she have an aim in respect of meeting those demands and as to when those 265 Government tenants will be able to exchange the flats?

**Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, hopefully during the lifetime of this Parliament, you must bear in mind one thing, we are talking about pensioners, pensioners' flats. In order for a pensioner flat to become vacant, unfortunately, the pensioner has to be deceased. Fortunately, pensioners are living a lot longer and healthier lives, which means that sometimes the pensioners' flats do not come back as quickly as people on the waiting list may want them to, but thankfully they are living longer.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** And I appreciate that and given that reply by way of an answer and also given the answer she gave in respect of Question 158, how is she and her Government going to be able to meet that deadline of satisfying the requests for exchange of these 265 Government tenants within the lifetime of this Parliament? We keep on saying it, but there are only two and a half years left.

**Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, with a lot of hard work and initiative?

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes, but will it require absolutely a lot of hard work and an initiative, absolutely, but will it also require, I suppose, does the Government have any current intention of building specialised flats to satisfy this particular need? I am conscious of the plans in respect of the pensioner flats, which is going to be meeting a different need in the Laguna estate plot, but in respect of this particular need, Government tenants, does the Government have any specific plans in relation to building something for these individuals?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman seems to have forgotten the answer I gave him a few moments ago in relation to Bob Peliza Mews.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** I see, it will be met in part by the construction of those particular flats, and from that, I am assuming that the Minister is equally as confident as the Chief Minister that that part of the Bob Peliza development will be complete during the course of the next two and a half years, despite

the issues which the Hon. Chief Minister raised in the context of the answers that I gave to me in relation to the warehouse.

**Madam Speaker:** I thought there was a... Was there a question there? Yes. Oh, sorry. All right, all right.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Will be done within the next two and a half years.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, we gave him the answers as to completion of the blocks there. I gave him the answers in relation to pensioner flats, where planning requires... Not the planning process, but our planning requires a little more work to be done. But of course, it is different types of apartments that we are building, and there are also the ones at Chatham Counterguard or Chatham Views that are going to be provided so I am surprised the hon. Gentleman felt he needed to ask us that question, because he has that information

**Hon. D J Bossino:** I do not have, with a great respect to the Hon. Chief Minister, that information. I do not think it arises from the answer that I gave. But may I also add that this is something which is very much in the public interest. Is she able, and I appreciate that this aspect of policy is in effect being overseen by her Colleague, Sir Joe Bossano, but is the Hon. the Minister for Housing looking at the possibility of making available the Rooke Residential Home in order to meet this particular demand?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Completely different, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The Hon. E J Reyes had a question.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In answer to Question 157, the Minister said there were 265 tenants willing to exchange. Are there any applicants, for example, current tenants of private rentals who have put their names down and would like a Government pension or flat? Are those included in that 265 or is that number in addition to the 265 who are willing to exchange?

**Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, they are included.

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

**Hon. D J Bossino:** No, it is in respects of Question 158. I have no further supplementaries on Question 157. I do have one supplementary in respect of Question 158 and simply to raise with her the accuracy of the answer that the Hon. Minister provided.

We have done a quick count, and we get to six, but she said five and then she did the individual assignments in respect of the different blocks. We get to six, but maybe she can explain why we are mistaken.

**Hon. P A Orfila:** Sorry, Madam Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is correct. There are six, not five.

**Madam Speaker:** Next Question.

**Q159/2025**

**Royal Sovereign House, Varyl Begg - Repainting**

**Clerk:** Question 159, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, is there a plan to repaint Royal Sovereign House, Varyl Begg and if so, what will it cost?

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

**Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University (Hon. P A Orfila):** Yes, ma'am. There is a plan to repaint Royal Sovereign House, Varyl Begg. There will be no further costs incurred to the taxpayer.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I see, and how is it that there are no further cost to the taxpayer when it is being repainted by the contractor?

**Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, the contractor got the colour wrong.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, is it right that the information that we have had is, is it right that the block was painted yellow and that is the reason it is being repainted? Because it was next to a block that is being painted red, so there wasn't a desire to see red and yellow blocks alongside each other. Is that the reason?

**Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, the red block was supposed to have been salmon, not red. When the other block was starting to be painted, I asked what colour it was going to be, and I was told it was lime green. When it got painted, it wasn't lime green, it was yellow.

Now, I got a lot of complaints about the red being placed next to the yellow. Maybe the hon. Member across the floor may be partial to the red and yellow, especially when placed next to each other. But generally, most Gibraltarians tend to avoid the red and yellow, and I heard my constituents.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, I would have allowed the hon. Member to sit down and let it rest there had she not given the unnecessary jibe that perhaps Members on this side were partial to the red and yellow. We are as impartial to the red and yellow as the Members on that side of the House. We are partial to the blue and yellow. We are also partial to the red and white. And perhaps the hon. Lady wants to correct the record, perhaps.

**Hon. P A Orfila:** Well, Madam Speaker, if the hon. Gentleman were to go for a walk about Varyl Begg right now, they may very well be surprised and very much in awe that at the moment it is yellow and blue. But unfortunately, that is going to be very short-lived. It will be blue.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I determined this was a good place to recess the House for a comfort break, although it was just getting exciting. But I do propose that we spend 15 minutes with a short comfort break before returning to finish the questions to the Hon. Minister for the Environment.

**Madam Speaker:** All right, we will take 15 minutes.

*The House recessed at 4.45 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 5.00 p.m.*

**Clerk:** Suspension of standing orders. The Hon. Chief Minister.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I beg to move under Standing Order 7.3 to suspend Standing Order 7.1 in order to proceed with the laying of documents on the table.

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

**Clerk:** The Hon. Minister for the Environment.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I have the honour to lay on the table the Heritage and Antiquities Advisory Council Parliamentary Report for 2024.

**Madam Speaker:** Order to lie.

## EDUCATION, THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

**Q73/2025**

### St Martin's School - Extension

**Clerk:** Questions to the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change. Question 73, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition, on behalf of the Hon. A Sanchez.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker As per the GSLP Liberal Manifesto 2023, is the Government still committed to constructing an extension to St Martin's School? If so, could the Government provide an update on the progress of this project?

**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, yes, the Government is actively exploring all feasible options to extend the current St Martin's School.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** And would that be done, presumably, at the same site? And if so, has the Government reached a view on the extent of the extension? I mean, what capacity do they need to build the school to now?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Madam Speaker. At the moment, we are looking at the same site and we are looking at between 8 and 10 additional classrooms, which we feel should be able to satisfy the needs for the foreseeable future.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I see. And these would be classrooms of the same size as exist at the moment. Is that right? Because I suppose at St Martin's School, you do not have ordinary class sizes. They are different types of class sizes. So perhaps the hon. Member can comment on that aspect.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I have not seen the designs, but I would have thought, from what I know, they would be approximately the size that they are now, the size that the school requires.



**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I see. And then finally, in terms of timescale for this project to take place, can the hon. Member comment on that?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, my intention would be that the new facility will be available for September 2026.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q74-78/2025**

**Introduction to Dyslexia – Parents and Children Programme  
Schools Enrolled - British Dyslexia Association  
Current Complement – LSAs, SNLSAs & SENCOs Trained to BDA Level 4**

**Clerk:** Question 74, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, on behalf of the Hon. A Sanchez

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Could the Government provide an update to this House on the development of the Introduction to Dyslexia for Parents and Children programme as pledged in the 2023 GSLP Liberal Manifesto?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 75 to 78.

**Clerk:** Question 75, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, on behalf of the Hon. A Sanchez.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Could the Government state how many schools have been enrolled in the BDA, British Dyslexia Association, Quality Mark programme to date?

**Clerk:** Question 76, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, on behalf of the Hon. A Sanchez.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Could the Government state how many SENCOs within the current complement are trained to BDA Level 5? Could the Government kindly provide the following information? One, the total number of SENCOs currently employed and the total number of SENCOs currently trained to BDA Level 5.

**Clerk:** Question 77, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, on behalf of the Hon. A Sanchez.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Could the Government state how many LSAs and SNLSAs within the current complement are trained to BDA Level 4? Could the Government kindly provide the following information? The total number of LSAs and SNLSAs currently employed and the total number of LSAs and SNLSAs currently trained to BDA Level 4.

**Clerk:** Question 78, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, on behalf of the Hon. A Sanchez.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Could the Government state how many teachers within the current teaching complement are trained to BDA Level 4? Could the Government kindly provide the following

information? The total number of teaching staff currently employed and the total number of teaching staff currently trained to BDA Level 4.

**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, in relation to, in answer to Question 74, the programme will be in place for the next academic year.

There are no Government schools currently enrolled in the BDA Quality Mark programme. There are currently 13 SENCOs employed in a permanent capacity. Additionally, there are 3 assistants to SENCO and 1 SENCO stroke subject leader English employed in a permanent capacity.

There are currently no SENCOs trained to BDO Level 5. There are currently 364 SNLSA staff. None are currently trained to BDA Level 4.

And there are currently 635 teaching staff employed, of which there are currently 10 teaching staff trained to BDA Level 4.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I see. Can I just ask on Question 77, so the part that said the total number of LSAs and SNLSAs does, and the hon. Member has given us the number 364. Does he have a breakdown between LSAs and SNLSAs?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, they are all considered SNLSAs. It is the same grade.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** And given the commitment that there was in the manifesto, which the hon. Member says will be in place by the next academic year, presumably 2025-2026, that is what he is talking about. Is there then a programme for the teaching of SENCOs, LSAs, SNLSAs and teachers on BDA Level 5 and 4?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, there are a number of questions on dyslexia later on in the Order Paper. I think we need to remember that I am answering two lots of questions because I was not here at the last session. And some of what I am going to say I may need to repeat later.

There is continuous teaching and training on dyslexia, but not necessarily the BDA curriculum. The Educational Psychologists have other curricula, other methodologies, but I can confirm that there will be ongoing training for staff on dyslexia. It may just not be this precise qualification.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Yes, I see. If there are other training, but not necessarily to BDA Level 4 or 5, how is the Government achieving any degree of quality control if it is not an established training scheme that is recognisable?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, it is recognised, but by the British Psychological Society as opposed to the British Dyslexia Association.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q79/2025**  
**Commonwealth Park- Lifts Maintenance**

**Clerk:** Question 79, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition, on behalf of the Hon. A Sanchez.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, can the Government confirm whether a maintenance programme is in place for the lifts located in Campion Park and Commonwealth Park? Furthermore, can the Government clarify who is responsible for the general day-to-day maintenance of these lifts?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I can confirm that the lifts located at both Campion Park and Commonwealth Park are maintained under a lift maintenance service agreement with the Department of the Environment. General Lifts, which provides the maintenance services, is responsible for the preventative, corrective and emergency maintenance of the lifts under the service agreement. Madam Speaker, when I prepared the answer a month ago, the lift at Campion Park was not working.

The contractor had to order replacement parts, but I am pleased to say that these, between the time that the question was asked and now these were received and both lifts should have been in operation today, I am told that they were.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Can the Minister clarify who the contractor is? Because he is said it is an agreement with the Department of Environment, but without specifying which contractor.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Madam Speaker, I mentioned the name of the contractor at the start of my second paragraph, General Lifts.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Oh, I see, sorry. When I heard General Lifts, I thought that was some kind of unit within the Department of Environment. I see, so it is called General Lifts Limited or something like that and it is responsible for both Campion Park and Commonwealth Park. Can I ask the, sorry, I was assuming that, but he can correct. Can I ask the Minister, is the Government satisfied with the lifts at Campion Park and Commonwealth Park?

Not just their maintenance, but the fact that they seem regularly to be broken down. I mean, I pass the one in Commonwealth Park on a daily basis. There are times that it works, there are times that it does not work.

Very recently, I walked past it as I heard two mothers speak to each other. They were both having had buggies and one of them said, it rained a bit and it is not working again. I hear it regularly from people in that vicinity. So is the Government satisfied with the lifts themselves?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I pass through there very often as well and I do not hear it. I do not know how regular is regular. Lifts in outdoor locations are a challenge. I do not believe they are out of order every time it rains. Am I satisfied? Well, every time a lift is not working, I am clearly not satisfied.

But on the whole, other than when, as on this occasion, they have to order parts from outside Gibraltar and that is a problem we have in Gibraltar generally, where we do not have supplies of specialised equipment here because of our size. Other than those cases, the repairs are pretty quick. I wish they never went out of order, but they are out in the open air and obviously this kind of equipment is always at risk.

I would not say that it happens as frequently. It does happen, but I do not think it is as frequently as the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Well, I have not done a number count, and it would be probably helpful to do one. Really, I was asking more specifically whether the Government is satisfied or has received information from perhaps even the company doing the maintenance because is it a maintenance issue because they are being maintained in a way which unfortunately the lifts keep breaking down or is it

that there is an intrinsic issue? Has the Government received any information from the maintenance contractor that perhaps the lifts are not the best lifts for that kind of thing?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker, we have not received any information nor any formal representation.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q80/2025**

**Environmental Agency – Data on Air Quality**

**Clerk:** Question 80, the Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, does the Government or the Environmental Agency have any data on the current air quality at the land frontier? And if so, when was the last time readings on air pollution were taken? And how often are these tests carried out?

**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):** Yes, Madam Speaker, diffusion tube monitoring at the frontier for both NO<sub>2</sub> and VTECs, nitrogen dioxide and benzene, are included within the non-automatic monitoring network. And a survey using an AQ mesh pod, which is a different system, was carried out at the frontier between 27th September 2018 and 5th of February 2019 as an additional test.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, may I ask the Hon. Minister to please correct me if I am wrong, but my understanding is that we have a series of machines around Gibraltar, eight I believe there are a number located at different locations, but none of which are directly facing the land frontier. Can I ask why none of these machines are located here, given this is one of the areas in which we have the most traffic passing through Gibraltar?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, we have different air quality monitoring systems. We have three of the large monitors, which does the full range of atmospheric tests. One is at Bleak House, another one is at Rosia Road, and another one is now on Devil's Tower Road, having been moved from Witham's. And we have about 7 or 8 AQ mesh pods, which are smaller, and they are rapidly deployed whenever we have an area of particular concern, as happened at the frontier between September 2018 and February 2019, where there had been some representation from staff there.

We have the diffusion tube network, which covers the whole of Gibraltar, including the frontier. And I am very pleased to say that the readings do not fail the standards which are normally recommended for work purposes.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, and if I may, complaints have been raised to Members on this side of the House with respect to employees working at the land frontier. My understanding is that they tell me that the air quality, in particular during the early hours of the morning when there is a rush hour, seems to be a very poor quality. Whilst I appreciate that the readings may take an average recording throughout the day, may not indicate that the air quality measures are unsatisfactory, but may I ask the Hon. Minister and commit him to reviewing the situation, given the complaints which have been raised with us on this side of the House.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I have dealt with this matter in relation to Customs Officers who are my responsibility at my department. On one occasion we looked at different times during the day what the pollution was, and the conclusion was, as the hon. Gentleman has concluded, in the event that we are able to bring a treaty with a negotiated outcome, the whole problem will go away. I think we are almost there.

So, we would wait to see the outcome of those talks before delving any further into this. But every time we have delved, we have found that the rates of pollution are below that which is acceptable. Although when I have been there, I have found it noxious myself.

But that is not to say that the readings are not below what is dangerous. I mean, something can be smelly, but not dangerous. Although, you know, I would not like to see people operating in an environment which they are not comfortable in.

But we have dealt with this before. When we were in opposition, we were approached. When we were in government, we did something about it. And that led us to the conclusion that there was nothing more to do. But hopefully with a treaty, it all goes away.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, and if I may, so the Hon. Chief Minister has answered in the hypothetical insofar that if there is a treaty, that the problem will go away. So may I put to him in the reverse, if there is not a treaty, can I ask the Hon. Minister to commit to reviewing the matter and address the situation?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I gave the hon. Gentleman two options. I said, if there is a treaty, I told him what would happen. And I also, when he goes back and looks at the Hansard, said what would happen if there wasn't a treaty.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

#### Q81/2025

#### Prince Edward's Road - Emergency Works

**Clerk:** Question 81, the Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, can the Minister provide details on the extent of the emergency work carried out on Prince Edward's Road earlier this month?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the emergency works at Prince Edward's Road, which were last month, clearly, were related to a burst water main. This required the closure of the road and the implementation of traffic diversions to allow AquaGib personnel to repair the pipe work, to restore supplies to its customers. Once the burst main was located, it was necessary to extend the potable water service interruption and increase the number of customers affected to be able to complete the repair.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, and if I may, from having scoured through the recent press releases with respect to emergency works carried out in Prince Edward's Road, I know that in the last few months, we have had at least six or seven instances where we have had temporary closures of this road due to emergency works. We are a bit concerned on this side of the House, and I may put to the

Hon. Minister, is there a procedure which is in place for investigating root causes of issues when we seem to have repeat emergency works happening in this area?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** I do not recall that many, and I work very close by. Certainly there was inconvenience during the time of the burst water main that I have referred to. There has been some resurfacing done in the area, but obviously, there is a procedure.

If there is a regular problem in any particular area, then the relevant department, be it Technical Services or AquaGib will investigate and, in fact, there are another question on the order paper about the sewage system near Wellington Front, where there were repeated problems and there has been a repeated process of investigation and at this moment in time, as many people will know, there are works being carried out behind the Mackintosh Hall in order to repair.

As a result of the process, to understand what was happening there at the time, which led to the smells and so on in the area.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, can I ask the Hon. Minister, I referred to a recent interview given by a personnel from the Technical Services Department, which confirmed that there is a need for relining or part of the sewage piping in Linewall Road. He spoke about 90 to 100 metres of pipe relining that the Government proposes to get into. Is this relining connected to the issues that we see you finding at Prince Edward's Road? I just seek his clarification on that.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

#### Q82/2025

#### Grand Parade Car Park – Public Toilet Maintenance

**Clerk:** Question 82, the Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** What regular maintenance programme is in place for the public toilet at Grand Parade Car Park? And can the Minister confirm whether it has been broken and if so, for how long in 2024?

**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 automated toilet at Grand Parade car park was not open during 2024. There has been a programme in hand to change all automated toilets around Gibraltar into conventional toilets. This has been done in stages with the one at Grand Parade just having been converted. The switchboard was reprogrammed and the toilet is operational.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, is the Hon. Minister aware that on the basis of the data on the Government's website, the public toilet located at Grand Parade used to be the one that generated the most revenue? Would you not agree that given the popularity of this toilet and its location next to the Cable Car, which is a very big tourist hotspot, that it is not appropriate for such a toilet to not be working and out of service for such a long period of time? I believe it is already confirmed that it was not open for the whole of 2024.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, we are having and have been having a lot of problems with these toilets which were acquired for many thousands of pounds by the previous administration. And it is proving very costly to repair, which is why we have undertaken the programme of converting them from automated toilets to toilets that have a more simple mechanism for opening and closing. Sadly, the revenue, which was not that significant, will cease, but it was much more expensive to repair these toilets, which, as I say, were acquired previous to our coming into Office at a huge expense.

We have had to take this decision so that this does not happen again, because they will be continuously going out of order and the cost of repair was very great.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q83/2025**

**Grand Parade Car Park – Fines Issued Foreign-Registered Vehicles**

**Clerk:** Question 83, the Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, can the Minister provide details as to the number of fines issued at Grand Parade Car Park to foreign-registered vehicles in 2024, broken down by month?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Yes, Madam Speaker, the information is provided in the schedule that is making its way across the chamber.

**Madam Speaker:** All right, we will carry on with the next question and revert to this one presently.

**ANSWER TO QUESTION 83**

Month in 2024	Number of fines
January	52
February	62
March	77
April	112
May	154
June	73
July	166
August	116
September	84
October	83
November	42
December	13

**Q84/2025**

**Licences Suspended - Section 36.1 of the Traffic Act 2005**

**Clerk:** Question 84, the Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Can the Minister confirm how many licences have been suspended under section 36.1 of the Traffic Act 2005, broken down into the following years, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Yes, Madam Speaker, the following number of licences were suspended by the licencing authority under section 36(1) of the Transport Act: 2020, 1; 2021, 0; 2022, 0; 2023, 2; 2024, 6.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, may I ask the Hon. Minister, can he confirm what the procedure is from start to finish in suspending someone's licence under this section of the Traffic Act?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, this relates to the suspension of a driving licence if the driver is suffering from any physical or mental disease or disability, which is likely to cause the driving by him, and I am quoting from the law, of a motor vehicle, a source of danger to the public. Normally, these come as a result of reports from a doctor and in a lot of cases, this comes in the more elderly population, particularly when they have to re-sit a driving test, and it is now the Chief Examiner who considers those reports and then recommends to the Transport Commission that the licences should be suspended.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, my understanding is the same as that of the Hon. Minister, that it is the licencing authority's prerogative to police and issue suspension notices under this section. Can I ask the Hon. Minister whether he thinks that this process is proactive enough in policing this area?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Member will have noticed, in fact, we all will have noticed that there has been an increase from 1, 0, 0 in 2020, 2021 and 2022. I took over in 2023 and then there were 2 and last year there were 6, precisely because I wanted to ask the licencing authority, the Chief Examiner, to keep a more watchful eye, if you like, and there were discussions with the GHA which have resulted in this slight change and increase in the number and we are in contact with the GHA so that if any doctor, normally it would be the GP, finds that there is this sort of concern, obviously they would need to inform the patient and get the patient's approval, but there is, I think, a greater awareness which is why we have seen an increase since I took over the transport portfolio in 2023.

**Hon. G Origo:** Can I get the Hon. Minister's clarification on that because I do not think he answered my question. Is he therefore confident that there is no cause for concern here with this section, not least because, as he says, namely concerns elderly residents who normally have physical or mental conditions which would prevent them from being able to drive.

Is he satisfied with the number of confirmations of suspensions that we had that there is no cause for concern?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Well, Madam Speaker, I cannot know whether this number reflects the number of people who actually have not got the ability to drive safely. I am hoping that the system does catch them. We keep on monitoring and as I say, there are ongoing discussions by the Chief Examiner to ensure that the information is provided as soon as it is identified.



But there are, of course, issues to do with medical confidentiality and so on that would qualify that. But certainly, we have made a lot of progress and the licencing authority and the Chief Examiner on whose recommendation this would be done is keeping a much more watchful eye than has been the case in the past.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, and if I may just make the comparison to the UK, as we frequently do when it comes to GHAs and standards in other areas to highlight what I think is a deficiency in this area. My understanding is that in the UK there is an authority known as a DVLA, the Vehicle Licencing Authority, and it is tasked with the responsibility of issuing guidance on how and when people who have notifiable medical conditions should surrender their licence. We do not have the equivalent authority here in Gibraltar.

In the UK, there is also legislation which makes it a criminal offence not to surrender your licence when a doctor notifies you with a notifiable medical condition. We do not have such legislation here in Gibraltar. With respect to the over 70s, my understanding is in Gibraltar they are required to take out tests once they reach of age and show medical evidence that they are fit to drive.

My understanding here is that these tests are now being done by Private Medical Practitioners. In light of all of this, would the Hon. Minister not agree with me that Section 36(1) in its current form is deficient and not able to police the roads in the manner as is done in the UK?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I would have to check some of the allegations that the hon. Member has made and I certainly will. We do have the DVLD which is our version of the DVLA and it is them and the Chief Examiner who is the person who supervises the DVLD and is the head of the DVLD who, as I say, has become very proactive recently on my recommendation in order to catch any of these issues that there may be. I will check all those facts and if there is any need for us to change our legislation, then I will certainly bring that to the House.

Indeed, I have just been told by the Hon. Chief Minister who has been in this House for longer than me that the legislation was actually presented by the previous administration and that the Opposition at the time voted against it. So, it may be that it is unsatisfactory. Therefore, I will look into it and if it is, I will improve it and I will report to this House in the debate on the Bill if it is in fact a Bill and not done by regulation as to how unsatisfactory the legislation that the GSD introduced was.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q85/2025**  
**City Bus - Collision**

**Clerk:** Question 85, the Hon G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Earlier this month, one of the City Bus vehicles was engaged in a collision on Winston Churchill Avenue. Can the Minister provide details as to the extent of the damage sustained? For instance, is the vehicle going to be operational in the future? And if so, what are the proposed costs of the repairs and has the cause of the accident been ascertained?

**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, City Bus is a privately owned entity and does no work nor offer any services to the Government, so I cannot comment or answer.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q88/2025**  
**Wellington Front - Sewage**

**Clerk:** Question 88, the Hon. C Sacarello.

**Hon. C Sacarello:** Will the Minister ensure that the sewage leaking through the wall into Wellington Front by the ramp's vehicular entrance, which has suffered a number of leaks in recent months, directly affecting clubs and association users and passersby alike, is properly dealt with?

**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, yes, ma'am, this has already been dealt with, but is a natural consequence of the 16 years of lack of investment in sewage infrastructure in the time in office of the party the hon. Member currently sits with. I can confirm that the Technical Services Department, TSD for short, is actively addressing, mentioned it earlier, the issue of sewage leaking through the wall at Wellington Front. The primary source of the problem was identified, and extensive works were carried out on the main sewer during November and December last year to correct this.

The next phase of sewer relining is now commenced in the area directly behind the John Mackintosh Hall and is scheduled for completion in a few weeks by mid-March. As part of these works, a significant blockage behind John McIntosh Hall will be removed. Madam Speaker, I have seen photographs of the blockage, which I will share with whoever wants to see them, mainly caused by wipes, and it is absolutely astounding.

This blockage has been restricting flow in the main sewer and during heavy rainfall in particular, causes the sewer to back up along Lover's Lane. Unfortunately, this results in effluent breaching the existing manholes and surcharging the overflow system, manifesting as leaks along the wall of Wellington Front. Once the blockage is cleared and the liner is placed, it is expected that sewer flow will be significantly improved.

Further works are also planned over the coming months to address issues with several public drainage lines that connect into the main sewer. In addition, a comprehensive programme will be undertaken to repair and rehabilitate existing manholes along Lovers Lane. The House will appreciate that the location and depth of the over 100-year-old main sewer presents significant challenges, making the work both dangerous and technically complex.

Nevertheless, the TSD remains committed to resolving the issue. Upon completion of the relining works, TSD's infrastructure section will return to Wellington Front to carry out additional remedial works on the existing manholes and overflow system. The final phase should provide a long-term solution to the problem.

However, during the interim period, further issues at Wellington Front may arise, as flow in the main sewer will remain heavily restricted while the relining works are in progress.

**Hon. C Sacarello:** Madam Speaker I will like to thank the Hon Minister for his lengthy reply and the TSD for all their work and also for the work they put in that as well. My question came about as a result of the leaks experienced in November and January this year [inaudible]. It seems the case of course.... Of course, there have not been enough works over the last 16 years, but you could say that there have not been enough works over the last 100 years, given the fact that Gibraltar has grown so much, and hence my line of questioning several months ago as to the general strategy for sewage

management. My question, Madam Speaker, is one of long-term strategy. We seem to be good at patching up when there is an issue and relining as and when required, but what strategy is in place for the long-term solution to our sewers, in particular, given the increased number of people we have living in Gibraltar and for the envisaged new builds that are coming?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I am quite shocked by the statement from the hon. Member. The amount of work that we are doing in our infrastructure, in the sewer infrastructure, and the extent of relining that we have done over the period that we have been in Government, compared to the amount that was spent in the period immediately preceding that, there is absolutely no comparison. The hon. Member must be aware of the continuing relining programme.

There will be places where problems arise, but there is absolutely no comparison, and absolutely the Technical Services Department has an ongoing programme, and we vote those funds here every year at budget time.

**Madam Speaker:** Any other supplementary questions?

**Hon. C Sacarello:** Yes, Madam Speaker, thank you. My follow-up question to that is, where is the plan for these works? Previously, the Minister offered to show them to me, but following up with emails, as I have, was met with silence. Are there any strategies in place, or would he be willing to share with the House, if not with me personally?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Yes, Madam Speaker, we have shared with the House the strategy. The strategy from the first year that we were Elected was to row back from the huge difficulties that the party that the hon. Gentleman currently sits with created for Gibraltar by not having a strategy or a plan. I am not very confident with the hon. Gentleman's abilities, given the way that he has discharged his functions in this House since Elected.

But if I tell him that in 16 years, well, it is not as nasty as being called nasty and pathetic. In 16 years, they invested £200,000 a year in the sewer. And we found, when Elected, that the Chief Technical Officer and the whole of the Technical Services team were telling us, it is falling apart.

We have been telling them it requires an investment of at least half a million a year for the past 16 years. And in the past 13 years, 12 years, we have invested, therefore, as near as dammit as that million that we have been asked to invest. And we make the money available in this House, in public, and we explain it and we explain the plan.

So we have shared it with you. hon. Members should know that the budget debate is not just an opportunity to come here and embarrass the Government and call us every name under the sun because it is the sort of debate where you are not stopped in your speech as a matter of courtesy. It is an opportunity for the Government to set out to the community what it is that we are going to do with that money.

Successive Ministers for infrastructure in my Government have been setting out what they are doing with that money. I have been setting it out as Minister for Finance. I specifically took the House, I think, with him in it.

If not, it is public and one would have expected that as a Member of this House, he would have refreshed himself on the things that are now his shadow responsibility. We had been investing that £932,000 on average in the past years that we have been in Government, and they invested £200,000, that is the plan to make the investment in infrastructure that the Technical Services Department and the Chief Technical Officer were telling us was necessary in their time and is now double necessary in our time because they failed to make the investment. We have made more money available than Technical Services have actually spent in some years because this is very difficult work, and they programme work but then it takes time for all of the reasons that the Hon. Minister for the Environment has said because it is dangerous work.

People going into the sewer who are not from Technical Services Department, they are from a subcontractor, expose themselves to with the carefully designed work that the people that Technical Services have prepared. That is the plan, to follow the advice to do that which they failed to do.

**Hon. C Sacarello:** Madam Speaker, I had like to thank the Hon. Chief Minister for his intervention and partisan history lesson but rather than give us figures, would the Government be able to provide the House with an actual strategy for the future proofing? Bearing in mind, this is something that we are handing on to future generations so rather than just patch up areas, what is the strategy for the safeguard delivery of a workable system given the growth of our nation for future generations and the present one?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, in words which came back to haunt but which are appropriate to the hon. Gentleman, I will say it to him perhaps a little bit more slowly and in a way that he can understand. Read my lips, read the Hansard. It is already there, not just in terms of the money.

When we explain what we are going to spend the money on, that explanation is the plan. Do the homework that the people of Gibraltar are paying you to do as a Member of this House and go to the sections of the Hansard that relate to this question for the time that we have been in Government and I would suggest respectfully to the hon. Gentleman the time that the party he currently sits with was in Government and he will see the plan. He is asking us for something he already has, and I must say Madam Speaker, with the excellent work done by successive Clerks, including the current one, it is all very easily accessible.

He can do it from his bedroom in the evening. He does not have to come here as we used to have to come here to and everyone used to have to come here because the internet did not exist to pick out the Hansard, you know, leaf through it. We have made it searchable to PDF.

He can search for the word sewer in respect of each Hansard. Indeed, Madam Speaker, if he listens to the things that as usual, our prescient knight and father of the House, Sir Joe has said recently about AI, he can ask Bing, Gemini, Deep Think etc and it'll tell him the answer. In fact, I can tell him.

I checked. So it is one AI question away from him being able to access from our budget speeches the numbers and the text of the plan for what the money is going to be used for, which is exactly the strategic plan that the hon. Gentleman is asking to please provide him with and he already has access to. Look, we have a responsibility with the spending of money in this House, including the spending on our salaries to ensure that we get value for money for the taxpayer.

What the hon. Gentleman, perhaps, I say rhetorically, consider that he needs to do that and see that that thing that he is asking for has already been debated in this House.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

#### Q89/2025

#### Private Number Plate Initiative - Revenue

**Clerk:** Question 89, the Hon. C Sacarello.

**Hon. C Sacarello:** Following the Government's recent private number plate initiative, how much revenue has been raised to date from sales attributable to this venture?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, £1,546,500.

**Hon. C Sacarello:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the hon. Member for his reply. Would he be able to let us know what the total revenue derived from the GBC Open Day auction was in the end?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker. I have answered the question that I have been asked. I do not have that information.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Since the hon. Gentleman the total revenue from the GBC Open Day was zero. It was to the GBC Open Day. I understand it was in the region of £150,000, but it was zero to the Government. We gave it for nothing.

**Hon. C Sacarello:** Thank you very much for that answer. Were all these transactions received via bank account transactions? Were any cash receipts on this?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I have been asked very clearly how much revenue has been raised. If the hon. Member wanted to know how much had been raised in different ways, then that should have been in the question and I would have provided that information. I do not have that information available. I have answered the question that I have been asked.

**Madam Speaker:** Sorry, before we move on to the Hon. D J Bossino, does the Hon. G Origo have any supplementaries in relation to Question 83?

#### Q83/2025

#### Grand Parade Car Park – Fines Issued Foreign-Registered Vehicles - Supplementary Questions

**Hon. G Origo:** I am grateful, Madam Speaker. By way of my first supplementary, can I ask the Hon. Minister with respect to the table that we have been provided, do these figures also include clamps or is it just fines?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Could the Clerk remind me the number of the question, Madam Speaker? Sorry? Question 83. Sorry, because I got a lot of questions here. This is the number of fines issued to foreign registered vehicles broken down by month at Grand Parade.

**Hon. G Origo:** Thank you. I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for that clarification. Can I ask, would you not agree with me that based on the number of fines and clamps that are being posed with respect to foreign registered vehicles in this area, does he not agree with me that the figures appear to be quite high? It is almost like if we are trying to trap tourists in order to squeeze out the pounds here.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I am pretty flabbergasted by the question. If we were not applying our law and we were not trying to deal with foreign vehicles parking where they should not be parking, I would have questions or comments telling me why are we not doing enough. Madam Speaker, there are vehicles that are parking in areas where they should not be parking and we have a duty to apply the law. Therefore, I do not want to comment any further.

**Madam Speaker:** The Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, thank you. I appreciate what the Hon. Minister makes a point that this is a reaction to foreign registered vehicles parking spaces where they should not be. My understanding from the people that live in the area that the issue is predominantly caused because of the poor and lack of signage. I understand that in Grand Parade it is very confusing to ascertain which are zonal parking, which are free to park zones and which ones are pay and display. In light of the statistics provided, it is supportive of the fact that it may not be so clear for these foreign tourists to understand where they can and where they cannot park. Given the potential negative image this can give tourists from their wonderful visit Gibraltar experience, is it not in the Hon. Minister's plans to address the signage issue in this area?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I am glad that the hon. Member is not suggesting that we should have a free for all parking for all visitors because then I am sure there would be representations in the opposite direction to the ones that he is making. Madam Speaker, the residents of that area are my constituents and they have in fact told me that they feel that the signage is perhaps confusing and the signage is being reviewed.

**Madam Speaker:** The Hon. D J Bossino have a question or has he been gazumped?

**Hon. D J Bossino:** I mean, in terms of the review, and I think my hon. Learned friend Mr Origo makes an absolutely valid point. It is not that we have a quarrel with the enforcement. What we have an issue with is that it is not properly signed.

So I would ask the Hon. Minister as to what are we now, February? You know, the peak season, according to these fines would start in April. With this fine information would start a significant hike in the month of April and it carries on to May, then it slightly dips in June and it clearly goes up in July and August.

So can he give an indication to this House that there will be proper, clear and unambiguous signage at Grand Parade in advance of at least the month of April, which must be, that must be the reason. The reason for that must be on account that it is a holiday month.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, what I can say is that there will be different signs by the month of April.

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

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just following on from this train of thought, I believe at least half of Grand Parade is being resurfaced at the moment. Would the Minister not agree that this would be a good opportunity to, if there was going to be a rearrangement of the parking zones, rather than having it to be painted twice, that to do it once in the way that makes sense, this would be an opportunity to do it now?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, it is already painted. It was done very quickly. I think I have got another question on that later on, but it is not so much the painting on the ground that people have complained to me about. It is more the signs and how they define where you can and cannot park.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q90/2025**

**Harbour Views - Remedial Works**

**Clerk:** Question 90, the Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** What remedial works, if any, are being carried out to the storm drain system in the area of Harbour Views?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the Technical Services Department is aware of a problem which is affecting the surface water drainage system within the Harbour Views housing estate. This is a problem with their internal system and is not related to the external public drainage network to which it ultimately connects. Nevertheless, Technical Services has provided the Management Committee of the estate with advice on several occasions and will continue to do so as and when this is requested.

The department is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the public drainage network in the area outside the estate and carries out cleaning and maintenance works as and when this is required.

**Madam Speaker:** The Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I first of all declare a vested interest as a homeowner in Harbour Views. I have no reason to doubt the veracity of the Minister's questions.

Can I advise him to make sure that a copy of his answer is delivered to the Harbour Views Management Committee, specifically its chairman, who stated in the meeting of the homeowner that the problem lies with Technical Services. That is why this water was remaining in the car park area there. Like I said, we have known each other for well beyond half a century.

We beat the Chief Minister and my Colleagues' school record because we started sharing school and making each other laugh from the age of seven. And to make matters worse for our beloved Christian brothers, we are even in the same house and we are well known for our footballing and other sporting skills with the fraternity. But, you know, perhaps the Minister in a coherent manner could inform the chairman of Harbour Views, you know, that if he is going to put the blame on Government, to make sure their answers are correct and it need be like you, like the Minister was saying now, re-offer the services of Technical Services in respect of advice and so on.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** I know the chairman very well. We often converse and I would be very happy to be approached by him if he wants to challenge what the Technical Services department have told me. But I am absolutely certain that they will make themselves available to provide advice as I have stated in my answer.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q91/2025**

**Moorish Castle - Historic Integrity**

**Clerk:** Question 91, The Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Is the Government satisfied that the historic integrity of Moorish Castle's outer keep has been maintained and protected? Answered the Hon. the Minister of Education, Environment and Climate Change.

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the outer keep is not included within the scope of the current works. However, its conservation and potential future interventions will be carefully assessed, studied and discussed once the restoration of the inner keep is complete. The Government's heritage professionals and their teams are fully satisfied that the historic integrity of the outer keep has been maintained and protected.

In addition, they are eager to highlight the extensive work currently being carried out within the inner keep. This ongoing restoration not only adheres to the highest international conservation standards, but is also set to revolutionise the visitor experience, significantly elevating Gibraltar's heritage offering.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** The answer given by the Minister does not address the one issue which has come to my attention and it relates to a particular structure which I am told on very good authority has been, it is a metal structure, has been screwed on to that wall and it basically covers the full height and extent of the wall and I am told forms part of the construction work being carried out at Road to the Lions, not at Moorish Castle. That is the information that I have.

I was absolutely shocked and alarmed by what I saw and I was given this information a few months ago, but I am told that the state of affairs remains the same, in fact, it is a goods lift. I have taken a note, and I have been told it is a goods lift. So can I ask the Hon. Minister to look into this and to make sure that, does he have any comments to make in respect of the facts as I have put them to him?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker. I am not aware of the structure that the hon. Member says is there. Obviously, I will have it looked into by my archaeologist right away.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Is he, given the serious nature of, I mean, I have seen this myself. He can take my word for it. He need not take my word for it and I would ask him this and he says he will make enquiries.

But it is actually, as I said before, very, shocking the significant infringement that there has been on a very important site. So is he not concerned that he has not been advised of this? That neither the Heritage Trust or the Advisory Council has not advised him of this very obvious potential in respect of one of our prized and important, if not the most prized and important heritage structures in this place?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, if everything that the hon. Member says is true, then clearly that is concerning. What also concerns me is given the hon. Member's declared interest in heritage, which he wants to make us believe every time we meet here, that if he is known about this for months, he has not raised it directly with me before. And if it was a problem, then we would have dealt with it.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** That comment is absolutely, totally irrelevant and does not assist the Hon. Minister. The Hon. Minister tells us on many, many occasions when he gives answers in this House, that he has all the structures in place, that he has this Council which advises him, that he, as a result of questions that I posed in the last Parliament, at last he is filing these annual reports. And yet, despite all these things, does he not realise, does he not appreciate that there is something wrong in the system?



The Minister always says that there is no issue in respect of the departments for which he is responsible. But in fact, the opposite is absolutely correct. There is a massive issue.

So, does he not accept that despite the legislation that he passes through, despite the reports, despite the supposed reliance that he places on Advisory Councils and Statutory Bodies and all the rest of it, there is a problem, there is an endemic problem in the things that he has political responsibility for in this community?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, well, apart from the fact that I am sure there is another way of doing question time, which might enable the hon. Gentleman to garner some political support, without him pretending to be on the last days of the planet with the level of upset that he seems to work himself up to in respect of every question and on every issue, which I would commend to him, but it is a matter of him, there does appear to be a very big problem with the system. With the whole of the system, even the parliamentary system, because we have a Member for Opposition on heritage matters, who is telling us that he has known for months that there is an issue which is potentially hugely damaging, that is to say, it is no longer hugely damaging, it is potentially hugely damaging, if correct, who has not brought to the attention of the relevant Minister, either in a phone call, in a letter, in a press release, or in an earlier question, this allegedly, potentially hugely damaging issue. So it is not just the alleged structure that the Hon. Minister has referred to the house, it is the whole democratic system that seems to be failing our heritage. It is not the archaeologist and the structure there, it is also him referring it to us.

It is almost as if, Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman were wishing that the whole of the damage is done, so that then he can say, look at the damage that has been done by the failure of your system, and I knew it was happening. And now I am telling you after it happened. So, we do not accept, Madam Speaker, because we have learned from them, and if they do it, it must be right.

We do not accept from them what they are telling us, because they do not accept from us what we are telling them. So we cannot accept that this thing that he has said is a huge potential problem has happened until we see it. He will allow us to be as doubting Thomas as he is, Madam Speaker.

So, when he shows us the evidence of the thing that he says, or when, as the Hon. Minister has said, our people have gone to check it out, we will see whether it is the huge potential problem that he has said it is or not. And then we will determine whether or not any of our systems have failed. He will know that on this side of the house, we have never suggested that we are infallible.

It was never me that pretended to speak from St Peter's chair or any of my Ministers. But we will see, Madam Speaker, and we will take into consideration any evidence he might care to bring to our attention when evidence is brought to our attention by those who are employed by us to bring these matters to our attention and then determine whether it is huge, whether it is potential, whether anything has gone wrong, whether the hon. Gentleman is perhaps potentially, hugely overreacting.

**Madam Speaker:** There is a supplementary, yes, but I do not want to debate.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** The reason why I react in this way, the reason why I react in this way is because I would have expected, and this is a fundamental and very crucial point, I would have expected for the Minister for Heritage to have stood up in this House by way of an answer, which was very specifically pointed in respect of the historic integrity of the Moorish Castle's outer keep, to have said confidently, no, I have given a licence, I am aware of it, and these are the reasons why I have allowed this to happen.

What is shocking to me is that he does not even know. So can I ask him this, given the importance, and it is not for me to tell him, it is for me to have been satisfied by him that everything was hunky-dory, when in fact it is not, or there is a potential that it is not. I use those words because I am allowing the Hon. Minister to come up and persuade us on this side of the house that everything has been done properly, but this raises very serious concerns.

Can I ask him to suggest to him that once he establishes the correct position, that he writes to me, if I can put it in these terms, he writes to me and tells me what the position is. Can I ask him to at least do that? Because I am very concerned and I am even more concerned as a result of the answers that we have had today from both Ministers in the Government.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I have no intention of writing to the hon. Member. The hon. Member, I think, stands out among the Members of the Opposition in his unfriendliness towards the Government, because there have been many circumstances and many instances when other Members around him, probably absolutely everyone else on that side of the House, has detected a problem and because they have a relationship with me and because they care about the things that they see, they have got in touch with me by letter, by email, by WhatsApp, by phone call and we have resolved them.

The hon. Member just wants to let things run, let things run and then try and have a go at the work that my team does and the extraordinary work that my team does. I mean, I suppose that if ever he sees the Moorish castle being demolished, he will wait until it is just total rubble before he decides to bring a question three months later. Madam Speaker, if the hon. Member would like to write to me giving the details of the concerns that he has on this thing that he has seen, then I will get it dealt with and I always reply to letters when they are reasonably structured and presented.

**Madam Speaker:** The Hon. R M Clinton.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As the Minister will be aware, under the Heritage and Antiquities Act, the Moorish castle complex is protected, which includes the inner keep, blind arches, the outer walls, towers, gatehouse and of course the Tower of Homage. Will the Minister undertake to apply the full penalties under this Act to whoever, if there is such an infringement on the integrity of the walls?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, it is not for a Minister to apply a penalty. That is not my role. We are the legislators. We do not execute the law. The process will be followed, but it is not for me to impose a penalty.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, I fully appreciate I am not asking him to personally. But you did say that. Maybe I should rephrase the way you asked him to undertake to impose the penalty. Okay, I shall follow the Chief Minister's advice. Will you make sure that the relevant parties do undertake to make sure the relevant penalties are enforced? See, I would never pass the bar exam. But perhaps I should get up.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** If I could for one moment assume that the hon. Gentleman was not intending to lay a trap for the Government and was simply seeking to express a sentiment that if there had been a breach of these rules, that the Government would seek that such a breach should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law, right? Rather than make the Government, the judge, the jury and the executioner then, of course, if there is any truth whatsoever to what we have been told by the hon. the Shadow Minister for Everything, then the Hon. Mr Clinton can be assured that the Government would be seeking that such appropriate follow-up slash prosecution, if appropriate, would be pursued.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q92/2025**

**Moorish Castle - Companies Involved and the Works**

**Clerk:** Question 92, the Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** please provide details of all the companies involved and the works related to the Moorish Castle to include their function.

**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, although this work is being carried out for the Gibraltar National Museum and not for the Government, I have the information as we clear the works given the protected nature of the site. As a result, I can tell the House that the following entities are involved in the ongoing works at the Moorish Castle, each fulfilling a specific role in the project. The Ministry for Heritage, representing His Majesty's Government of Gibraltar through the Government archaeologists, overseeing all heritage related matters.

The Gibraltar National Museum, managing the site on behalf of the Government, providing supervision and expert heritage advice. Fortress Attractions, appointed operator subcontractor for managing the works and facilities once completed, which is subcontracting the following. That is, Fortress Attractions is subcontracting the following.

Koala Construction, main contractor undertaking the restoration works under the guidance of the Government archaeologists and the Gibraltar National Museum. Carduus, project management team responsible for overseeing budgeting, resource allocation and site safety. DMA Gibraltar Limited Engineers, engineering consultants advising on all structural matters in collaboration with heritage professionals.

GC Architects, architectural firm engaged in designing the future aesthetic of the visitor experience. Pula Fuka Creative Agency, lead entity responsible for developing and delivering the creative aspects of the visitor experience. AMA Mechanical Electrical Designers.

GreenArc, vegetation clearance under the supervision of the Department of the Environment. XL Scaffolding, Czech Anglo Productions, safety solutions. This multidisciplinary team is ensuring that the restoration and development of the Moorish Castle adhere to best practises in heritage conservation while enhancing the site for public engagement and tourism.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** So that we understand on this side of the house the basic company structure. The list of companies that the Hon., the Minister has just provided as he has explained it are in effect fall under Fortress Attractions Limited, which was the, I think, is the company also responsible for the Northern Defences, which was the subject of press release exchanges with us about four or five months ago. And I would ask him, I am putting this to him, and I formulate it in the way of a question so that the hon. Member confirm that my understanding is correct.

Then, further up the tree, there would be some form of relationship between, as he put it, the Gibraltar National Museum who has, as I understand it, overall supervision of this site because it is, as he put it again, being done by them. The Gibraltar National Museum, I assume, is not or could be rather a business name and I imagine there must be a corporate entity and I imagine it is Knightsfield Holdings Limited. But beyond that, is there some form of instruction relationship between the Gibraltar Government whose site this ultimately is and the Gibraltar National Museum? and in that context, may I ask...

**Madam Speaker:** That is enough for one question.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, there is a contractual relationship to run the Gibraltar National Museum, which is actually a statutory body within the Heritage and Antiquities Act. And as I said, the Ministry for Heritage, through the Government archaeologist, oversees all heritage-related matters and there are regular meetings. In fact, there are at least monthly meetings with myself on a number of projects, including this one. But the main supervision and overseeing, as I said in my original answer, is provided by the Government archaeologists.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** There is one aspect of the facts as I put them to him, which I do not think he is either confirmed or otherwise. The contractual relationship is therefore between the Gibraltar Government and the Gibraltar National Museum, which he has described as a statutory body. Is that the position?

Oh, Knightsfield. Sorry, Knightsfield Holdings Limited, which he has said is a statutory body? Which aspects of his answer was he referring to when he said that X, whatever it is, was a statutory body? I did not quite understand what he said.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, the matter, Madam Speaker, is exactly as we inherited from them. The contractual relationship is between the Government and Knightsfield Holdings, as is a matter of public record. That is to say, the law, the Gibraltar National Museum, is a statutory body.

Knightsfield run that for the Government under contract, which is something that we inherited from the GSD. And the hon. Member will recall that he often refers us to what he calls the golden legacy of the GSD. This was one of the strings, Madam Speaker, which we inherited from them.

Yes, we did. We inherited this from them. They might have inherited it from us as well, but we inherited it from them.

They renegotiated the contract. And when we were Elected in 2011, we had the new contract between the Government of Gibraltar and Knightsfield Holdings, which included the running of the Gibraltar National Museum.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I accept that. I am just asking the hon. Member to clarify precisely because of that, because this is not a legacy issue of the GSD. I am sure he accepts in the way that he is now described the matter. This was originally a contract entered into by the first GSLP administration, which then expired, was renegotiated, and a new contract was entered into. I am sure he accepts that.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** I do accept that, Madam Speaker. They were, as he says, new, renegotiated arrangements. It was a new contract. That is to say, we inherited that contract from them. This aspect of it has not changed. But this aspect of it has not changed.

What the hon. Gentleman is asking, we, the Government, Madam Speaker. He might ask who's them. Them, the party that they represent in this House, Madam Speaker. The party of which, when he was a Member of this parliament with them, he was the Deputy Leader of and the Deputy Chief Minister of. And I believe in that time, Madam Speaker, they renegotiated this contract.

And we, the GSLP/Liberal administration since 2011, inherited that part of it from them. That is to say, the bit the Hon. Mr Bossino is asking about was already negotiated and agreed when we, 2011 GSLP/Liberals, entered into Government in a contract that had been done, redone by the GSD administration of 96 to 2011.

**Madam Speaker:** Let's try and keep it to supplementaries that are relevant. Yes, the Hon. R M Clinton.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I usually try to keep my questions brief. If I may ask the Minister, in terms of all the entities that he is listed in response to my hon. Friend's Question 92, which of those would hold the heritage licence? Who is responsible under the Heritage Act?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, yes, the heritage licence is held by Fortress Attractions, which is the contractor to the National Museum and subcontracts the other entities.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** I do not entirely accept the history lesson that the Chief Minister has given us, but be that as it may, be that as it may, because it is not totally accurate, but be that as it may, because in fact, there was a statutory agent.

**Madam Speaker:** All right, I am going to keep the hon. Member to questions because both sides have given history lessons, and I had like to focus onto supplementaries.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** In respect of the contractual relationship between the Gibraltar Government and Knightsfield Holdings Limited insofar as this project is concerned, which is a subject matter of the question, can he confirm, or otherwise, whether this particular development has been done under, within the price tag that is, I think, made public in the budget session of about 1.5 million pounds. Is it within that budget or is extra money being provided by the Gibraltar Government to this particular company to carry out these specific works?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, it is not within that budget, but it is not being provided by the Gibraltar Government.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Who is it being provided by then? The Hon. Minister says that there is a contractual relationship between Gibraltar Government and Knightsfield. He takes us down that particular route. Now, in relation to this particular project, the Hon. Minister is saying that it is not a cost. So what contractual relationship is there between the Government and Fortress Attraction, sorry, Knightsfield Holdings Limited in respect of this particular project? Where's the money coming from?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I explained this in the House before, that it is private investment that is being brought in and there are contractual arrangements, but it is not Government money that is being forked out. I have explained that if the hon. Member looks at Hansard, he will be able to see that. I have explained this in this House before.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Is the Hon. Minister able to say where this private investment is coming from? Where this money is coming from?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** In relation to the licencing point made by my hon. Friend, Mr Clinton, where in answer to that specific question, the Hon. Minister says that it is Fortress Attractions Limited is the beneficiary of the heritage licence. Can he clarify this point? Because in the paper which has been laid today, which is the Heritage and Antiquities Advisory Council Parliamentary Report of 2024, there is a list of heritage licences which have been issued through the Heritage and Antiquities Advisory Council.

I imagine is the abbreviation there at the top of HAC. And it has a number 1077. It says Moorish Castle, issued on September 2024.

And it says that the beneficiary or the licensee is Mr Peter Cabezutto. So there is no company name and it is actually given to an individual who indeed is very closely connected.

**Madam Speaker:** I will remind the hon. Member that people should not be named unless it is absolutely necessary.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** It is referred to in a report which has been laid before the Parliament. It is actually a part of the record and this will be published in Hansard.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, that person is a Managing Director of Fortress Attractions Limited. The licence, as I recall, was given to them. The name will have appeared because perhaps that is the person who signed the application. Okay, if we assume, I mean, once again, this is a bit of a mess.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Okay, if we assume, I mean, once again, this is a bit of a mess. If we assume, if we assume, if we assume that the answer which the Minister gave to my hon. Friend is to be correct and accurate, will he not agree with me that the record insofar as this document, which is now before this Parliament, it is an official record laid only a few, half an hour ago, should be corrected to reflect the name of the corporate entity as opposed to the individual? And whilst we are at it, could I also ask him to check the other, the other, the other details where, for example, you have Northern Defences goes to Mr. Patrick Cabezzuto. I imagine that is the, that is the, it should be the same company because they are doing that project as well.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the company directors have personal liability in their companies and it would have been signed in the names. But, but I think that makes absolutely no sense to, to, to try and, and, and distinguish between these.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, if I can give assistance to the House, Madam Speaker, if I can give assistance to the hon. Gentleman, given what he is trying to do, which is not generous. Andrew Lord represents the Friends of Gibraltar, Heritage Trust. But it is not Friends of Gibraltar Heritage Trust, it is Andrew Lord.

I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman only wants to pick at the one that he says is close to us and he is close to us, but not to any others.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** With Lord Airy's battery, heritage licence being in the name of Andrew Lord, although it is not Andrew Lord who is doing it. It is the Friends of Gibraltar Heritage Trust.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** He is not appreciated that the point he is making is absolutely a wrong point. It is a completely wrong point. It is the question arose as a result of the answer the Hon. Minister gave to my hon. Friend as to who the beneficiary of the heritage licence was. And the answer was, it is this corporate entity. Once here, we have a completely different picture. It says that it is not a corporate entity, but an individual. I have not said it.

**Madam Speaker:** Enough, we are going to move on. Next question.

**Q93-94/2025**  
**Schools - Total Number of Pupils**

**Clerk:** Question 93, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, what was the total number of pupils in first schools, middle schools and secondary schools at 31st December 2024?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 94.

**Clerk:** Question 94, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** How many pupils with special needs were there at first schools, middle schools and secondary schools at 31st December 2024?

**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, information is provided in the schedule that is making its way across the chamber.

**Madam Speaker:** All right, we will move on and revert to this for supplementary.

**ANSWER TO QUESTION 94**

**ANSWER TO QUESTION 93**

<b>Lower Primary School</b>	Governors Meadow Lower Primary	216
	Notre Dame Lower Primary	314
	St Bernard's Lower Primary	113
	St Joseph's Lower Primary	276
	St Mary's Lower Primary	138
	St Paul's Lower Primary	291
<b>Upper Primary School</b>	Bishop Fitzgerald Upper Primary	473
	St Anne's Upper Primary	431
	St Bernard's Upper Primary	318
	St Joseph's Upper Primary	414
<b>Secondary Schools</b>	Bayside	1305
	Westside	1348
	Gibraltar College	248

**ANSWER TO QUESTION 94**

	Number of children on SEN register - Dec 2024	
Lower Primary aged pupils	527	This includes St Martin's Lower Primary aged children but excludes pre-pre Early Birds Nursery
Lower Primary aged pupils PLUS pre-pre Early Birds Nursery pupils at St Martins School	543	This includes the pre-pre Early Birds Nursery children who are not of a Lower Primary age

	Number of children on SEN register - Dec 2024	
Upper Primary aged pupils	1016	This includes St Martin's Upper Primary aged children

	Number of children on SEN register - Dec 2024	
Secondary aged pupils	1231	This includes St Martin's Secondary aged children

**160/2025**

**St. Martin's School for Early Birds Nursery - Temporary Site**

**Clerk:** Question 160, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition. On behalf of the Hon. A Sanchez.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, could the Government state where it intends to locate the temporary site to accommodate the additional classes needed for St. Martin's School for Early Birds Nursery?

**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 Government will make an announcement about the site when we are ready to do so.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Yes, I see but of course, we are in the last, what is it, four months of the academic year. I am sure people want to know where it is going to go. When does the Government think it is going to make such an announcement?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, very soon.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Yes, I was just slightly perplexed. It is not my question. It is my hon. Colleague Mrs. Sanchez's question, but rather perplexed as to why there is a level of caginess on it because presumably the Government is aware, or is it that the Government is not sure where it is going to locate it? If it is sure, why is it not something it is willing to say?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, there are discussions going on at the moment to see how we are going to progress with this. And I do not think it would be in the interests of the children who are going to benefit from it that we reveal the site right now. But we are close to being able to do so.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I had like to ask just finally, will the site be available for the next academic year? So are they willing, are they at least willing to confirm that it will be available as from September 25?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to confirm that it will be available as from September.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q161/2025**

**SNLSAs - Demonstration**

**Clerk:** Question 161, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition, on behalf of the Hon. A Sanchez.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Could the Government state whether it has reached an agreement with SNLSAs regarding the concerns raised through their respective union and during the demonstration held earlier this month?



**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, negotiations are proceeding.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I assumed from that that the answer to the question was no, you have not reached agreement because negotiations are ensuing. Does the Minister want to add anything else, more, to give us a sense of whether matters are progressing or not?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker, I do not think that would be correct. The negotiations are being led by the Industrial Relations Department and when you are negotiating, you do not want to make public statements because obviously that could have an effect on the outcome.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Is the Government at least sympathetic and willing to say in the House as to the concerns expressed by SNLSAs to the Government?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I am not going to get involved in the discussion any further because these are points that are clearly part of the negotiations. The Government is very pleased of the work that SNLSAs do but that is something that has been the case certainly for as long as I have been in Government, but I am not going to make any comment at all which would in any way affect the negotiations.

**Madam Speaker:** Next Question.

#### Q162-163/2025

#### Cable Car Station - Project Works to Commence/Costs

**Clerk:** Question 162, the Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, does the Government have any information as to when we can expect the Cable Car station project works to commence?

**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 will answer this question together with Question 163.

**Clerk:** Question 163, the Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Can the Government confirm the cost of the repairs carried out to the cable car and what entity was contributed?

**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, as one would have expected the hon. Member or the Leader of the Opposition to be aware, this is a project run by a private company and I am therefore unable to answer.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the Hon. Minister pointing out the obvious, I suppose, in relation to Question 163 but in respect of Question 162 I wanted to ask some questions with respect to how this project is going to be carried out. So if I may, because I do understand he sits on the DPC and therefore must have some view on how this project is going to be undertaken. My understanding is that part of this project requires materials and debris from the site to be carried down in trucks via the Nature Reserve.

Does the Minister consider that this is still the most viable option as I note that they considered also installing a pulley on the east side which would have been less damaging to the environment?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, that is not a logical supplementary to Question 162, I am afraid to say. It says, does the Government have any information as to when we can expect the Cable Car station project works to commence? And the Government does not have that information.

There is no leeway there to talk about how the works are going to be carried out. But in any case, the method statements were provided and discussed publicly at planning, I believe on more than one occasion and therefore it should be in the public domain. But as I say, it is not a logical supplementary to this question.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, thank you, if I may try one more time. As I stated earlier, the project is going to be carried out in a particular way, which in my view and I believe in the Hon. Minister's view, he raised concern when having sat on the DPC panel as to the possible methods of moving about the debris. Can I put it to him whether he is supportive of this project being carried out in this way?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, in which way? It is a very big project. There are many different aspects of it so I cannot really answer that question.

**Hon. G Origo:** If I may assist the Hon. Minister, I am referring to the waste management that is going to be undertaken when building this project. My understanding, having seen his interview, is that this project may take around 21 months to construct and that will involve the waste management having trucks going down and up the nature reserve for these 21 months. This would be damaging to wildlife and also have an environmental impact. So can I ask the Hon. Minister, is he supportive of this project being done in this way?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Madam Speaker, the only thing I can say on behalf of the Government is that the methodology has been approved by the DPC, the DPC, the Independent Statutory Body, and in making the application for that permission, the applicant was represented by the hon. Gentleman's law firm.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

#### Q164/2025

#### St Joseph's School - Drop-Off Zone

**Clerk:** Question 164, the Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, since its implementation earlier this month, is the Government satisfied with its changes to the drop-off zone at St Joseph's School and have these modifications alleviated the situation and improved traffic flow?

**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, ma'am. The only alteration to the current system was minor to bring forward the timings for the drop-off to be clear from 8.30 a.m. to 8.00 a.m. This now allows Gibraltar Parking Management Services Limited to remove the persistent offenders in time for the drop-off that starts in earnest at 8.30. This has allowed for the complete drop-off area to be clear of vehicles in time and has improved the situation for families dropping off their children. Before this change, just applying fixed penalty notices did not resolve the problem as the vehicles remained in place, reducing the parking area for drop-off. The no left turn is also being removed.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for his answer. I appreciate that these alterations to the drop-off zone may take some time before they are understood by the residents and before we can actually see whether or not they had a meaningful impact in alleviating traffic flow. But I just wanted to seek clarification on the latter end of what his statement was saying.

I recall having brought to the attention of the Hon. Minister an issue that residents were experiencing in the area as they dropped off their kids in the school when they finished the route of the drop-off zone that was a security or type of traffic warden that would prevent them going southbound down North Pavilion Road and instead force them to join the traffic congestion going down Scud Hill. Is it the case that he stated earlier that that has been addressed?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Madam Speaker, I recall the conversation. The hon. Member is one of the ones who does reach out when there is a concern. That is why I added that, although that wasn't part of this particular process, I thought it was relevant. That has been a long-standing instruction, I am told from the RGP from years ago. But in reviewing this and following our conversation, it did not seem to have any logic. So that has been removed.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q165/2025**  
**Scud Hill - Footpath**

**Clerk:** Question 165, the Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Does the Government have any plans to reduce the size of the footpath at the bottom of Scud Hill, which runs adjacent to Cumberland Road?

**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, no ma'am.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, may I ask the Hon. Minister, why not? Concerns have been raised to Members on this side of the House from the tenants that live in the area.

In particular, there is a bottleneck junction when you get to the bottom of Scud Hill Road and there are parking bays on the other side. The complaints that have been raised to us are that the cars are frequently crashed and smashed into and there is very limited space for vehicles to pass. So much so,

when the resurfacing took place just only a few weeks ago, the truck that was carrying out the resurfacing got stuck and could not go through these vehicles.

I think the same would be true if the emergency services, the fire brigade or a large police van were to go through this area. Can I then ask the Hon. Minister to assess the situation and if he agrees with me that this bottleneck causes a hazard that he will address the situation, not least because the roads have been recently resurfaced.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the problem would be resolved if the parking was removed, not the pavement. But Madam Speaker, what I want to add, because again, I have received representation, they are my constituents as well, and I have asked the traffic team to look at how we can improve the situation in that area as a whole, not just specifically looking at the question of the footpath. We have carried out quite a number of improvements in the area, as the hon. Member will be aware, by the Central Hall, further up the hill opposite the Schomberg area, and I have asked the team to look at that and see whether there is anything we can do to improve and remove that problem.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, whilst I am not normally in support of prioritising cars over pedestrians, in this instance, having looked at the matter myself, I went over this weekend, the bus stop at the bottom of Cumberland Road has a small staircase that brings you onto this pavement. Then this pavement runs 20 metres up Scud Hill and stops at a park. It does not go anywhere else and therefore, serves no purpose for the pedestrians that are using it.

I say that on the basis that people who get off the bus stop in Cumberland Road also have access to the same park on Cumberland Road, and therefore the residents have pointed out to me, say that this pedestrianised pathway serves no purpose. Given the concerns that it has in damaging their cars, and given the potential it has to block emergency vehicles, can I ask the Hon. Minister and invite him to assess the situation once again?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Well, Speaker, there may well be other better solutions than the one the hon. Member is suggesting, and I have said I have asked the excellent transport team to look at the whole area.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** If, of all the solutions that the Hon. Minister's department and team are looking at, does it, can he, is he, is the Hon. Minister saying that it will not include, the reduction in size of the pavement that my hon. friend is referring to? In other words, if you are going into the direction of traffic, the one on the left, which is huge and ginormous, and should not have been constructed that way or built that way in the first place, because there is a significant pavement which is more commonly used and much more useful for individuals on the right. So the question is very clear, very specific. Is he saying, given the answer he gave, that there are no plans to reduce the size, that the things that he is considering will not include the reduction of the size of that particular pavement?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, yes, indeed, that is a hypothetical question. I have already said, Madam Speaker, that the transport team is looking at the whole of that area for an integral solution for the whole of the area. I repeat, I have an excellent team and there are other issues that have been raised and the changes that we will bring about will be not as a result of the questions asked here or the Hon. Mr. Bossino's intervention, but it will be as a result of my response to my wonderful constituents with whom I meet regularly and who have raised issues with me which have been tackled.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Adjournment**

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I am afraid to say that the Hon. Minister is going to be standing in for me this evening at a hugely important event at the Convent in honour of the Royal Gibraltar Regiment and he needs to be out of his dapper suit into his even more dapper black tie in the next 50 minutes in order not to keep His Excellency waiting. So, I am afraid I am going to have to move the adjournment to tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

**Madam Speaker:** All right, I now propose the question which is that this House to now adjourn to tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. I now put the question which is that this House to now adjourn to tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye) Those against? Passed.

This House will now adjourn to tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

*The House adjourned at 6.40 p.m.*