



# PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

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

**Gibraltar, Wednesday, 19th March 2025**

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# The Gibraltar Parliament

*The Parliament met at 3.03 p.m.*

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

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

## PRAYER

*Madam Speaker*

## Order of the Day

### CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** May I sign the minutes as correct?

10 **Members:** Aye.

*Madam Speaker signed the Minutes.*

### COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

#### Death of Judge J E Alcantara

**Clerk:** (iii) Communications from the Chair.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

130 **Madam Speaker:** Yes.

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

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

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

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

#### PAPERS TO BE LAID

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Ordered to lie.

## Questions for Oral Answer

### INWARD INVESTMENT AND THE GIBRALTAR SAVINGS BANK

**Q285/2025**

**Government Economic Plan –  
Revenue**

**Q286/2025**

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

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

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

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

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

**Clerk:** Question 286, the Hon. C Sacarello.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q287/2025**  
**General Sinking Fund –**  
**Balance at 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025**

**Q288/2025**  
**Public debt –**  
**Figures at 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

390

**DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER**

**Q398/2025**

**Cross of Sacrifice site –  
Development space**

**Q399-400/2025**

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

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

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

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

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

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

405 **Madam Speaker:** Too much information.

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

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

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

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** 398.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Is he able to provide that information?

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

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

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

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

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So this obviously would not encroach on that land.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

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## INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, CIVIL CONTINGENCIES AND SPORT

**Q289/2025**

### **Government manifesto commitment – Paddle courts at Bayside Sports Centre**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

## HOUSING AND THE UNIVERSITY OF GIBRALTAR

**Q290/2025**

### **Housing allocation scheme – Amended rules**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

665 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**EMPLOYMENT, EQUALITY, CULTURE AND TOURISM**

**Q291/2025**

**Trainee Youth Support workers –  
Complement**

**Q292/2025**

**Youth Support workers –  
Complement**

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

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

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

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

**Clerk:** Question 292, the Hon. G Origo.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

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#### Q293/2025

#### Joint Negotiating Committee JNC qualified Youth and Community workers – Complement

**Clerk:** Question 293, the Hon. G Origo.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

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**Q294/2025  
New Youth Club –  
Plans**

**Q295/2025  
Youth Centre –  
Rook site**

**Clerk:** Question 294, the Hon. G Origo.

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

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

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

890 **Clerk:** Question 295, the Hon. G Origo.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, any supplementaries on 295?

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

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

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

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

1035

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

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

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**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q296/2025**  
**Youth Clubs –**  
**Weekend opening times**

1045

**Clerk:** Question 296, the Hon. G Origo.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q297/2025**  
**London Marathon –**  
**Proposed Upper Rock Trail event**

**Clerk:** Question 297, the Hon. G Origo.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1195 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q298/2025**  
**Employment Tribunal –**  
**Appointment of Chairperson**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**Hon. C P Santos:** We haven't appointed anyone new yet. We've just received, we received applications for mediators and new chairpersons, but currently we have one chairperson is working full-time. So this person has taken on a larger load.

1265 So because of extending the hours of some of our chairpersons who are either part-time or in less hours, the numbers have gone down due to that.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Is there a definitive number that the Hon. Minister is seeking to employ in that role? If so, is he able to provide the number across the floor of the House?

1270 **Hon. C P Santos:** There is no definitive ideal number because they work according to cases. The more people who have the more cases we can hand out. So we need to make sure that the people that apply and the people that we get are appropriate.

1275 So it is not about filling in numbers, but finding people who can appropriately go through the process.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

## JUSTICE, TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Q299/2025

#### Failure to have MOT certificates – Fines

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

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

**Clerk:** Question 300, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

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

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

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

**Clerk:** Question 301, the Hon. J Ladislaus.



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

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

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

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

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

1415

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

1420

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

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

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

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

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

1445

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

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

1450

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

1525

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

**Clerk:** Question 303, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Hon. C Sacarello:** Next question.

1555

**Q304/2025**  
**Royal Gibraltar Post Office –**  
**Parcel post delays**

**Clerk:** Question 304, the Hon. C Sacarello.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

#### Q305/2025

#### European Commission – New delegated regulation/proposal

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

## EDUCATION, THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

**Q306/2025**

### **Traffic Act 2005 – Amendment of provisions**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Is that the position taken?

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

1710

**Q307/2025**  
**Average speed cameras –**  
**Deployment areas**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.  
1755

**Q308/2025**  
**Comcen Tunnel –**  
**Transport link**

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

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

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

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

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

**Q309/2025**  
**Public transport vehicles –**  
**HVO fuel**

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

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



1790 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I am expecting the full report within the next few weeks.

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

**Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I would be delighted. The initial report back I have is that the, I think I mentioned last time, that the trials are successful and I would be very, very pleased to share that.  
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**Hon. G Origo:** And if I may, Madam Speaker, I am grateful that it is confirmed he has happy to share that. And I do recall the last time in giving his answers, he did allude to the initial reports which served to show that there was an initial reduction in the emissions. I think he quoted 50% and this could range from 50 to 90.  
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He did say that this fuel was significantly cleaner, but also more expensive. So is it the Government's position once this report comes out that they're going to roll out this HVO fuel on the remainder of the Government fleet? Because that is what he alluded to in his previous answers.  
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**Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, we will consider it. We are in discussions with the providers, the suppliers. And if we are able to guarantee a certain amount of consumption of purchase, then the cost will come down considerably.  
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And the suppliers are also looking at reducing other costs. So it is possible that we will be able to extend the use of HVO beyond the buses and to more of the Government fleet, which will make a considerable contribution to reducing carbon emissions. But we await the full report and the financial considerations.

**Hon. G Origo:** And if I may, Madam Speaker, can I put to the Hon. Minister whether, given that he has confirmed that this conversion to HVO fuel will come to a cost, is this in any way going to deter or detract Government from the big picture, that was in its manifesto to electrify and go greener with respect to the public transport vehicles? Is this going to delay or deter that in any way?  
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**Hon. Prof J Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker. There are vehicles for which there are clear electrical alternatives, and there are vehicles for which there are not. If there are vehicles for which there are not yet clear electrical alternatives that will work in Gibraltar, then HVO is an interim if they are diesel.  
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But the plans for continuing to reduce emissions from vehicles through electrification continue, but this is another tool in the repertoire of measures that we can take to reduce carbon emissions.  
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**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

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**Q310/2025**  
**Storm drainage systems –**  
**Review and maintenance work**

**Clerk:** Question 310, the Hon. G Origo.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1940

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q311/2025**  
**Rainfall data loggers –**  
**Procurement and installation**

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

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

1960 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam  
Speaker, the Department of the Environment has not acquired new rainfall data loggers yet. The  
Department is presently reviewing this element of its monitoring programme.

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

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

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

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

1990 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q312/2025**  
**25-year Environmental Plan –**  
**Final draft**

**Clerk:** Question 312, the Hon. G Origo.

1995

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

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

2000

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

2005

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

2010

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

2015

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

2020

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

2025

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

2030

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

2035

**Q313/2025**

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

**Clerk:** Question 313, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2080 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q314/2025**

**Counselling course –  
Qualification criteria**

**Clerk:** Question 314, the Hon. J Ladislaus.

2085

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

2090

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

2095

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

2100

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

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

2105

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

2110

**Q315/2025**

**Kingsway Tunnel –  
Management by GUT Ltd**

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

2115

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

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

2120

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

2125

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

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

2135 facility are also performed by GUT Limited.

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

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

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

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

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

2155

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

2160 **Madam Speaker:** Next Question.

**Q316/2025**  
**Vocational and BTEC courses –**  
**Enrolment**

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

2165

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

2170 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Yes, Madam Speaker, I now hand over the schedule with the information requested.

2175



**ANSWER TO QUESTION 316**

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

Cont...

**CONTINUED ANSWER TO QUESTION 316**

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

Cont...

**CONTINUED ANSWER TO QUESTION 316**

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

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

**Q317/2025**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2225 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q318/2025**  
**Secondary schools –**  
**Mechanics course**

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

2230

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

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

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

2245

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2290

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

#### Q319/2025

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

2295

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

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

2300

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

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

**ANSWER TO QUESTION 319**

**Criteria for Entry into the ALC**

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

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

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

Cont...

**CONTINUED ANSWER TO QUESTION 319**

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

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

There needs to be evidence of:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** All right, next question.

**Q320-321/2025**

**Schools –**

**Number of pupils sent home for cooling off /suspended**

2340

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

2345

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

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

2350

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

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

2355

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

2360

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

2365

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

2370

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

2375

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q322/2025**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q323/2025**

**TLR Posts –  
Review**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

### Q324/2025

#### Teacher representatives – Requests to review issues in schools

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

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

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

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

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, no ma'am.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Any supplementaries?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Can I have some clarification on that?

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** The Hon. D J Bossino.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2965 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q330/2025**  
**Laguna Estate –**  
**Cockroach infestation**

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

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

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

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

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

Both of these complaints have been resolved.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3040 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q331-333/2025**

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

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

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

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 332 and 333.

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

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

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

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

3065

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the Ministry for Heritage acted immediately upon being informed of the incident by the hon. Gentleman, although by his own admission he delayed providing the information to quote for months. The contractor was contacted on the morning of Friday 28 February and the matter was investigated without delay. Due to adverse weather conditions, it was not possible to conduct a site meeting or remove the structure on the same day.

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

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

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

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3090 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I do not think in all the time that I have been in politics and in this particular pit,  
has one had to endure the response that the Hon. Minister now says in this House but has said in  
press releases and in press releases exchanges in relation to this issue. How is it possible that they,  
a Government, the Hon. Minister in particular, who thinks that he is the guardian of everything  
3095 heritage in Gibraltar. Who has moved the passing of this Act in 1918, sorry in 2018, who boasts of  
all these processes and procedures and committees and advisory committees who advise him to  
do precisely what he is meant to do and politically tasked to do, which is to actually be what he  
thinks he is, but I say he is not the guardian of Gibraltar's heritage. How is it possible that actually  
it is my fault, it is a lowly Opposition Member's fault for not having told him what was a very  
obvious and clear breach of this particular provision when we saw the bolting of that horrible  
metal structure against one of our most prized assets in terms of heritage in Gibraltar? How is it  
3100 possible?

**Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, that is absolutely not what I said. The hon. Member, by his  
own admission at the last sitting, had seen it months before and did not report it. Now if the hon.  
Member expects me to have actually seen it then as Minister for Transport I should be able to  
3105 now unequivocally tell him how many cars are unlawfully parked along Line Wall Road because if  
I do not know I am failing in my duty as Minister for Transport.

Madam Speaker, it is absolutely ridiculous that I should be expected to actually see  
everything that is happening. I did not see it like I do not know how many cars are unlawfully  
parked now in Line Wall Road, it is not my duty to know how many cars are currently parked in  
3110 Langle Road. Madam Speaker, I believe that the hon. Member should have contacted us  
immediately, he did not, be that as it may, we have acted immediately, we are following due  
process and then we will see how the matter ends.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Well, indeed, how the matter ends. Does he not appreciate that what he has  
3115 offered in this to this House by way of that particular reply is absolutely pathetic. It is ridiculous  
for the Hon. Minister to state by way of analogy that he as Minister for Transport cannot say how  
many cars are double line parked in Line Wall Road It is completely and utterly different.

This is a fundamental breach both in terms of law and physically against the wall of a  
prized and important heritage asset, for goodness sakes, it is the Moorish Castle Complex. Which  
3120 bit of that does the hon. Member not understand and I will ask him, as I did in relation to the other  
line of question, I will ask him and does he not appreciate that he ought to be politically  
apologising. In other places, in other jurisdictions, the Hon. Minister would have had to have  
resigned for something like this and resigned for the Cabinet but clearly, because we are in a  
trustable place, we know what the effects of that would have been. We would probably have had  
3125 a very quick General Election, which I dare say we would have won

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, the Government does not agree with any part  
of that analysis, not least that anything said by any Minister in this House in respect of the actions  
of this Government are pathetic or that the result of the General Election would be, as the hon.  
3130 Gentleman has suggested, because that is what he suggested the result of the last General  
Election was going to be.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** I do not recall that I ever suggested that in advance of the last general Election.  
I mean, one always has the confidence that one will win an Election, then ultimately it is up to the  
3135 ultimate arbiter, which is the people of Gibraltar and its electorate to decide. I made a reference,  
Madam Speaker, to the obvious breach in one of my questions to the provisions of the Heritage  
and Antiquities Act and that is as normal and common for the Hon. Minister. He sends us around  
the Houses with his normal worthy replies and I think he made a reference that he and his  
department is seeking legal advice. I think it is. In respect of what measures to take.

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

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

**Hon. Chief Minister:** No, Madam Speaker, because the hon. Gentleman in his supplementary has asked the question and told the Minister what the answer should be and the tone in which the Minister should answer and on behalf of the whole Government, I tell all hon. Members in this House that Ministers will provide the answers that they are bound to provide which are, that is to say, the truth in answer to any supplementary in such tone and in such manner as they consider to be appropriate and that the hon. Member who is a lawyer and has admitted that he saw a  
3160 breach of this Act which he describes as being quite so heinous, failed to bring it to the attention of the Minister or any other prosecuting authority and needs to examine his conscience about whether he acted properly or not given the heinous nature that he says that these facts have. And finally Madam Speaker, as to prosecutions etc, the Government will continue to take the view that prosecutions are not a matter for the Government, they are for a different party. We make the laws, we do not enforce the laws.  
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**Hon. D J Bossino:** Of course, I mean that is a matter for legal advice and of course the Government, the Minister is able to put certain things in motion in order for certain procedures to be taken. I think it is in the mattress courts by way of a complaint and that would be a matter for him and to seek legal advice. As to the process, what I have asked him is whether he can be more emphatic and robust but be that as it may, it is clear and obvious that my admonitions as to how pathetic and ridiculous the answers that we are getting (**Madam Speaker:** I press the hon. Member for a question) from the press also apply unfortunately and very sadly to the leader of the current Government.  
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I think the Hon. the Minister in one of his replies mentioned I think the possibility of one of the measures that could be set in motion is to seek from the contractor and indeed the subcontractors some sort of readdressing of the damage that has been done to this particular war. Is the Hon. the Minister able to say how serious the particular breaches have been and also in that context, does the Hon. Minister have an idea of what the likely costs will be in order to make the necessary repairs to, as far as possible, make good the damage that has been done to this particular war?  
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**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, the last time I checked, this was a Parliament in a question-and-answer session, not in an admonition session. The Government has not come here to confess to something where the hon. Gentleman, as Father Confessor, is there to impose on us a penance for failing to act in the way that he considers may or may not be appropriate. We are not here to hear from him whether he thinks that we are pathetic or indeed for us to tell them whether we think that they are pathetic.  
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We are here to be asked questions and not to have to listen to hon. Members preface questions with those sorts of remarks. So the hon. Gentleman will understand that when he has made a question and he has made that question about something that he has been told may  
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potentially soon be *sub judice*, the Government is also not going to be drawn on those matters in order not to potentially affect the ability of those who might determine that there are offences committed here by the contractors, by those who have seen things which are illegal and have reported them etc, that those should in any way be prejudiced by further remarks in this House.

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**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

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

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

**Q334/2025**  
**Gibraltar Chronicle –**  
**Digitalisation of archives**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

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**Q335-336/2025**

**Seagrass project –**

**Environmental assessment; Government financial contribution**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

3395

**Q337-339/2025**

**Night Bus service –**

**Passenger statistics broken down by year; Environmental assessment**

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

3400

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

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

3405

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

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

3410

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

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

3415

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

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

3420

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

3425

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

**ANSWER TO QUESTION 339**

**ANSWER TO QUESTION 337**

Total number of passengers that used the Night Service per month

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

**ANSWER TO QUESTION 338**

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

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

**ANSWER TO QUESTION 339**

**ANSWER TO QUESTION 339**

**2018**

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

**2019**

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

**CONTINUED ANSWER TO QUESTION 339**

**2022**

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

**2023**

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

Cont...



**CONTINUED ANSWER TO QUESTION 339**

**2024**

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

3435

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

3440

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

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

3445

I do not want to misinterpret exactly what subject that is. I was tempted to think it was a certificate of physical education or something, but the Minister may have the correct nomenclature for that course.

3450

**Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, my first thought would be PE, but I am not going to say that because I need to check. And I will tell him tomorrow or later today.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, I am grateful just, you know, for future use. Can I double check, Madam Speaker, with your leave? Because the Minister before did try to explain there was a difference.

3455

Under the Gibraltar College, there is a course on women's Hairdressing, Level 3, Year 2. Then there is, in the Bayside, there is a reference to Hair and Beauty, Level 2. And on the Westside, there is a Hair and Beauty, Level 2, and he has broken that down to Year 1 and Year 2.

So, are they completely different courses or are there different syllables attached to each one? He did sort of hint that there was a difference between women's Hairdressing and Hair and Beauty, but does he have any further clarification for those of us not well-acquainted with this? What are the actual differences in the course?

3460

I know one is sort of registration done for the College, the other two are Bayside and Westside. I mean, do they both type of courses use the same external provider? I know the one from the College does, but do the others still use the same external provider?

3465 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Yes, Madam Speaker, they are different courses. The Hair and Beauty, which is the one done in the secondary, is Hair and Beauty. The one in the College is Hairdressing and they are both provided by the same external provider.

**Madam Speaker:** All right, next question.

3470

### Adjournment

3475 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, that might be a convenient moment to take the next question tomorrow at 3 p.m. and I therefore move that the House should adjourn to tomorrow at 3 p.m.

3480 **Madam Speaker:** All right, I now propose the question which is that this House do now adjourn to tomorrow at 3 p.m. I now put the question which is that this House do now adjourn to tomorrow at 3 p.m. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye) Those against?

This House will now adjourn to tomorrow at 3 p.m.

*The House adjourned at 7.53 p.m.*