PROCEEDINGS OF THE

GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.33 p.m. – 5.36 p.m.

Gibraltar, Thursday, 8th October 2026

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 3.33 p.m.

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

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

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Thursday the 8th of October 2026.
Suspension of Standing Orders, the Hon. Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I beg to suspend Standing Order 7(3), to suspend Standing Order 7(1) in order to proceed with the laying of a document on the table.

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

PAPERS TO BE LAID

Clerk: Papers to be laid, the Hon. Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to lay on the table the Transaction Tax (Deductions) Rules 2026.

Madam Speaker: Ordered to lie.

Questions for Oral Answer

EDUCATION, THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Q365-367/2026
St. Martin's School –
Offered interim childcare arrangements & progress of the extension.

Clerk: Answers to Oral Questions continued.
Questions to the Hon. Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Question 365, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Can the Government explain why parents of children due to start St. Martin's School in September 2026 were offered interim childcare arrangements instead of commencing the normal school day, and provide details of the arrangements put in place, including the number of children affected and how long these arrangements were required?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Yes, Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 366 and 367.

Clerk: Question 366, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Can the Government confirm whether the St Martin's School extension being delivered remains materially the same as the scheme announced in Government Press Release 364/2025 of 16 May 2025 and, if not, identify any changes that have subsequently been made to its scope?

Clerk: Question 367, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Can the Government provide an update on the progress of the extension to St Martin's School, including the stage reached to date and the anticipated date by which the extension will be fully completed and operational?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, the start date for the reception cohort was the 14th September. The interim arrangements were required for a very short period of four mornings to allow final fitting out of the room.

In answer to Question 366, yes, Madam Speaker, the scheme remains materially the same except for a minor amendment to extend the roof playground that has been submitted to town planning. The full works are due to be completed during the midterm break, but I will qualify that, Madam Speaker, because the lift, which is a major structural lead, had some delays, and because work on the lift which is an additional lift; there is a lift already, would be disruptive to the school, I took the decision to halt those works so that works on the lift can only continue during holiday time. So, the lift will not be ready by midterm, but all the rest we are informed will be.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, in respect of question 365, the Hon. Minister stated that the provision arrangements were required for four mornings. Would the Hon. Minister be able to elaborate where did the provision run from exactly?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker, delighted to provide that information. I am told that of the 20 children in the cohort, only 4 required the interim provision, and that was carried out in the premises of St Martin's School according to my information.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, the correspondence that I have seen referred to childcare arrangements, and that might be different to educational arrangements. Would the Hon. Minister be able to elaborate as to what was offered and what arrangements were made?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker, it was childcare as opposed to education. It is important to the school that the children should begin their school journey in the classrooms and the learning environment intended for them, with access to all the spaces and so on. As these spaces were not yet available because they were receiving the final fitting out, it would not have been possible during this four-day interim period to provide the reception experience in the way the school had planned. So, for this reason, the temporary provision was deliberately described to families as childcare rather than as a commencement of the normal school day, which started four days later.

Hon. A Sanchez: Okay, and I am moving on to 366. In respect of the original extension, because I note that there has been an application to make changes or to apply for a further extension. I am correct to say that the scope remains with the 9 classrooms, and everything remains as originally stated in the original press release?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, ma'am.

Hon. A Sanchez: And could the Hon. Minister state whether this phase of the construction is complete and whether all the 9 classrooms and all that part of the extension is now ready?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: No, Madam Speaker. As I referred to in my answer, this would be ready during the midterm break. 5 of the classrooms are already in use and the others are nearing completion.

Hon. A Sanchez: Would the Hon. Minister be able to elaborate on the cause of the delay? I note that there is a press release, I do not have the exact number of the press release, but it was around May when the original extension was announced, that notes the Minister saying that it would be complete around September 2026.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, through experience I can say that it is called the construction industry. I believe that the main delay was due to the non-arrival of some fittings, but it is a construction industry which, traditionally and sadly, tends to suffer delays.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, I note now that there was an article in the Chronicle published earlier this month that notes that there will now be additional works, which the Minister has also commented on in his answer.

My question is that when the original extension was announced, evidently projections must have been made in respect of the additional space required. Did those projections not foresee the additional teaching space and areas that are now being needed and adapted for in this further extension?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: I am not sure that I got the gist of the question. I think I have been asked whether we predicted the number of children that we were getting. Is that what the question was, Madam Speaker?

Hon. A Sanchez: My question is, Madam Speaker, that evidently when the Government announced the original extension in May 2025, I assumed that projections must have been made to determine the size of the extension and the classrooms needed and the space needed. My question is: did those projections not take into account the additional teaching space and areas that were required, and if so, why is a further extension now needed, and why were those projections and those numbers not taken into account then?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: No, there is no further extension needed. The extension is just a minor extension on the roof playground. The actual number of rooms are the same as we announced in May. No additional rooms have been provided or are being provided.

Hon. A Sanchez: But the extension the further works they note teaching spaces, am I correct, and further spaces for the children?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, the further works that I am saying should be finished by midterm is that the question? There are no others. We are looking at 5 classrooms already in use, 4 classrooms to be completed. I have got a copy of the press release that the hon. Lady kindly referred to. It includes the hygiene rooms, the sensory hub, those other works that are being completed. The only additional to that, as I said in my answer, is a minor extension in one of the playgrounds. Nothing else. And that should be enough for what we project for the next couple of years.

Hon. A Sanchez: Right, Madam Speaker, and in respect of this new phase that has now been announced in respect of this sensory space on the roof and these additional works, would the Hon. Minister be able to give us a time frame when he expects all of this to be complete?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, these works we are referring to are those that we announced in May 2025 in Press Release 364 of 2025, which the hon. Lady referred to in her question. They are the works with a small extension to the roof terrace area that are due to be completed, with the exception, as I said before, of the lift, because there were more structural issues than were predicted and I was not going to have major disruptive works happening during term time, so they have been halted and will carry on when the school is closed. But there are no additional works going on on that site other than those announced in May last year.

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

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Can I ask the Hon. Minister, he has mentioned, I think, 5 classrooms already in operation and there are another 4 coming on, 9 in total I think he has indicated. Is he confident that with the additional 9 classrooms that will be sufficient now going forward in the foreseeable future, and what is the capacity that they are expecting at St Martin's School in the next few years?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Okay, Madam Speaker, I would not be able to provide the actual numbers going for the past years it has been about an extra 20 a year; some do leave in the latter years. But I think the hon. Lady may have been referring to something that I may have mentioned in my budget speech about increasing capacity for St. Martin's. We have other plans for extending capacity at St Martin's but not on this site.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: And would he be willing to perhaps explain that in a bit more detail?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: No, Madam Speaker, I am not able to do that because it is in planning stages and I am not able to share that at this stage.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: So, the answer to my original question is the Minister satisfied that the 9 additional classrooms would be sufficient? The answer would be no, because the Government is considering increasing capacity elsewhere

Hon. Prof J Cortes: They would be sufficient for probably the next 2 years.

Hon. D J Bossino: For the sake of Hansard, and it may be, Madam Speaker, that this is an issue of inaccurate reporting, it does not come direct from a Government press release, I do not think. It is a report that the Gibraltar Chronicle, as my hon. Friend Mrs Sanchez referred to, of the 20th of September 2026, and it reads like thus: it says

> the Department of Education has submitted minor amendments application with the town planner to create

and I emphasise these words additional teaching space

> and then it goes on to expand the playground at St. Martin's School in response to and I emphasise those words a growing number of pupils.

And I emphasis those words, the report says:

> to create additional teaching space.

which is a point that.

Madam Speaker: Before the answer, the rules do not allow a Member to comment on the accuracy of a press release, so we are not going to discuss the press release not the press release, the Chronicle report because the rules do not allow it. I mean, it is quite clear. But we are not going to discuss what has been put into the Chronicle as being accurate or not. We can comment on the press release, or you can ask the Hon. Minister for any particular plans that are mentioned in there, but not on the accuracy of the press statement.

Hon. A Sanchez: No, but we wanted to clarify perhaps a misunderstanding of where it came from, and perhaps he could elaborate whether that is, but he has clarified it, he has clarified the Government plan.

Madam Speaker: Not on the accuracy of the press statement.

Hon. D J Bossino: Perhaps a way to put it is whether the Hon. Minister…

Madam Speaker: It is very simple, if the press statement says we are going to build 3 classrooms, you cannot say is that true, but you can say does the Minister have an intention to build 3 classrooms.

Hon. D J Bossino: Well, yes, and indeed or does the Hon. Minister stand by the statement he gave in respect of the minor extension, as he put it, it is only in relation to the playground. I give him the opportunity.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, my team have told me except for a minor amendment to extend the roof playground that has been submitted to town planning. That may include seating in the playground. I have not got the plans in front of me, but certainly there is no major additional extension like more classrooms or anything like that. It is very minor. It is essentially what we announced in May last year. I hope that clarifies the matter.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q368/2026
Current state of the Cemetery –
Plans to adequately maintain this area.

Clerk: Question 368, the Hon G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Is the Minister satisfied with the current state of the Cemetery, and can he confirm whether he has any plans to adequately maintain this area?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, the Cemetery changes through the seasons, as I have explained before in this place. Thus, in spring it can be extremely attractive with green vegetation, plants and flowers, and at the end of the dry season it can look tired. This is normal in any natural area.

The Cemetery is a large and challenging site which requires constant attention, and the nature of burials means that there is construction occurring constantly. Cemetery management works hard to ensure that contractors tidy up after themselves. I can say, however, that there are plans for further improvements.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, the Cemetery certainly does look tired. I must say I visited it a few weeks ago and my observation is that it did look quite dilapidated, I must say. So, in the Minister's response I asked whether he is satisfied with the current state. Can I put to him what kind of objective assessment was undertaken to ensure that the cemetery is in a condition satisfactory to the Minister?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, there are various points here that the Cemetery looks tired. He went a couple of weeks ago; it was the end of summer, and I explained that that is always the worst time to go. Dilapidated, one must remember that some of a lot of what is in the Cemetery is privately owned by families and we cannot move in and restore graves and so on willy-nilly. But there is a Board of Visitors to the Cemetery that visits on a regular basis, at least monthly, and provides monthly reports to the Department of the Environment, and they are often acted on. I met with the Chair just a couple of weeks ago and we looked at some improvements. So, as I say, there are plans for further improvements, and there is a lot of feedback from the independent Board of Visitors to the Cemetery, which is made up of representatives of different aspects of the community, different religious persuasions, and people with considerable experience in a lot of different areas.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, the Hon. Minister just in his supplementary response confirmed that a board goes, I think he said monthly and then reports back to his Ministry. But can I ask and put to him: when certain defects, if you may call it that, are reported back to the Ministry, whose responsibility is it to cure these defects? Is it the contractor which we already pay to maintain the cemetery, or are these outside of that contract?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: If it appertains to a private grave then it is up to the family. If a contractor has carried out works and has impacted negatively on the surrounding area, like, for example, has not repaired some damage to the walkways or whatever then they are responsible. If it is something else, like the perimeter wall, the toilet, and so on, then the Department of the Environment would have to deal with that.

Hon. G Origo: And can I ask the Hon. Minister whether the costs of these additional identified defects are within budget, or paid outside of the scope of the original budget which we approve every year?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Well, it depends on the extent. Normally for day-to-day repairs it would be within the budget. If there is something major, then obviously the system allows for seeking supplementary funding in order to carry out. If it is an urgent matter and an emergency, then those would normally be provided.

Madam Speaker: Next question. One final.

Hon. G Origo: I am grateful, Madam Speaker. The Hon. Minister did confirm, to the latter part of my question, that the Government had plans to refurbish and maintain the area. Is he able to provide more details of the extent of the refurbishment? Because I know they already did the outside entry area of the Cemetery, but are these works that are going to happen inside? Are we beautifying the place, changing the pathways? What are the details on that refurbishment?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: We are looking at different things, including perhaps a more proactive management. We are looking at possibly more *nichos*, possibly also a columbarium. Some of these things I think I have mentioned in my Budget speech. So, we are looking at a wide range of possibilities.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q369/2026
Mandatory online e-scooter registration – Rental scooters from private operators.

Clerk: Question 369, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Can the Minister confirm whether the mandatory online e-scooter registration extends to those individuals using rental scooters from private operators, and if not, why not?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Yes, ma'am, it does.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, by way of clarification, can the Hon. Minister confirm whether it is the individual that will have to register themselves when using these private operators? So, for example so he understands where the question is coming from, if someone comes off a cruise liner and through a private operator 20 people rent an e-scooter, are the operators doing the registrations, or are the individuals themselves required to register online?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, it is the operator the owner of the scooters.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, given that it is the operators which are doing the registrations, when there are any issues of enforcement of traffic regulation or laws, is the fact that these individuals are registered to the operator providing any barriers to carrying out the enforcement,

or is it the case that these operators are able to provide this information as and when required in order to properly enforce any breaches of traffic legislation?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, the Department works through the different agents for the cruise liners and so on, and we have found great cooperation from them.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q370/2026
Pursuant to Regulation 39 of the Control of Traffic Regulations – Provision is being enforced.

Clerk: Question 370, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Pursuant to Regulation 39 of the Control of Traffic Regulations, no person shall ride a bicycle on any road unless the bicycle is equipped with an efficient bell capable of giving audible and sufficient warning of its approach, can the Government confirm whether this provision is being enforced?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, the Royal Gibraltar Police has confirmed that no persons have been reported for this offence by the RGP over the past 3 years.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q371/2026
Recent expansion of 120 e-bikes to the Hoppy network – Arrangements with regards to the use of public land, demarcated for the collection and return of these vehicles.

Clerk: Question 371, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: In light of the recent expansion of 120 e-bikes to the Hoppy network, can the Government confirm what arrangements are in place with regards to the use of public land, demarcated for the collection and return of these vehicles?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, no public land has been leased, licenced, or allocated exclusively to Hoppy. Under the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan, Government has provided 50 public parking bays for bicycles, e-bikes and scooters across Gibraltar. These are shared bays open to anyone, whether the vehicle is privately owned or hired, and none is reserved for any particular operator. Hoppy users collect and return vehicles at these bays in the same way as any other member of the public, and it is the spread of these locations across Gibraltar that makes shared mobility a practical option for short journeys. Bay locations are identified by the Minister of Transport with regard to pedestrian access, road safety and existing parking provision.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, by way of clarification, is the Hon. Minister then saying in his answer that there are no fee arrangements of any kind whatsoever with this private operator for using those demarcated bays for the provision of their own private scooter business?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker that is my understanding. They provide a service which the Government wants to encourage because it is a mobility a reduction in traffic and an improvement in air quality.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q372/2026
Fines have been issued to licensed taxi drivers – Failure to take a fare in 2026 to date.

Clerk: Question 372, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: How many fines have been issued to licensed taxi drivers for failure to take a fare in 2026 to date, broken down by month?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, 3 in July and 1 in August. I do not have the figures for September. I will remind the hon. Member, if I may, that this was an initiative that we started at the beginning of the summer.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, may I ask is the Hon. Minister able to confirm whether any of these fines are repeat offenders, or are we talking about different operators for the 4 fines which have been issued?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, it is 4 fines. I am trying to remember but I do not. I suspect they are probably different. I suspect they are, but I would not be 100% sure. I can find out and let the hon. Member know.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for that, but may I ask on this line because what is the process which takes place in order for these fines to be issued? Because my understanding is that persons may make complaints and may complain that a taxi has refused a fare, but then in terms of the evidential requirements, what are the requirements in order for one of these offences to be levied on one of these operators? Because I am trying to see the difference whether the number of complaints is aligning with the number of fines which are being issued, because it is something like here quite often that sometimes fares are being refused, but given that we only have 4 fines in the last couple of months for this infraction, I just want to understand whether there is a difference between complaints versus actual fines being issued.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, that fine detail is something that obviously I would not be aware of day to day. The enforcement is largely done by the transport inspectors, and certainly it could be that they witness instances themselves. We have also installed CCTV to monitor some of the taxi stands, but I would not be able to be specific. Again, it is information that I can seek, but I do not think that I can be expected to know that fine detail.

Hon. G Origo: Okay, I am grateful, Madam Speaker. Sometimes we do have traffic and transport inspectors on the roads and they may identify these infractions themselves, but in the case where we have a member of the public complain that a fare has not been taken, in terms of the evidential burden or expectation, is the statement or complaint alone enough to issue the fine, or is there a process which is undertaken?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, yes indeed. If there are complaints that are brought to the notice of any of the official stakeholders, be it my own Office, be it the head of the Ministry of Transport, be it the transport inspectors. Normally it is recommended that they make a formal complaint to the Transport Commission, which can then consider it and, depending on the severity and on the frequency, the Transport Commission could go any way towards revoking the licence completely. I suspect they would not do that on one instance but cumulatively they might, but there are processes.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q373/2026
Fixed penalty notices have been issued – Drivers of foreign-registered taxis found to be operating in Gibraltar.

Clerk: Question 373, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: How many fixed penalty notices have been issued to date to drivers of foreign-registered taxis found to be operating in Gibraltar?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, to date transport inspectors have issued 10 fixed penalty notices to foreign registered taxis and the Gibraltar Police have issued 4.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, may I put to the Hon. Minister, my understanding is that in implementing the Treaty, because of the changes with transport and fluidity, I believe that transport inspectors for at least a short period were placed at the Frontier in order to ensure that no vehicles which are not supposed to come into Gibraltar do come in.

Given that we have been employing transport inspectors to stand at the Frontier to see all these vehicles come in, how is it the case that 10 FPNs have been issued to taxi drivers coming from the border? My understanding, at least from every Member on this side of the House, was that Gibraltar was more secure than ever, so I find it quite hard to believe that we are employing members of the Civil Service to stand at the Frontier and we have 10 vehicles as taxis coming to Gibraltar unnoticed.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, how the hon. Member can consider Gibraltar insecure because some taxis have been able to slip into Gibraltar I cannot understand. It is not as if they were all criminals coming to do some dirty business in Gibraltar. The numbers have certainly reduced tremendously since the first bait in the first couple of weeks. The taxis in the area have got to know that they are not allowed in. For example, as we know, Uber has made it impossible to book a taxi or one of their vehicles all the way into Gibraltar, so the frequency has decreased tremendously. I do not think you can expect however many people are at the border to be able to control absolutely every single taxi because they happen to have a blue licence plate at the

back, but the numbers have decreased tremendously, and the enforcement is being effective. I believe that most of these fixed penalty notices have in fact been paid, so I think the enforcement is working, and the message is getting across. If somebody tries to ignore the clear signs and happens to come in, fortunately most of them are actually being caught once they are in Gibraltar and usually in the northern area down Devil's Tower Road and that sort of thing, so I do not think it is a critical problem and I certainly do not think that it threatens Gibraltar's security.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, if I may, picking up on one of the supplementary answers of the Minister, he did say that out of the 10 FPNs issued to these taxi operators most have been paid, which infers that some may have not been. What happens to those FPNs which are not paid by these operators, and how are we properly deterring others from doing the same?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, this was a supplementary to a question that the Hon. Mrs Ladislaus asked last time I was here, and I spoke to her behind the Speaker's Chair and explained that we are dealing with that. I would rather do that with the hon. Member as well for reasons that Mrs Ladislaus kindly understood. It may be that I will be able to say it here in this place in coming weeks or months, but I would rather keep it between us and not in the public domain because there are sensitivities. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Mr Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Thank you. I think the Hon. Minister speaks of in his reply, I think it is in total 15 FPNs. Really, I think there are 10 issued by the traffic inspectors and then 5 by the RGP, or thereabouts, 4.

So, in terms of trying to establish what he says that the enforcement has been effective; I think those are the words he used may I ask him what period of time these 14 cover, so that we can perhaps be persuaded by what the Hon. Minister says that this is the subject of teething problems which result from the initial application of the Treaty, which may have been met with ignorance by taxi drivers on the other side of the border.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: I believe that this is possibly because we did change the regulation at one stage to deal with it, so it would have been clearly since the 15th of July, but probably most of them would have fallen within the first 4 to 5 weeks. But I need to check the detail.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q374/2026
Foreign registered vehicles repeatedly driving through Main Street – Government doing to address this recurring problem.

Clerk: Question 374, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Since the implementation of the new Treaty, foreign registered vehicles repeatedly find themselves driving through our busy Main Street. What is the Government doing to address this recurring problem?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, the different enforcement agencies have already stepped-up enforcement, and

enhanced signage is being prepared. For major events vehicle mitigation barriers have been purchased and are deployed prior to the event via the Safety Advisory Group and as part of the events application.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, does the Hon. Minister have with him any information with respect to the number of incidents that we have had since the Treaty, I see he is nodding his head from his chair so my next question would be: he did mention that improvements to signage are being undertaken, so my understanding would be that signage is the issue that is causing drivers of foreign cars to go into Main Street because things may not be clear.

Can I ask though what happened to physical barriers? He did refer to physical barriers are any physical barriers currently in place to prevent drivers of cars, especially these foreign registered vehicles, from driving through Main Street on an ordinary day, not one of these ceremonies where he referred to extra security being in place?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker, there are a couple of things here that we have to note, and the question is not actually precise because every vehicle has access to the southern part of Main Street. So, I am assuming he is referring to the parts of Main Street from the Supreme Court northwards. Yeah, okay. But we have to remember.

The mitigation barriers are used for special events, as I have said, and the hon. Member has recognised. There are other barriers which are meant to be checks on vehicles with sinister intent speeding into Main Street, and clearly vehicles have to access Main Street with permission regularly in order to take deliveries there has to be access for fire and ambulance and the cleaning vehicles so we cannot close Main Street off totally. I think, once again as I said before, there may have been, shortly after the treaty implementation, a spate of vehicles coming into Main Street. I do not think that continues to be a problem; it certainly has not been reported to me. As I say, signage was being prepared, and the answer was prepared obviously a few weeks ago I do not know whether it is ready or whether it has gone up over the past few days but clearly awareness is being stepped up, and the enforcement agencies who are aware of that have their eye out. If a transport inspector at Casemates sees a foreign vehicle trying to come down, they are going to stop it. I can tell you that the taxi drivers themselves will also possibly kindly ensure that these vehicles do not proceed any further.

Q375/2026
Lack of parking available to beach goers at Western Beach – Largely due to foreign registered vehicles.

Clerk: Question 375, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Does the Government have any plans to address the lack of parking available to beach goers at Western Beach, which is largely due to foreign registered vehicles who prevent locals from accessing these spaces but are not attending the beach themselves?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, a cleanup of vehicles was done on the 9th of July 2026 where 17 vehicles were either towed or fined. For next year, the Government is introducing a new pay and display regime for this area. Locally registered vehicles will not fall under this regime.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, I am grateful to hear the answer from the Hon. Minister that something is actually being done to curtail this issue. But may I ask, given the difference that I have just noted, I know, having gone to Catalan Bay earlier this week, that there the provision is: if you are not actually attending the beach, and if you are not a resident, after a certain time you are prohibited from using the parking. Why is it that a different policy is being adopted with respect to Western Beach, where you are saying we are going to issue a pay and display scheme, as opposed to: if you are attending the beach you are allowed to be there, or if you are a resident in the area you are allowed to be there? Is there a reason why we are adopting one approach instead of the other?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker. The car park at Catalan Bay does not fall directly under the Government it is now in the possession of the developers and therefore they have their own regime. I think there is a difference in that Catalan Bay clearly is next to a residential area; Western Beach is not. But as I have said, we have stepped up monitoring of the Western Beach area to ensure that vehicles are not abandoned there as perhaps they have been in the past, and the pay and display regime we intend to introduce for other beach areas as well.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, if I may, in his supplementary answers the Hon. Minister referred to a cleanup which took place on the 9th of July, which is now some 3 months ago. Can I ask how frequently these cleanups take place in large parking spaces such as Western Beach? Because clearly the issue I believe he was actually on the weekly beach programmes at Western Beach when the residents or the beach users there were complaining that parking is a habitual and recurring issue in the area. So, given that he is well aware of this, why is it the case that we are taking this different approach in this area?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker it was done on the 9th of July because that was towards the start of the beach season and it was in order to assist the beachgoers in being able to find parking that was the reason it was done on that occasion. The area is monitored, but clearly the more drastic action has to be taken when the circumstances require it.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, I note that the Hon. Minister says the area is being monitored, but from the information he has given us, the last cleanup took place 3 months ago, and he was in a programme at the end of the summer in August where residents and users were complaining that there was no availability of spaces. Given that he is aware that the complaints are there and given that he has admitted that they are monitoring it, why is it that they have done nothing for 3 months to help the beach goers in this area.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker two points, Madam Speaker perhaps if it was not done later on in the summer perhaps it was not needed because we had dealt with it but in any case, Madam Speaker if only we cleaned up once a year it is certainly more often than used to happen in other times which it is absolutely true because Western Beach Carpark has never been dealt with the way that we are dealing with it now and this will continue to be done regularly before the beach season.

Hon. D J Bossino: Just one point of clarification if I may Madam Speaker. The in terms of dealing with the situation which is what my learned and hon. Friend Mr Origo is referring to and the use perhaps abuse of that parking space by you know foreign registered vehicles who may be using it now simply as a parking space because they can easily cross the Frontier because there is not a border, fixed border, anymore. Can I ask him whether it does the Government's policy go beyond addressing the issue of abandoned vehicles which is what I get from his answer is his policy limited to.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker, if the hon. Member had listened to the second part of my answer, we are introducing a new pay and display regime for the area for which locally registered vehicles will not be required to pay. We are introducing a different regime.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q376/2026
New Bus ID system and live tracker – Expected to be introduced/Details & Costs.

Clerk: Question 376, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: The Minister has confirmed that a new Bus ID system and live tracker are expected to be introduced in coming months. Can the Government provide details on these new systems, what were the costs and who have they been procured from?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Yes, Madam Speaker, I have just had to update a couple of words here because the answer was prepared some weeks ago.

Madam Speaker, the provider for the new ticketing machines is Bassadone Motors and the total cost is £434,543. The current implementation time then is as follows. The week commencing since 14th September last, GBCL, Bus Company Limited, received access to the back-office system on the 22nd of September, GBCL received training on the back office system and following the initial training further train the trainer training is currently being provided enabling them to train all drivers in the use of the new ticket machines, and subject to everything progressing as planned with Bassadone's who have the contract for the buses including the successful input and configuration of all required information in the back office system, GBCL is currently looking to go live by the end of November.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker If I may, in respect of the cost can I ask the Hon. Minister whether the £434,000 cost for this new ID system is this a one-off fee or is it apart from the lump sum will have a maintenance and supervisory cost of the systems and is that being costed here or is that separate from the figure he has just given the House.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, this is a purchase fee. There are currently negotiations on what maintenance may be required and whether there will have to be a set amount as a retainer and those discussions are currently being had. It was a system based on an existing system but produced specifically for Gibraltar.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker and if I may with respect to, because I know it is a new bus ID system, and I think in the Government press release they said they were updating the live tracker.

I understand that we already had a live tracker in place probably by a different operator so can I ask what specific functionalities this new live tracker system is going to provide and whether it was just a case that the old contract lapsed and we are entering a new one or are there any improvements to the tracking system that we should see for the benefit of the members of the public.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: The current live tracker is a web-based system which is quite old and is not always as reliable as we would like so this will obviously update it and there will be more accurate access to information and we hope and we certainly hope will not fail as often as the old bus tracker sometimes does.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, I could not help but notice the Hon. Minister confirmed that the old tracker was not as reliable and did not work as functionally as the members of the public expected it to given the investment put into the previous tracker system. So, can I put to the Hon. Minister whether any repercussions or consequences arose from the previous contractor who provided a live tracker that the Minister himself has confirmed was not really working properly.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Once again, I am reminded that the bus tracker did not exist in previous times. Madam Speaker, I do not think this is a logical supplementary because it is for new information that I have provided. The live tracker currently existing is provided in-house by the ITLD Department and therefore I think that the provisions that he would want us to apply would not apply in this case.

Madam Speaker: Next question. The Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Just on this so can I understand, is this a new tracker system going to be available via an app and not because the Minister said it the current tracker is web-based so does that mean there is going to be a specific app for the tracker for the new one?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: I believe so, if I am not correct, I stand corrected but obviously it will be a much more updated web-based so it would be more reliable.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q377/2026
Discussions with La Linea council's transport team – Parking and transport solutions were being considered.

Clerk: Question 377, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Can the Minister provide details on the discussions with La Linea council's transport team where a joint approach to parking and transport solutions were being considered?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Yes, Madam Speaker, my Ministry and Technical Services teams met with representatives from *La Línea ayuntamiento* on the 12th August. They discussed one park and ride solution. It was established that *La Línea* has 9,259 pay and display style parking spaces within the proximity of the border. They will be providing the Ministry exact details of these which will be communicated to visitors to Gibraltar via the Ministry of Transport website and other methods with our colleagues from the Ministry of Tourism.

Secondly, traffic congestion was discussed. It was established that the initial congestion which was experienced days after the implementation of the Treaty was in fact due to the traffic restrictions because of *La Línea* fair. By restricting traffic flow towards *La Atunara* meant all traffic had to go in the opposite direction. *La Línea* authorities were very confident that the issue had

been resolved as they had introduced other measures after the fair to increase traffic flow. I think we are aware that that seems to have worked. And thirdly, a possible public service vehicle hub and the possibility of this was discussed.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, can I ask the Hon. Minister, I believe the way that he answered his question there is a difference that there is only one meeting that is taking place with this council. Can you confirm whether that is the case or has he had any subsequent follow-up meetings since his initial discussions.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: One meeting has taken place. There is regular contact and I am due to meet with the Mayor of La Línea quite soon to further these discussions.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker and I note from his answers that the Hon. Minister confirmed that the agenda on the table with the council was parking issues and fluidity issues. From his further supplementaries I think he commented that they are looking at a kind of park and ride multi-storey facility. Have any commitments been made with respect to whether that is being done on this side of the border or is that being done on the Línea side.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: No, ma'am.

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

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Yes, can I just ask the Minister to elaborate a bit about the discussion they had on what he called the possible public services vehicle hub, what did he mean by that?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker, the idea has been discussed, and I have said this publicly before, but it is just an idea, and we have not firmed up any details yet.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Yes, but I am trying to understand the idea, that is what I was asking.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Well Madam Speaker the idea is a simple one and it is quite, I am sure one that Opposition Members will support, it is the idea of using the loop in order to be able to have an area where people may disembark a vehicle on the Gibraltar or Spanish side and interline to a similar vehicle on the other side. That is to say for example a public service vehicle, a taxi or a bus that does the Gibraltar route can collect a passenger somewhere in Gibraltar and take them to the Frontier. There they are undercover on a rainy day or a particularly sunny day. You will be able to disembark the vehicle and wait for the relevant equivalent vehicle that would be doing the Spanish side of the trip.

That is something that needs to be agreed by both Gibraltar and La Línea and the Kingdom of Spain because the area of the loop on the Spanish side is the Spanish Government's Spanish Central Government's land whilst the area towards the east is the municipality's land. So, there are issues there trying to square all of those issues off that might require a negotiation on the Spanish side between the municipality and the central Government. There may be equities of the *Junta de Andalucía* as well because the roads need to connect and some are *Junta* roads rather than national roads. On the Gibraltar side as there is only one central Government, despite remarks to the contrary that I have heard when hon. Members were on this side of the House, it is quite easy although the loop needs to remain, in our view, available in the event that there were tailbacks arising for whatever reason, not necessarily the reintroduction of traffic controls but perhaps traffic reasons again. The *Línea* fair if it is going to be in the same area in the future might cause tailbacks et cetera. But hon. Members will see that we have also just announced that as from midnight tonight vehicles going from Gibraltar to Spain do not need to do the loop chicane.

They will be able to go along the top of the loop. That is the beginning of making that area available potentially for this interchange for public service vehicles.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I see and that is helpful and beyond the interchange which is as the Chief Minister has explained now it is a sort of almost like seamless connecting point hub as he has explained it now in a way. Is there any plans or aspirations for there to be more than that and for there to be cross-border routes in any way for buses or anything like that.

Hon. Chief Minister: Well Madam Speaker what has been our position from the beginning during the course of this negotiation is that if there are no freedom of movement of services then there will be no freedom of movement of services and that also means no freedom of movement of what would be the types of service that are represented by the equivalent in Gibraltar of municipal bus services. So, hon. Members will know that or should know that there are bus services which relate to cities, bus services that relate to regions, bus services that relate to countries and bus services that relate to routes that cross country lines.

Now, in the context of Gibraltar what we are saying is our city bus services will not cross-country lines and we will not accept bus services that are city bus services that cross country lines. We will protect our taxi services, and we will not permit that there should be cross country taxi services.

That is not to say that there is not the possibility for there to be what I might call cross country bus and I am going to say something which is now not relevant but, in the future, you never know, cross country rail services. That is not something that is likely possible certainly into the centre of the city, but it is not impossible into the northern part of the territory of Gibraltar so that would be a possibility and there are types of bus services which cross country lines. Those do not rely on the European foundational treaties, and they therefore do not rest on the Treaty that we have between Gibraltar and the United Kingdom and the European Union in relation to Gibraltar alone. We would not be adverse to a service that comes into the northern part of Gibraltar, which is cross-country which could come from France, which could come from Portugal, which could come from Spain or even from further afield on a scheduled basis. That is different to the type of vehicle that could take pilgrims from here to France or to Fatima for example.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q378/2026
National Nature Restoration Act –
Government expect to conclude its Restoration Plan.

Clerk: Question 378, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Given one of the main requirements of the National Nature Restoration Act is that by 31 December 2030, at least 20% of ecosystems identified as needing restoration in Gibraltar are subject to active, area-based restoration measures, by when does the Government expect to conclude its Restoration Plan?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, the Department of the Environment is actively working on the National Restoration Plan and hopes to be in a position to publish it by the end of this year.

Hon. G Origo: Grateful to the Minister's response on the timing indication of when he expects it to be completed and can I ask in respect of the consultation itself is the Government or the Ministry itself engaged in any private consultation which is guiding or spearheading this restoration plan or is this just all being done in-house?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, there was public consultation put out. I am not aware of how many responses were received but I know that some were, that they are being assessed by my team of scientists in the Department of the Environment and there has been direct consultation with the environmental NGOs who will obviously have their say and contribute and a draft will be shared with the environmental NGOs as well before it is finalised.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, I note that the provision in the Act itself does provide a very onerous requirement of having at least 20% of the ecosystems to be actively restored. In this respect is the Hon. Minister able to at this stage have any idea or confirm what the total expected cost for the Government would be in order to achieve the requirements in this Act which is for this 20% of area of nature to be actively restored?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Not very much at all Madam Speaker because I am glad to say that we are already doing a lot of the work that the Act requires. If I may add additional information, this comes as a result of the Treaty requirements because the European Union recently published the National Restoration Regulations, so this reflects that.

I attended a seminar last week in Brussels on the National Nature Restoration Regulations and I was very proud to say that a lot of the work that many EU countries are not yet doing, Gibraltar has done.

Things like converting a car park into Commonwealth Park and Campion Park, that sort of thing is what cities around Europe are being asked to do by the EU, so we are doing a lot of it. A lot of it is already programmed so this will not require excessive additional expenditure because Gibraltar is already well ahead of the curve on this.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, thank you for the indulgence. I note that the Hon. Minister in his first reply stated that he expects potentially to have the restoration plan in place by the end of this year, hopefully sometime in December. Given that that is the case the plan must be almost near completion so in that vein can I put to him, because the target, is in my view quite onerous and it is set for 2030, will there be any measurable milestones that are happening in a periodic basis so we can track whether this is actually being met and on target?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: As I say Madam Speaker, we are doing a lot of this already. The regulations in the EU and reflected in our Act require that there be no loss of green area by 2030 and that there will be an increase in green area after 2030 and we are already actually increasing green areas. So, I have no worries at all that we will be able to meet these objectives.

Q379/2026
New mandatory scholarships – Awarded in 2026.
Q380/2026
New discretionary scholarships – Awarded in 2026.
Q381/2026
New distance learning scholarships – Awarded in 2026.

Clerk: Question 379, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: How many new mandatory scholarships have been awarded in 2026 and what is the total number of mandatory scholarships currently being funded?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 380 and 381.

Clerk: Question 380, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: How many new discretionary scholarships have been awarded in 2026 and what is the total number of discretionary scholarships currently being funded?

Clerk: Question 381, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: How many new distance learning scholarships have been awarded in 2026 and what is the total number of distance learning scholarships currently being funded?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, 272 new mandatory scholarships have been awarded in 2026 and there are 745 mandatory scholarships currently being funded in total.

In answer to Question 380, 203 new discretionary scholarships have been awarded in 2026 and there are 239 discretionary scholarships currently being funded in total.

And in answer to Question 381, 43 new distance learning scholarships have been awarded in 2026 and there are 79 distance learning scholarships currently being funded in total.

I must add, Madam Speaker, that because students sometimes decide not to go even after they have been awarded or there may be some exceptional late application that is favourably considered for extenuating circumstances, this may not be totally accurate down to the last person, but broadly speaking, these are the figures that I am very happy to share.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for that information. In a similar question last year, the Hon. Minister added some information saying that there were scholarships that fell under both categories. Some mandatory scholarships have actually been converted into distance learning as opposed to those who are not entitled to mandatory and simply apply for distance learning.

Can you confirm whether any of these numbers are accounted for twice or is that not the case?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: No, Madam Speaker, I am fairly confident that they are not accounted twice.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q382/2026
2026 Mandatory Scholarships –
How many pupils have opted to defer.

Clerk: Question 382, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide details of how many pupils have opted to defer their 2026 Mandatory Scholarships for a year or two?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, the Department of Education does not require individuals to inform them that they are taking a gap year or opting to defer their school award mandatory scholarship by a year or two, so it would not be possible to answer this question accurately.

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, I accept the answer given by the Minister, but that is not information I received from Year 13 or pupils who were in Year 13 last year who were told to indicate if they intended to defer, because that way it allows Government to predict that huge numbers off the cuff. If there are 200 students in Year 13 now, you say there is a potential for 200 new mandatory scholarships coming up next September, but however, there could be 20 who have deferred from their entitlement of 25 or 26, and those will be taken into account, especially when finance experts are preparing scholarships. Does the Minister not agree that, since students were asked to provide the information, that that should have been collated somewhere in the Department of Education?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, that information is not available to the Department of Education. I will clearly ask, as I always do when the hon. Member raises a point. However, what they may indicate or not indicate as to their intention when they fill in a form is not necessarily the number who actually choose to defer or not defer, because, as we know, students will change their mind for a whole host of reasons, and therefore perhaps those figures are not deemed to be accurate. What we can say is that if somebody is offered a scholarship and they say, well, thank you for the scholarship, I am going to defer it, that is a figure that we can have, but that will not give you the global figure of all those students who choose to defer.

So, in actual fact, we do not have these figures, but I will take the comment back and see whether they have missed something and not provided me information that may be available elsewhere.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q383/2026
BTEC Courses currently being undertaken –
Estimated costs, completion dates of said courses and qualifications expected.

Clerk: Question 383, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide details in respect of all BTEC Courses currently being undertaken by pupils, with details of location where these courses are delivered, indicating estimated costs, completion dates of said courses and qualifications expected to be obtained upon completion?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Yes, Madam Speaker, delighted to do so. I now hand over, well, I just hand over a schedule with the information requested.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 383

BTEC course	Host setting	Location where it is delivered	Costs per annum	Length of qualification	Qualification achieved on completion
BTEC Tech Award in Digital Information Technology	Bayside	Bayside	£75.50 per entry plus embedded operational costs	2 year course	Depending on the standard evidenced by the pupil, they will achieve a BTEC Level 2 or BTEC Level 1 in Digital Information Technology
BTEC Tech Award in Digital Information Technology	Westside	Westside	£75.50 per entry plus embedded operational costs	2 year course	Depending on the standard evidenced by the pupil, they will achieve a BTEC Level 2 or BTEC Level 1 in Digital Information Technology
BTEC Certificate in ESports	Gibraltar College	Gibraltar College	£133.10 per entry plus embedded operational costs	1 year course	Depending on the standard evidenced by the pupil, they will achieve a BTEC Level 2 or BTEC Level 1 in ESports
BTEC Tech Award in Travel & Tourism	Gibraltar College	Gibraltar College	£79.70 per entry plus embedded operational costs	1 year course	Depending on the standard evidenced by the pupil, they will achieve a BTEC Level 2 or BTEC Level 1 in Travel & Tourism
BTEC National Extended Certificate in Performance (Acting)	Gibraltar College	Gibraltar College & GAMPA (at Hospital Hill premises & in The Magazine Studio Theatre)	£470 per entry plus approx £4,362 for operational costs	2 year course	Depending on the standard evidenced by the pupil, they will achieve a BTEC Level 3 Extended Certificate, or BTEC Level 3 National Certificate, in Performance (Acting)
BTEC National Extended Certificate in Music Performance	Gibraltar College	GAMPA (GAMPA Hospital Hill premises)	£470 per entry plus plus approx £30,704 for operational costs	2 year course	Depending on the standard evidenced by the pupil, they will achieve a BTEC Level 3 Extended Certificate, or BTEC Level 3 National Certificate, in Music Performance

CONTINUED ANSWER TO QUESTION 383

BTEC International Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma in Travel and Tourism	Gibraltar College	Gibraltar College	£405 per entry plus embedded operational costs	2 year course	Depending on the standard evidenced by the pupil, they will achieve a BTEC Level 3 Diploma, or a BTEC Level 3 Certificate, in Travel and Tourism
BTEC International Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma in Business	Gibraltar College	Gibraltar College	£405 per entry plus embedded operational costs	2 year course	Depending on the standard evidenced by the pupil, they will achieve a BTEC Level 3 Diploma, or a BTEC Level 3 Certificate, in Business
BTEC International Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma in Information Technology	Gibraltar College	Gibraltar College	£405 per entry plus embedded operational costs	2 year course	Depending on the standard evidenced by the pupil, they will achieve a BTEC Level 3 Diploma, or a BTEC Level 3 Certificate, in Information Technology

Madam Speaker: We will come back to this later. Next question.

Q384/2026

Statistics in respect of the number of pupils enrolled in our schools and The College – Broken down by educational establishment, school year and gender.

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Clerk: Question 384, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide statistics in respect of the number of pupils enrolled in our schools and The College for the academic year 2026/27, broken down by educational
940 establishment, school year and gender?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Yes,
945 indeed, Madam Speaker, I will now hand over a schedule with the information requested. Madam Speaker, there is a schedule for the next question, so I am going to give them both to the hon., well to the young lady so that he does not have to do an extra trip.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 384

SCHOOL	EBN (pre pre)		N		R		Yr1		Yr2		Yr3		Yr4		Yr5		Yr6		Yr7		Yr8		Yr9		Level 1 Yr10		Level 2 Yr11		Level 3 Year 1 Yr12		Level 3 Year 2 Yr13	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Gibraltar College																							21	22	44	45	48	29	38	27		
Westside																			108	112	120	116	92	98	105	119	107	108	153	135	100	73		
Bayside																			122	127	102	90	116	113	98	123	120	92	89	73	94	99		
St Bernard's Upper Primary											34	24	32	30	39	33	47	37																
Bishop Fitzgerald Upper Primary											51	63	56	62	74	59	53	64																
St Joseph's Upper Primary											35	40	45	49	41	37	45	47																
St Anne's Upper Primary											44	58	50	52	47	42	48	55																
Governor's Meadow Lower Primary			21	32	42	52	24	37	28	32																								
St Joseph's Lower Primary			20	19	32	20	39	30	32	36																								
St Bernard's Lower Primary			15	11	17	8	8	10	14	19																								
St Paul's Lower Primary			28	21	33	43	28	50	32	46																								
Notre Dame Lower Primary			23	25	29	37	33	51	39	48																								
St Mary's Lower Primary			6	10	12	14	17	17	19	18																								
St Martin's	3	11	6	10	4	16	4	6	4	8	2	4	6	12	4	0	4	7	3	6	0	2	1	6	1	1	1	4	1	3		

Madam Speaker: We will come back to this. Next question.

Q385/2026
Statistics in respect of the number of pupils – Referred to Mental Health Services & Child Protection Services.

Clerk: Question 385, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide statistics in respect of the number of pupils, broken down by age/schoolyear, who have been referred to:

(a) Mental Health Services;
(b) Child Protection Services,

during the academic year 2025/2026?

Madam Speaker: The schedule has been handed over for 385 as well. We will return to this in due course.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 385

This schedule provides the data in respect of the number of pupils, broken down by school year, who have been referred to:
a) Mental Health Services; and
b) The Care Agency through a MARF (Multi-Agency Referral Form).
These figures reflect the referrals submitted by school / Department of Education staff.

	Referrals to Mental Health Services	Referrals to the Care Agency- through a MARF
Pre-pre	0	2
Nursery	1	4
Reception	0	2
Year 1	1	3
Year 2	1	2
Year 3	7	3
Year 4	7	5
Year 5	7	3
Year 6	4	7
Year 7	3	4
Year 8	3	1
Year 9	2	4
Year 10	3	2
Year 11	2	1
Year 12	2	0
Year 13	2	0

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, if I may just make a comment on the last schedule that I think might be helpful. Just to say, Madam Speaker, that the last schedule in relation to Question 385, there could be children who feature in both lists and that these are referrals by the Department of Education. There may be referrals from other agencies to Mental Health Services or Child Protection Services who would not be caught in this schedule.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q386/2026
Current Teaching Complement –
Employed on a substantive or supply basis.

Clerk: Question 386, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide details of the current Teaching Complement, indicating how many teachers are employed on a substantive or supply basis, broken down by educational establishment?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Yes, Madam Speaker, I have just handed over another schedule with information requested.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 386

This schedule provides the details of the current Teaching Complement, indicating how many teachers are currently employed on a substantive and supply basis, broken down by educational establishment.

School	Permanent Teachers (employed on a substantive basis)	Non-permanent Teachers (employed on Fixed Term Contracts)
Bayside School	89	25
Westside School	92	22
Gibraltar College	23	4
Bishop Fitzgerald Upper Primary School	34	7
St Anne's Upper Primary School	33	10
St Bernard's Upper Primary School	20	5
St Joseph's Upper Primary School	25	0
Governor's Meadow Lower Primary School	25	0
Notre Dame Lower Primary School	26	1
St Bernard's Lower Primary School	9	2
St Joseph's Lower Primary School	21	0
St Mary's Lower Primary School	14	2
St Paul's Lower Primary School	23	4
St Martin's School	21	19
TLC (Teaching & Learning Centre)	1	7
LMT (Learning Mentor Team)	4	0
EAL (Teaching English as an Additional Language Team)	1	0

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Mr Reyes is determined to make the usher exercise. We will return to any supplementaries on 386 in due course. Next question.

Q387/2026
Teachers currently down on the Supply List –
Do not have fixed employment contracts.

Clerk: Question 387, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide details in respect of the number of teachers currently down on the Supply List and who do not have fixed employment contracts for at least a whole term?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, no schedule this time. The Department of Education currently has 197 teachers listed on its supply list. At present, 84 teachers on the supply list have not secured a fixed-term contract for at least a term.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, by simple arithmetic, I can take it from there that over 100 have a contract of at least a term. From those 84 who do not have a contract, does the Minister have any information relating to whether those are sort of newly qualified teachers for that?

Because I believe sometimes teachers who have recently retired have taken an early retirement option, then on top of that put their names down for casual supply. Does he have any information of sort of the categories where there are new recent graduates that have entered the profession and how many of those are people who have done full service and sort of weeding out from the classroom?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I do not have that information, but what I can say is that of the 83 who have not secured a fixed-term contract, only 37 of them actually applied for one and were unsuccessful. So, the bulk of those, just over half, did not apply when a fixed-term contract came up. That could be because they had other employment, because they prefer to be on an as-and-when basis.

So, it is not that 83 were unsuccessful, only 37 of them applied. The breakdown as to how many are recently qualified and how many are not; I do not have that information.

Hon. E J Reyes: Just one small thing, a bit of a finicky point. In his original answer, I think the Minister said 84 did not have the contract, and now, in supplementary, he is referring to a figure of 83. I know there is a difference of only one, but can he double-check his figures?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Take it as 84, because I believe that… oh, yes, yes, sorry. Yes, indeed.

So, this is coming a few weeks after the answer was prepared. I have just seen a note that has been added that one further teacher has secured a fixed-term contract, which means that the figure should now be 83. So, thank you for that.

It was in my supplementary, but it had not been reflected in the actual answer. So, I apologise. It should be 83. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q388/2026
Talks/discussions with Teachers' Representatives – Review behavior and discipline issues in schools.

Clerk: Question 388, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government update this House in respect of the talks/discussions it has had with Teachers' Representatives, since the last answer given in this House, arising out of their requests to review behaviour and discipline issues in schools?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, this stream of work has been progressed with NASUWT UK, with our most recent meeting prior to the summer break having been on the 21st May. The Government sought to arrange an interim remote meeting during September ahead of the next scheduled in-person meeting, but following discussions regarding availability, NASUWT UK advised on the 7th September that, given the imminent face-to-face meeting, it did not consider that a further remote meeting was necessary, and a further meeting then took place on the 6th October. Two days ago, I was very briefly told yesterday that the meeting went well and progress was made.

I do not have the full details yet. The meeting took place less than 48 hours ago.

Hon. E J Reyes: I am glad to hear the Minister's remark that the meeting progressed well. Although it happened just on the 5th October, is that the end of the matter, or does the Minister foresee that there will be further follow-up meetings, be it in person, online, or whatever system?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker, I am not part of those meetings. The discussions have been taken by the Director and the Department. I am expecting at least one further meeting, and then I will be given the outcome with recommendations to be considered.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q389/2026
Drop-off/collection parking spaces lost – St Joseph's Lower and Upper Primary Schools.

Clerk: Question 389, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide details of the number of drop-off/collection parking spaces lost at St Joseph's Lower and Upper Primary Schools as a result of ongoing refurbishment works?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, before the redevelopment works commenced, there were 21 school zone parking spaces. With the temporary reconfiguration of the car park at St Joseph's Parade, it now stands at 22. Therefore, there has been a net gain of 1 car parking space for drop-off collection.

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, I must declare that this is because I am quite a regular visitor there for drop-off. I have noticed, and so have many other grandparents around the area, that there has been a loss of about 15 to 20 drop-off parking spaces. The system in the school, and he probably knows as Minister for Education, requires the adult taking the child to actually park the vehicle, take the child from the vehicle, and physically drop off or collect the child inside the school building.

So, it is not just a question of stopping for a minute, but if one looks at the lane of traffic closest to the school building, that is on the eastern side of the car park, some spaces were lost due to having to put in the temporary classrooms, but those more on the left-hand side, in order to allow a flow of traffic go through, have been removed, and we cannot identify where the other additional spaces have been created that were not there before. Perhaps the Minister can guide me to that.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker, because I am referring to specific drop-off spaces. Spaces named and allocated as drop-off have actually increased by 1. There has been a loss of 12 zone parking spaces in St Joseph's Parade, not drop-off, 12 zone parking spaces, and these have been provided elsewhere in Zone 3, so there is a net loss of zone parking of 1, but there is a net gain of specific drop-off of 1, and I am told by the teachers in St Joseph's that the system is actually working no worse than it used to before.

If the hon. Member wants me to show him on a plan, I am happy to do so on another occasion, but specific drop-offs, there has been a gain of 1, there have been 12 lost in the area, there has been a net loss of 1 in the whole of Zone 3.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I do look forward to, on another occasion, to be able to sit down with the Minister and look him up. However, can I ask specifically, is the Minister, in his answer, referring to those parking spaces that are by the pavement closer to the school building that are subject to a notice that is up that says, that this area is restricted parking, specifying no longer than 10 minutes between the times of 2.30 p.m. and 4 p.m.? Is that the area he is specifically referring to?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, what is referred to in some other jurisdictions as kiss and go.

Hon. E J Reyes: And I then have to ask, is the Minister aware that there seems to be no monitoring at all, and no policing, that that system is not abused? Because having arrived there very close to 2.30 p.m. there are cars parked there, many of whom are even foreign registered, that have been parked there since early in the morning, 10 minutes have elapsed and that car has not moved, 4 o'clock has come and that car is still there, and no one seems to be monitoring or imposing fixed penalty fines on that. Is the Minister aware that that is happening?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I am aware that that was the case, and steps have been taken to remedy the situation, because I was made aware of that by other parents.

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, Madam Speaker, I shall monitor it again next week. It was only the day before yesterday that I was there. I can assure the Minister from the bottom of my heart that no steps seem to have been taken, especially not noticed by me, or any of the other many dozens of adults who go to collect children in that area.

Madam Speaker: All right.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: If I may, I would be very happy to receive details, registration numbers, and even photographs if that is the case.

Madam Speaker: All right, I will take the questions now to the Hon. Mr Bossino, and after him, we will come back to the supplementaries to the Hon. Mr Reyes.

Q390/2026
Monument Plaza project –
Relocation and building cost associated.
Q391/2026
The College –
Total cost of the construction.

Clerk: Question 390, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister for Education now confirm whether the developer of the Monument Plaza project is paying for the relocation and building cost associated with the construction of the Gibraltar College at the new site and if so, what is the amount?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 391.

Clerk: Question 391, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: What is the total cost of the construction of the Gibraltar College?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, the total cost is not yet determined, as details in particular of furnishings, fittings, and equipment are still to be confirmed. A sizable part of the cost will be met from the payment made by the developer of Monument Plaza.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, I am afraid to say that we have not progressed much since I last asked a question on the 14th January 2026, and in fact, I think the Hon. Minister is absolutely right to join these two questions together, because they are both related. We need to understand what, as I understood it, if I may, we need to understand what the cost of the Gibraltar College is for him to then say whether the Government will have to fork out and meet any balance which is left over after the contribution to be made by the Monument Plaza developers.

But can I ask him this? He talks about fitting out, I think he said, I think he may have said also furnishings, but the question that I have posed relates specifically to construction costs, and whilst it will be very useful to have details of the other items, is he not able to at least say now what the construction costs number is?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: No, ma`am.

Hon. D J Bossino: The Hon. Minister, when he gets cagey like this, it makes me slightly nervous. What is he trying to hide? I am asking him a very, what I think is a very simple question, and he is simply choosing on this occasion, once again, to present a brick wall, as I put it to him on the last occasion, a brick wall, that I asked him questions about this subject matter. This was in January 2026.

They have broken ground in Europa Point in relation to this development, although I understand from my colleagues here and from my own observations that not much has developed in terms of the construction, but why is his answer in the negative?

Why is he now saying that he is unable to provide the construction cost number?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, my answer was a no because he asked me a yes-no question, and I gave him a yes-no answer. Madam Speaker, I do not have the information because it is not yet finalised.

Hon. D J Bossino: But why is it the case that it is not yet finalised? When he answered the question back in January, he talked about the final designs being prepared. At least then, at least then, he was able to provide me some information.

Why is it the case that the costs information, the construction costs, let me put it to him, are not yet finalised?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: I am not distinguishing. The furnishing, fittings and equipment are all part of the overall figure that I assume the hon. Member wished to be provided with, and that information is not available at the moment. There are also things that happened during the course of construction which may alter that figure in one direction or the other, so at the moment I do not have that information.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, you know what they say about assuming things. Now, I am not assuming, I am simply asking him a question which revolves around the construction costs. Is he able to provide me at least with that element, whilst I appreciate that he may not be in a position to provide me with the other elements?

He talks about that there may be delays and the usual vicissitudes in relation to construction. What is it, is he able to say, that is preventing him, in respect of the construction and development of the site, preventing him from answering my questions today?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Exactly those issues that he has referred to.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, I have not referred to any issues. I have referred specifically to vicissitudes in the context of construction. I was repeating what he told me.

I am simply asking him to explain and set out, perhaps not in detail, but if he does have the detail to do so, but at least the general issues which are preventing him from providing the information that I seek. I sought it in January, for goodness sakes. They have started with this.

How is it possible that he is being still so cagey in respect of the construction costs? What is going on here?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I am not being cagey at all and perhaps when I said the issues he was referring to, I should have said the vicissitudes that he was referring to.

Madam Speaker: All right, I am not going, we are not going to have a discussion over the floor. I will allow another supplementary, but we have had five. I appreciate the hon. Member is not getting the answer he would like, but it is the same question, the same answer.

So, I will allow another supplementary that is different to the one put.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, and I am grateful for your tally, there are five questions in respect of two questions on the Order Paper. But can he at least at this stage say whether he has a cumulative cost to date? What is the running bill at the moment?

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

Hon. D J Bossino: Is the Hon. Minister, please may I ask him, that he does not have that information because he did not prepare sufficiently in anticipating the questions that were going to be posed and he does not have it with him? Or is it that he does not have that information for the same reasons that he was referred to in respect of my earlier questions?

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, it is a recurring theme of hon. Members' supplementaries these days. If we do not have the information that they decide in a tangential supplementary that they want to ask, to say that we have not prepared appropriately, nothing could be further from the truth because, of course, that is not an accusation that lies against hon. Members in this House. It is an accusation that lies against the magnificent team that prepares us for parliamentary session, that seeks to provide us with the information that is likely to arise from questions.

So, on their behalf, I deprecate what the hon. Gentleman has said. Hon. Members in this House come ready for the type of supplementaries that we should be asked and hon. Members on the other side of the House should be very clear if they want a particular figure in asking for it to ensure that it can be provided, because the Government is delighted to be transparent and delighted to give hon. Members the information that they seek, so long as they seek it, Madam Speaker.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, I will ask a further supplementary to the answers that we have been treated to by Members opposite but let me point out to the Chief Minister very clearly that, in fact, the question is in the Order Paper. It is a one-liner, very simple question. What is the cost of the construction?

That information is simply not available. Can I ask the Minister this? Is he able to say, here and now, that the College, given the comments I made in terms of our own observations about the lack of development of that particular site, is the College going to be open for students in September 2027, which I understand is the commitment that the Government has ascribed itself to, and if not, what are the reasons for the delay?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I am afraid to tell the hon. Gentleman that he is finding it difficult to read his own questions. When he has told us what his question was, he has omitted the key word, total. It lies on his pen that the question that he asked, and the question that is on the Order Paper, as he said when he asked his supplementary, no doubt not intending to mislead the House, is what is the total cost of the construction of the Gibraltar College?

There is no reference there to the construction cost to date. There is no reference there to it being broken down. The hon. Gentleman can rest assured that it is fully the intention of this Government to deliver in this term of office, which will straddle more than one leadership of this House, all of the commitments that we entered into in the manifesto, and if we are not able to, it will not be for want of trying.

Hon. D J Bossino: I do not agree with the way that the Hon. Chief Minister has chosen to interpret my question. He has interpreted it in a very, may I say, partisan way. It is total cost.

Total cost simply means a totality. It can be the current totality of those costs. If they want to be helpful, he knows, and the Minister knows that he could have been helpful, but he has chosen for some reason, and those reasons I simply do not know, he has chosen simply not to be helpful.

But can I ask him the question so that the Minister can answer on this occasion, if you please, is whether the school, the college, will be open in September 2027?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, the Government will interpret the Government's answers in the way that the Government intended, not in the way that the hon. Gentleman suggests, and I refer the hon. Gentleman to the totality of the answers we have given in respect of this question before.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, when he answers in that manner, to answer the specific question as to whether the doors of that college, given what we are observing, it does not seem that they are going to be open in the next, whatever it is, 11, 10 months, whether they will be open, can he guarantee that to this House, the Minister for Education, that he will keep to his

promise that it will be open in September 2027? I will push that door as far as I can, but if they slam it on my face, there is nothing else I can do.

Hon. Chief Minister: Well, Madam Speaker, it is not up to him to decide who answers on the part of the Government. It is not a commitment of the Minister for Education that the doors of the college will be open. It is a commitment of the GSLP Liberal Government that I lead, and I encourage him to push the door of the College open in September next year, when I tell him on behalf of the Government, it will open to him and every student.

Madam Speaker: I know the hon. Member and I have a chat on how many supplementaries. There have been 10, and almost all the 10 have been a repeat of the same question and a repeat of the same answer, but we are not progressing, so I am not going to keep... Is it a different question?

All right, well let us see if I agree with the hon. Member when he asks the question. Go on.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, I will pose it, and then I will obviously bow down to what you... Yes, you may be surprised. No, Madam Speaker, seriously, let us try and extract the temperature away from this, and let me ask the Minister this.

I simply ask him, in relation to the cost, yes, but when is he able, does he think, to be in a position to provide the answer to the question that I put and in relation to costs? When is he able to provide the answer?

Hon. Chief Minister: Well, Madam Speaker, I understand from the basis of the rules of the House that he can ask the question again in six months.

Madam Speaker: All right, next question.

Q392/2026
Nature Reserve sites –
Not opened before 9am.

Clerk: Question 392, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Why are Nature Reserve sites not opened before 9am during days that will be expected to be busy?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, very happy to provide the answer. The opening of the nature reserve sites is earlier when requested by the agents handling the cruise. Given the increase in frequency of cruises and particular early arrivals of these in Gibraltar, we are currently reviewing the early opening schedule with a view to be better able to cater for cruise ships.

Hon. D J Bossino: I see, and so that the Hon. Minister understands where this question comes from, it has been reported to me by a business that he observed what he described to me as something which was embarrassing, if I can put it to him in these terms, which is that you had literally queues of people waiting to go into St. Michael's Cave. That is something which I think we ought to be avoiding. I detected in his response, in effect, there were two replies.

One is that, as I understand it, and I ask him to confirm whether this understanding is accurate or not, that at the moment the opening hour regime is determined on an as-requested basis by the agents of the operators of the cruise liners, I think the hon. Member says. But is it the case that the Government is now, because we have earlier arrivals of cruise liners, that the Government is now looking at the possibility of, on a more formal and fixed basis, opening sites at an earlier time?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, approximately what I meant, Madam Speaker. We do require on request from the agents to tell us, hopefully with a few days' notice at least, to open earlier, and we will aim to open usually, it will be 8 a.m. The cases that the hon. Member is referring to is exclusively when there is an early cruise ship, otherwise you do not get the queues that early in the morning.

Because this is increasing in frequency, and early arrivals as well, thanks to the excellent work carried out by my hon. Friend the Minister for Tourism and his team, we are reviewing whether we need to do that on a more regular basis.

Hon. D J Bossino: I mean, the fact that the cruise liner arrives early or not, I am not sure that can be attributed to any excellence or other work by his hon. Colleagues or his team. Perhaps if there were a greater number of cruise liners visiting our port, perhaps he would be entitled to be treated to that accolade, but not on the basis that they come in earlier, if I may say by way of a slight preamble.

But can I ask the Hon. Minister whether he thinks that, is it the case that on the basis of the studies that I am sure he or his Department has carried out, is it the case that he is satisfied that an 8 a.m. opening time is going to address the issue that I referred to him in my earlier supplementary?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, indeed, depending on the time of year, any earlier, it could be dark, although in St. Michael's Cave that might not make too much of a difference. I think I can attribute the early opening to my hon. Friend, because if more cruise liners arrive, and I do not know how the industry works, but if you have more cruise liners on a given day, it would be logical that they would space their access to the nature reserve between them, so perhaps that would tend to encourage earlier opening. I believe 8 a.m. is the correct time. If there were any particular reason for which they would have to open earlier, which I really do not think would be the case, then that would be considered at the time.

Hon. D J Bossino: If I may, Madam Speaker, I assume, but I ask the Hon. Minister to confirm that, and I cannot think immediately of other than one perhaps, business which may be impacted by an earlier arrival of potential customers. But presumably his Department is in negotiations and at least informing these businesses of the possible change in regime. Perhaps it already happens in the context of the as-requested basis that he talked about earlier.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, all these arrangements are made in discussion with industry, absolutely.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q393/2026
The Moorish Castle – Cost of the works.

Clerk: Question 393, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: What is the up-to-date cost of the works recently undertaken at the Moorish Castle?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, these works have been carried out by a private contractor.

Hon. D J Bossino: So, yes, and I understand that the private contractor's Fortress Attractions are limited, but perhaps the Hon. Minister can confirm that just by way of side confirmation. But is it the position that the Minister will not be answering any questions because the Government is not cited in respect of the cost expenditure in respect of the construction of Moorish Castle?

Madam Speaker: That may be hypothetical if you do not know what questions the Government are going to be asking.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member is very, must absolutely be certain as to who the contractor is because it has been raised here in this House and they in fact invited him to the opening of the Moorish Castle. So, he will know who the invitation came from.

Hon. D J Bossino: Is it then the case,

Hon. Prof J Cortes: And attended, by the way, Madam Speaker.

Hon. D J Bossino: I attended, and I was taken around the new refurbished site by them and indeed he and other Members of the Government were there to celebrate the opening. But is it then the case, if I may, Madam Speaker, to ask, if I may ask him this, is it the case that the Government has had no expenditure in respect of the sites? When I say the Government, I ask him to, when he is considering the reply, to answer on the basis of its widest possible interpretation that can be given to the Government.

He knows where I am coming from. I am talking about the Gibraltar Savings Bank, you know, the charity structure of Sir Joe Bossano, agencies and all the rest of it. Is there any cost, is there any cost which has been incurred by the Government in respect of this site?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member is well aware of the way that these contracts have been funded, which is by the tickets and by the visitors who purchase tickets.

Q383-386/2026
Supplementaries

Madam Speaker: Right, now I will take supplementaries to 383.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It should be short and sweet. In 383, under the column of costs per annum, if we take the first one, it says £75.50 per entry. Is that an initial

registration fee for a two-year course that is only paid once at the beginning? So, therefore, it cannot be per annum, meaning as if you are paying twice. Or is it a fee payable upon final entry when you put your name down for the examination?

Otherwise, I could interpret that for each student there will have to pay £75.50 per year just to follow the course that is being delivered, for example, in this case at Bayside.

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Yes, Madam Speaker, of course, a student does not pay this. It is paid by the Department of Education from money voted in this House. Madam Speaker, the top of the column is entitled costs per annum. Therefore, it is an annual cost.

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, but is that a new introduction? Because, at least in my days in the classroom, you either pay the fee when you register the pupil for a course, if you were, for example, the length of the course for two years, you pay one registration fee at the beginning of the course. You do not need to pay it again when the second year commences.

In most cases, you only pay the fee when you enter the pupil on the examination register. So, you could have had 10 pupils following a course and then only 8 or 9 are payable because they are the only ones that are going to sit the exam. If the Minister does not have the information, can he at least commit himself to find it, find out?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I am going by the information provided in the answer prepared by the hard-working and diligent staff of the Department of Education. But as I always do when the hon. Member raises a query, I will double check and let him know.

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, still on 383, on the second part of that column, it says, plus embedded operational costs. Can you give me some examples, some light on what the embedded operational costs actually refer to?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, of course, Madam Speaker. It would be equipment, materials, that sort of thing, which has to be provided for the running of the course.

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. I gathered that. So, if we look at the bottom of the first page, the Minister has currently provided an approximate operational cost of £30,704.

Is that an operational cost for equipment, and have we not in previous years also been buying equipment? So, is this a recurring cost for replacement of equipment? Does he have some indication of what you saw?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, could the hon. Member point to where he is? Oh, I see, the second last entry. Yes, they will be the sort of thing that I have explained.

There will be operational costs. I do not have a breakdown of that. Clearly, there are costs in running every course.

Again, if the hon. Member wants a breakdown of the operational costs in that detail, I would need notice, and I would certainly look into it.

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, Madam Speaker, I suppose I would have to go and note it, because what I was asking was if this was for the replacement of equipment, given that in previous years he has given me an indication that the cost relates, for example, to the purchase of certain musical instruments or whatever, and I am asking, you know, if he does not have that answer, then I accept it and I will pose the question further.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I am assuming that it is as in previous years, but when the hon. Member asks, I always want to check, so I will check regardless.

Madam Speaker: Any supplementaries on 384? Anything on 385?

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, Madam Speaker, on 385, is this schedule the one referring to where the Minister, I think, trying to be helpful, said that referrals to Mental Health Services and referrals to Care Agencies could be the same individual in both? Is that the case?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker, because the two could be related. A referral for child protection could be to a child who also has mental health issues, possibly related to the reason why he needs some kind of intervention, and therefore that child could appear on both lists. It will not be most of them, but it will be some of them.

Madam Speaker: Anything on 386?

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, Madam Speaker, I think we are almost at the end. In 386, the useful statistics here, however, one sticks out. In respect of St. Martin's School, there are 21 teachers employed on a substantive basis and almost an equal number, I mean 19, that are employed as non-permanent teachers, a very big contrast to the numbers in relation to all the other schools and so on. Is any information available why in this case is such a high number?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker, as in all the other schools, there will be some which are quite clearly things like maternity leave, career breaks, some may be on long-term sick, some seconded elsewhere, or for particular reasons, there may be a teacher on reduced hours who needs to be covered. In the case of St. Martin's, we do regularly supplement the number of teachers depending on the specific needs of children. So, that is one in which we have to be able to bring teachers in for a period of time, maybe for a term or two, sometimes even on a one-to-one basis, depending on the specific needs, which is why that tends to be an inflated number.

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. I therefore note that as pupil demand led. One final thing on that question. My question did ask for the information to be broken down by educational establishment. I did not put down schools, but rather educational establishment. The Minister has given me rightly a list of all the schools, even the Teaching and Learning Centre, the Learning Mentoring Team, the English Language, Teaching English as an additional language team, but there is no reference to members of staff that pertain to the Department of Education, some of which those posts are exclusively reserved and occupied by teachers.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, they are not working as teachers. They are teachers by profession, but they are working as Education Advisers, for example, which is stretching the definition of the question. If the hon. Member is asking how many qualified teachers are working in the Government service, there are some qualified teachers who are not even working in education.

So, where does one draw the line? Certainly, this was not seen as requiring information in relation to Education Advisers, Senior Education Adviser or Director of Education. It is teachers on the ground.

Hon. E J Reyes: Unfortunately, it was not seen. Yes, I understand what the Minister is trying to say in his answer, but there may be teachers who are working perhaps in the Treasury Department. I am referring to the Department of Education, where they are teachers and they can only hold up posts the mere fact that they are teachers.

Although they may not have a full-time timetable, there are cases, and I have personally witnessed that, where teachers who spend 90% of their time in the Department of Education do commute to schools to actually deliver some lessons, especially when it comes to covering important examination classes. But if the Minister and his team did not quite understand what I

was getting at from my way of drafting, with your leave, Madam Speaker, I will pose that specific question with respect to the Education Department on another occasion if the Minister does not have information at hand.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, it is information that I do not think was requested. The practice of education advisers teaching specifically very rarely happens now. They have a huge workload and therefore, sadly, for them, because they are teachers and they love to teach, they are not able to do that.

If the hon. Member is interested in the number of staff in the Education Department as advisers or Senior Advisers, I will refer him to the Estimates book, where the complement is clearly laid out.

Madam Speaker: All right, next question.

Q394/2026
Draft heritage plan –
New consultation or a new plan be published.

Clerk: Question 394, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: How many people responded to the consultation on the draft heritage plan undertaken in 2023 and will a new consultation or a new plan be published?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Yes, Madam Speaker, the consultation related to the draft heritage vision, safeguarding our past, enriching our future. A disappointing 5 responses were received during the consultation. However, the public consultation formed only one part of a much broader process of professional stakeholder and community engagement.

The heritage vision had already been developed through the Heritage and Antiquities Council and a dedicated sub-committee of the Council, HAC, as we know it for short, drawing on the expertise of Gibraltar's principal heritage bodies and professionals. The final vision was produced by a heritage team coordinated by the Government archaeologists and appointed by myself, and the Council. The Council itself brings together Gibraltar's principal heritage stakeholders and professional expertise, including the National Museum, the Heritage Trust, GONHS, the Department of the Environment, Town Planning and the Government archivists.

The Government formally published a draft vision on the 18th of April 2023 and invited public and stakeholder comments until 12th May 2023. Public engagement also went beyond direct written submissions to Government. The Heritage Trust organised an open public forum at the John Mackintosh Hall specifically to discuss the heritage vision and gather feedback from its members and the wider public.

The meeting was attended by the Government archaeologists. The Trust also issued an anonymous public questionnaire with both online and hard copy versions available so that those unable to attend the meeting could still contribute their views. The Trust stated that this feedback would be used to formulate its response to Government.

All feedback received was considered following the consultation period and subsequently reported that the feedback had been analysed, required no significant changes to the document and that the heritage vision was therefore formally adopted. There are no plans at present to replace the adopted heritage vision or to repeat the 2023 consultation. The priority is to continue

giving effect to a vision that was developed through expert and stakeholder input, opened to public consultation, subjected to additional community engagement and subsequently formally adopted.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I am grateful for that because what really my question was going to be whether the Government now considered it adopted because as the Minister says the consultation process issued in April where there was a closing period of May and there has been no, as far as I can see, no public announcement of the formal adoption of the plan by the Government and that really was the crux of where I was getting at as to whether in fact the Government had adopted the plan. The Minister has confirmed it as I understand it and is my understanding correct therefore that it was adopted back in 2023 or was it adopted after the last election because of the processes he has indicated and therefore the Government are adhering to the plan as set out without amendment and there is not a final version which is different to the one that is available online. Is that correct?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I hesitate to apologise for a dissertation. I give dissertations to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, lots of schedules to my hon. Friend Mr Reyes so I do not know what it is about the Hon. Mr Bossino that does not seem to be satisfied with my contributions.

Madam Speaker, I am surprised that there was no formal announcement, surprised because you know I tend to ensure that public statements are made on significant progress like this. I need to check whether there was a press release or other. I can confirm that it is formally adopted. It was adopted in 2023. The hon. Member can take that as a formal announcement, but I am surprised that it was not in the public domain. Maybe it was and I have forgotten, and he may have missed it, but it is formally accepted.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q395/2026
How many registered vehicles at 16 September 2026 – Petrol; Diesel; Hybrid; or Electric.

Clerk: Question 395, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: How many registered vehicles were there at 16th September 2026 and how many of those were:

1. Petrol;
2. Diesel;
3. Hybrid; or
4. Electric,

vehicles.

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, vehicles by propulsion, the status as on the 21st September this year. Petrol 29,034, diesel 7,383, electric 462, hybrid petrol electric 3,850, hybrid diesel electric 245, hybrid diesel LPG 9.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: And sorry, and the total of registered vehicles?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: I would have to add these up, Madam Speaker. It is 30, 40, 44, 45,000 something like that.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: It was part of my question so I thought that he would have it in front of him.

Madam Speaker: Any supplementaries?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: I have the figure, Madam Speaker, if I may. Sorry, Madam Speaker, I have the figure. I just stood up with. Total 40,983.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: 40,983, that is what he said. Okay, so then because he gave me a statistic when he went to hybrid, he gave me a statistic I thought it was 3,850 and then other statistics. So that must be all part of the 3,850 because otherwise it does not add up to 40,000 surely.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I would then go to sum up the ones in my official formal answer in case of a supplementary because the information that I have is that those are separate. There are 3 different types of hybrid included there. 3,850, 245 and 9.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: 3,850, 245 and 9. Not 245, 9. All right, I see.

Okay, well I am not trying to test the hon. Member on his mathematics. No, this is not a mathematics test. It was an answer the question test, and because I asked how many registered vehicles were there, can he perhaps, because of simply because of the 3 figures he has given me, perhaps he can write to me with the overall figure of registered vehicles simply because I had asked it, just to make sure that we then do the correct maths on understanding the breakdown by percentage of the totals in relation to petrol and so on, but on the assumption that he will write to me, and looking at these figures anyway, if it is around 40,000, there are 29,000 petrol vehicles.

Does he agree with me, and around 7,000 diesel vehicles? That looks like roughly around 70 to 75 percent and maybe another 25 percent. Does he agree with me that in fact there has been no real improvement on the rates of getting more hybrid vehicles or electric vehicles in the last few years?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member does not have to assume that I will write to him. He knows I will and if I do not, he will remind me and then I will. Madam Speaker, what I can say is that I have comparative figures from 2022 to this year, and I can say that diesel vehicles have fallen by 606, petrol have fallen by nearly 5,000 and hybrid vehicles have increased by 2,600 odd and electric vehicles by 243. So, the trend is there, most definitely there. Would I like it to be faster? Yes, but the change is clearly happening.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I am not sure about that. I mean I am not sure what statistics he is referring to because the statistics that I have seen in this House in 2022 revealed that there were about 69 percent of vehicles were petrol vehicles and 24 percent were diesel. These statistics look pretty similar so I am not sure if we are talking at cross purposes and perhaps, he can tell me what the source of the 2022 statistics are so I can compare to my source of 2022 and maybe we can verify what the numbers are.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: The 2022 figures that I am given I believe are the ones that I gave in Parliament when I was asked that question and comparing to the 2026 figures those are the differences, not in percentage but in numbers of vehicles.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Well, I mean we had worked out the overall percentages of what I thought were the percentages of 2022 and looking at these figures, you look at a petrol of 29,000 from 40,000 vehicles, well that roughly is three quarters. When you look at 7,000 out of 40,000, well

you know it is, so at least on petrol it seems that, and given that in petrol in 2022 our calculation was that it was 69 percent, well it is not really in overall terms being reduced so that is why I am asking the hon. Member where his calculation comes from.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, then again, Madam Speaker, if you see that in 2022 there were 1,400 hybrid vehicles and now there are 4,100, clearly there is a change and there are twice the number of electric vehicles that there were at the time so it really depends, I mean you can do what you want with statistics but these are real figures in the change, there has been a decrease in the number of diesel vehicles registered, a decrease of nearly 5,000 in the number of petrol vehicles, an increase of over 2,500 hybrid and an increase of over 200 electric, so the trend is clearly there and I repeat that I would like it to be stronger but the figures are there.

Madam Speaker: All right, I think that is the last question.

Adjournment

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Well, Madam Speaker, can I therefore now move that the House should now adjourn to next Wednesday at 4 p.m., and tell the House that I am about to go to the happy event of celebrating Maria Azopardi's 100th birthday. I happen to know that she is related to somebody in this House, so I am sure that from both sides of the House we will want to wish this particular Gibraltarian and centenarian a very happy birthday indeed, and I move that the House should now adjourn.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: May I, Madam Speaker, with your leave, and given that Mariquita is my aunt, may I just say to Aunty Mariquita that she will have the pleasure not just of the Chief Minister attending her 100th birthday, but she will be recorded in Hansard as having had the celebrations of this House.

Madam Speaker: I am not going to be left out, so I will wish Aunty Mariquita a happy birthday on behalf of the Office of the Speaker as well. I now propose the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Wednesday the 14th at 4 p.m. I now put the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Wednesday the 14th at 4 p.m. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Passed. This House will now adjourn to Wednesday the 14th at 4 p.m.

The House adjourned at 5.36 p.m.