



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.03 p.m. – 4.18 p.m.

Gibraltar, Tuesday, 29th September 2026

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 3.03 p.m.

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

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

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Tuesday 29th of September 2026.

Madam Speaker: Before we begin, I just want to address the House, although it feels very dark in here, I am not sure if it is just the sombre mood perhaps, or maybe the lights missing. But anyway, it is part of the refurbishment process, I need to be patient for a little bit longer.

Pursuant to my powers under the Parliament Act, and for the reasons which follow, I have formed the view that it is necessary to issue an updated ruling redefining the precincts of Parliament. The first ruling concerning the precincts of Parliament was made in 1993 by Speaker Peliza. In that ruling the precincts of the House were designated as including the lobby, the pavement in front of the House, the whole area of the Piazza and the public highway on its three sides.

That ruling was subsequently superseded by a more restrictive ruling made by Speaker Canepa in 2019. On that occasion the Speaker ruled that the precincts of Parliament should be more narrowly defined to include only the lobby and the pavement area directly in front of the three arches in the front of the building. Both of those rulings were made in response to demonstrations taking place at or in the vicinity of the entrance to Parliament.

The present ruling is not a response to any demonstration or other incident. Rather, now that the structural and internal refurbishment of Parliament has almost been completed, the Parliament has now taken over occupation and control over the whole building which in the past had its ground floors and mezzanine levels occupied by restaurants and cafes. I consider, therefore, that this is an appropriate time to review and redefine the precincts.

My Office has responsibility for the safety and security of Members as well as for the preservation and care of the Parliament building. It is therefore our responsibility not only to ensure the smooth and orderly access of Members, staff and members of the public to Parliament, but also to safeguard the well-being and security of Members, to ensure that Parliamentary staff are able to discharge their duties without unnecessary interruption, and to protect and preserve the dignity, appearance and integrity of the Parliamentary setting. This includes ensuring that the Parliament building, its façade and its immediate surroundings are properly protected so that the dignity of Parliament as the seat of Gibraltar's legislature is preserved.

A considerable investment has been made in the refurbishment of Parliament, transforming it into an eye-catching landmark of Gibraltar's civil and democratic development of which we can rightly be proud. The newly refurbished façade presents Parliament in a clean, stately manner and it is important that it is protected from unnecessary damage or interference. This includes, by way of example, ball games being played against the building, the unauthorised placement of tables, chairs, sandwich boards, signs and notices, the stopping, parking or loitering of bicycles, scooters and vehicles, and the holding of activities or events.

I recognise in particular the important role played by charities and other entities which regularly establish stalls outside the lobby of Parliament. Such activity at a central hub in Main Street is welcomed and is not something which we would wish to restrict. It is, however, equally important that such stalls or other temporary arrangements are not established at times or in a manner which impedes the proper functioning of Parliament or the safe movement of Members, staff and members of the public.

Similarly, in the event of demonstrations, it is necessary to ensure that Members can enter and leave Parliament safely and without obstructions and that Parliament itself can sit without interruption. The protection of the building and its integrity must therefore extend not only to its physical fabric but also to the immediate setting in which it stands.

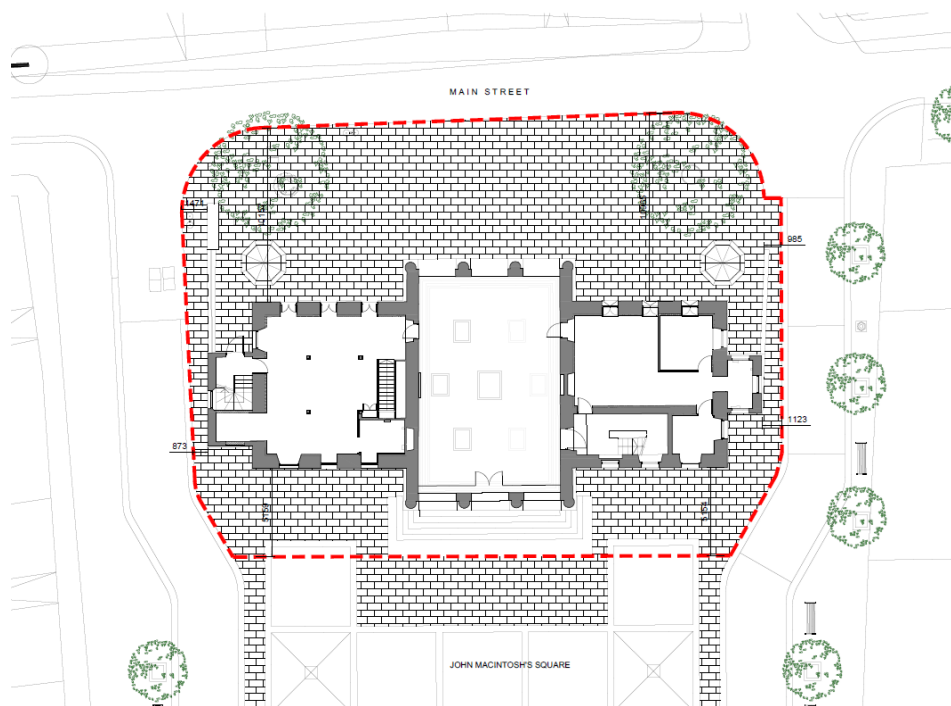
The precincts of Parliament must be defined in a clear and certain manner to enable appropriate measures to be taken should circumstances arise which might compromise the integrity of the building, the safety of Members, staff, the public and or the proper functioning of Parliament.

This ruling is intended to provide a proportionate mechanism for controlling unauthorised objects, vehicles and events within this sensitive area while maintaining appropriate public access and use. In considering this matter I have held meetings with the Commissioner of Police, and I shall provide him with a copy of this ruling for ease of information and have also raised the issue with the Chief Minister, the Deputy Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

In the circumstances I rule that the precincts of Parliament shall comprise the Parliament building, the lobby of Parliament, the area in front of the building on the eastern façade extending from the front of the building to the point at which the pavement meets the kerb, the area at the rear of the building on the western façade extending to the lowest step, and a perimeter following the line of the kerb along the northern and southern sides of the building and adjoining the areas on the eastern and western sides as described above.

For the avoidance of doubt the extent and boundaries of the precincts of Parliament shall be as demarcated in red on the plan which I attach which forms part of the ruling. In the event of any inconsistency between the description, I have given, and the boundaries shown on the attached plan, the boundaries shown on the attached plan shall prevail.

I appreciate Members have not seen a copy of the attached plan, but I am happy to circulate that.



Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, if I can, no doubt on behalf of all Members on both sides of the House, welcome that ruling. I think from the history that you have given us, and I recall both of the rulings of Speaker Peliza and of Speaker Canepa, one might describe those as political rulings in relation to demonstrations and the political activity that can sometimes surround the precincts, and I might describe your ruling today more as a logistics ruling that is designed to protect access and egress in the manner that you have described, and is therefore very welcome on this side and no doubt that side of the House.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, as you have rightly pointed out this is all information which was imparted to the Leader of the Opposition and he has consulted the rest of the team in relation to it. I think indeed we may have seen a plan of sorts, but I detect an expansionist nerve in your body, Madam Speaker, in terms of encroachment into areas that perhaps were not protected. I say that in jest because ultimately there is a balance to be struck and that is between the safety of Members and indeed the integrity and respect, I would add, of this very important institutional and legislative making body and building, but also to ensure, very importantly, you mentioned charity work. I think that is very, very important certainly in this community but also, the other side of the equation, which is the expression, the democratic expression of views. We have seen that very much played out in the streets of Madrid in respect of a housing issue, and I think that people need to have the right to express those views but within certain limits, and you have set those out very clearly in your ruling this afternoon.

Madam Speaker: I am grateful to Mr. Bossino and to the Hon. Chief Minister for that. I hope that this ruling strikes that balance. As I say, Parliament is a central hub, and not only is Parliament a central hub, and whilst the Speaker is speaking perhaps other Members may not speak across the floor, I am looking at both of you by the way, but Parliament is a central hub and I would like to preserve it as such, always within the restriction that Parliament must be able to sit and function properly and safely. So, thank you for the support from both sides. Yes, Mr Clerk.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Clerk: 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 documents at the table.

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

PAPERS TO BE LAID

Clerk: Papers to be laid, the Hon. Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism.

Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): I have the honour to lay on the table the TGEU Implementation (Frontier Workers) Regulations 2026.

Madam Speaker: Ordered to lie.

Questions for Oral Answer

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, CIVIL CONTINGENCIES AND SPORT

120

[Q287/2026](#)
[Children's park at Camp Bay –](#)
[Refurbishment](#)

Clerk: Answers to Oral Questions continued.

Questions to the Hon. Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport.

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Question 287, the Hon. D J Bossino on behalf of the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. D J Bossino: It gives me great pleasure to ask the Hon. Minister the one question that he has on the Order Paper on behalf of Mr. Origo.

When was the last time the children's park at Camp Bay got refurbished?

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

Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport (Hon. L M Bruzon): Madam Speaker, parks around Gibraltar receive constant attention under the Maintenance Agreement with GJBS. The Children's Park at Camp Bay is part of this regime and the last upgrade of equipment was in December 2024.

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Hon. D J Bossino: The Hon. Minister refers to December 2024 when the equipment, as he put it, was refurbished under the contractual arrangements which the Government has with GJBS, but from the information that Mr. Origo has provided me in preparation for this question we are advised that there are other things which are not quite up to scratch with the park. I am told that the rubber flooring is ripped, there is some sort of metal structure which is rusty and that type of thing, so I would be more concerned to ask the Hon. Minister, and so asking, whether refurbishment works beyond the equipment, as he puts it, is being undertaken to this particular park.

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Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, the GSLA has a parks team that visit parks on a daily basis, and any issues are reported to GJBS who undergo the works. Now there are telephone numbers in parks that people can call and report any issues that they reckon or deem should be addressed, so I encourage anyone who has any worries, although of course I will inform the GSLA to go and have a look, but there is a constant maintenance programme which runs all year.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Whilst the Hon. Minister, I think he has answered this or a similar question certainly in this vein in the past, where he has made a reference to a hotline that can be called, and he says that he will be I think he suggests that he will be reporting it to GJBS, can I encourage him to do so and will he please do so? Because as I say the information that we have is that this particular park, it is in a sorry state, and it does require perhaps deeper intervention and refurbishment than the Hon. Minister is alluding to.

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Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, as I said before, I will.

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Hon. D J Bossino: May I ask the Hon. Minister how frequently these parks are in fact inspected, and I would be more concerned to ask the Minister and do so ask him, whether they are inspected from a safety perspective.

Hon. L M Bruzon: Madam Speaker, as I said moments ago the GSLA have a parks team who visit every park every day and report on any issues. If it helps the hon. Gentleman, the refurbishment works, the park in 2024 was at a cost of £23,330. After that, every financial year there is an average of about £2,000 to £3,000 spent on that park alone every year on maintenance.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

EQUALITY, EMPLOYMENT, CULTURE AND TOURISM

Q288/2026

**Disability parking spaces –
Currently available to the public**

Clerk: Questions to the Hon. Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism. Question 288, the Hon. D J Bossino on behalf of the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Government confirm how many disability parking spaces are currently available to the public and whether there has been a net loss or gain in 2026 of these types of spaces?

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

Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): Madam Speaker, there are 149 disability parking spaces currently available to the public. This figure has remained the same in 2026.

Hon. D J Bossino: Does the Hon. Minister have this information to hand and if he does, can he share it across the floor of the House? Is the Hon. Minister able to provide us with the location of these, as he put it, I think in his answer, 149 parking spaces and is he also able to divide that between those within public car parks and on-street spaces?

Hon. C P Santos: Madam Speaker, I actually do have that breakdown (laughter). There are 44 accessible spaces in the South District, 14 accessible spaces in Town Area, 15 accessible spaces in the Upper Town, 31 in West Side, 31 in the North, 14 in the East Side, and those do not include those in private car parks like Midtown.

Hon. D J Bossino: I do welcome the Hon. Minister's answer in this regard because he does come prepared with, as he puts it, quite rightly I say, predictable questions that the Opposition is going to ask because I dare say that many of his colleagues do not do likewise and expect us to predict what the answer is going to be.

Madam Speaker: Let us get to the supplementary rather than enter into discussion.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Needless to say, that is not the view that we take on this side of the House.

210 **Madam Speaker:** All right, supplementary or not, but no further comments.

Hon. D J Bossino: But simply to welcome, Madam Speaker, how the Hon. Minister has treated the question.

215 May I ask him this by way of supplementary, I hope just as predictable as the one I just asked him. Given that there has been no change in 2026 in terms of the numbers, whether up or down, is the Hon. the Minister able to say whether the Government has plans to increase, or indeed as opposed to decrease, but I suspect they would wish to increase the number of these spaces available because we are told, and Mr. Origo is advised, that there are people who approach him complaining about the lack of availability of these spaces for those badge holders.

220 **Hon. C P Santos:** Well, I would recommend that those approaching Mr. Origo complaining they could approach myself or my department or other ones who can actually do something about it, because the process with regards to disability parking is simple. If you require one around your area you apply to the Traffic Commission, you state which area it is, you can send a photo image of how you need the accessible disability parking, and it goes through to the Traffic Commission. 225 So, there is never a plan to increase or decrease, it is on a need's basis.

Hon. D J Bossino: Well, I am glad to hear that the Government has not been a recipient of complaints because then it would suggest, whilst we have a different story, that their story is otherwise and indeed there is not a concern in respect of this area. And it is interesting also to note that the Government does not simply respond on a needs basis rather than on a policy basis. It should, for whatever reason, decide, doing a study and doing an analysis, that there ought to be, in a particular area, a greater number of these spaces made available. 230

235 But is the Hon. Minister able to state whether there is a policy in place in respect of removal of parking spaces? He does say that the number has not changed between one year and the next, but I do ask him whether the Government has a policy to remove parking spaces which are then not regularly used. Is this monitored and is this analysed?

Hon. C P Santos: There is not a policy to remove any parking spaces. We have a compliance officer from the SNDO who does monthly checks, submits the reports, liaises with car parks, the police and all other authorities. And if we get any complaints on improper use, our compliance officer attends this and deals with it in the appropriate manner. But there is no policy to reduce because we feel that they are all used adequately. 240

245 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I am assisted here by my hon. Friend, Mrs. Sanchez, but I do recall that the Minister of certainly the Government announced a rehashing, a review, a revamping of the Blue Badge criteria. I think there was something in social media not that long ago. Can I ask him about this? How is that progressing? And it is relevant to the question on the order paper because I ask him this also, whether it will have an impact on the number of these spaces available to those who need it. 250

Hon. C P Santos: I did state a review of the Blue Badge in my budget speech as well, and it was discussed here, and it is not really being held up, we are just reviewing because it is a change in the traffic legislation. So, we are looking to see how we can make those changes as soon as possible, and at the moment we're not predicting it will change the number of parking spaces, it will change the way that people are using them, and then as we go, we'll see whether we need more parking spaces or not. 255

Madam Speaker: Last one. 260

Hon. D J Bossino: Can I press him further? Is he able to at least provide an indication of what those changes are? It may be that he spelt it out in his budget address. I do not recall it. His response can be, I refer the hon. Member to the address that he made in the course of the Appropriation Bill debate, and that is fair enough it is within the rules of the House, but I do not think it will be useful for those people who are listening in respect of this issue.

Can I ask him to expand further in respect of what changes he is wishing and wanting to make in respect of the blue badge policy and criteria?

Hon. C P Santos: I am not really willing to give any details until it is all finalised in case there were to be any changes, so I will give all the information as soon as I release what these will be.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q289/2026
NVQ Courses –
Currently being undertaken by Trainees at the Training Centre

Clerk: Question 289, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide details in respect of all NVQ Courses currently being undertaken by Trainees at the Training Centre, indicating estimated completion dates of said courses and qualifications expected to be obtained?

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

Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): Madam Speaker, trainees at the Training Centre are currently undertaking NVQ courses and qualifications with estimated completion dates as follows: City and Guilds NVQ Level 2 Diploma in Building Maintenance Operations two cohorts are running simultaneously: Cohort 1 estimated end date December 2026 and Cohort 2 estimated end date December 2027; there is a Diploma in Plumbing NVQ Level 2; there are two cohorts running simultaneously: Cohort 1 estimated to end January 2026, Cohort 2 estimated end date December 2027; The EAL Performing Engineering Operations NVQ Level 2 in Electrical the existing intake progression in training to NVQ Level 3 is estimated end date October 2026; The EAL Engineering Maintenance NVQ Level 3 Electrical, estimated end date October 2027; The EAL Engineering Maintenance NVQ Level 3 Mechanical estimated end date October 2027.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can I arise from that perhaps my fault for not having included it as part of the question but given that the end dates are going to be 2026 and 2027, especially those in 2027, are those a cohort that has just commenced training, because the Minister has indicated to me in the past that he may or may not have an intake coming this September and we are now September, or is it still an intake expected to happen within the last month, happening in 2026, so that I have a better picture? I know in some areas there are two cohorts, so that must be as a result of different start dates. So, if the Minister can enlighten me with that, it helps to complete my picture in respect of trainees.

Hon. C P Santos: Madam Speaker, we are fortunate that the Training Centre and the NVQ courses do not follow an academic calendar, so we can start whenever it is required. So, our aim is to always have two cohorts going, one level that then moves on to the other one. So as soon as we complete one of the cohorts, we will have another intake. So, for example, right now we have

310 an intake that is starting at the end of this month for mechanical, which I have not stated because the question wanted the ones actively now. So, we have just finished a Level 2, so we are now commencing a Level 2, and then when we finish a Level 3, the Level 2s will move to Level 3 and so on. So as soon as the cohorts end, we start a new one.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, that is useful. Can I press the Minister as well? He gave us a breakdown, especially in respect to the construction trades, like plumbing and so on. There are some trades that are not mentioned at all, does it mean they have zero trainees, or there has been no mention of any trainees, let us call it that, aspiring to attain a Level 1, which is the basic entry level? Maybe he has not been provided information, or there are simply no Level 1 candidates?

Hon. C P Santos: The Level 1 candidates completed just before the summer, they are the ones who are in Cohort 2, who are estimated to finish in December 2027. So, we are now going to take another Level 1 intake as well. And the Level 2 and Level 3 building maintenance operations are the other wet trades. But they are all under that title, and then you decide which two of the wet trades you're going to specialise in.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, it is useful. And I accept that the Minister seems to be preparing to take on new intakes and so on. Is he able to provide us with an estimated start date? I ask this so that I know when, Madam Speaker, I am going to pose my next question so I can get figures of trainees coming in and so on.

Hon. C P Santos: We are aiming for January 27.

335

Madam Speaker: Next question.

[Q290/2026](#)
[Elite Scholarship Scheme –](#)
[Grants awarded.](#)

340

Clerk: Question 290, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: How many applications have been received and how many Grants have been awarded in 2026 under the Elite Scholarship Scheme, giving the criteria used to make these awards, and what is the total estimated cost of these Grants?

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

Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): Madam Speaker, we received 11 applications for the Elite funding for financial year 2026-2027. Of these, 5 applications were successfully awarded. The total cost to date has been £10,000 as approved under Head 20 Culture, Subhead 2(14) Elite funding.

The criteria used remains unchanged since my answers to Questions 728/2024 and 732/2025. However, in addition, we have since published the list of schools eligible for the scholarship.

355

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you. Madam Speaker, does the Minister have at hand the information of those 5 grants that have been awarded in respect of which areas?

360 **Hon. C P Santos:** Madam Speaker, I do have that. One is a Masters in Music, three are dance related and one is a course in acting.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

365
Q291/2026
Employment Tribunal –
Claims filed.

Clerk: Question 291, the Hon. E J Reyes.

370 **Clerk:** Can Government provide an update in respect of what stage all claims filed with the Employment Tribunal are at and when were those claims first filed?

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

375 **Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos):** Madam Speaker, the breakdown by stage of the claims filed with the Employment Tribunal are as follows: Awaiting a response, 5; Mediator, 17; Awaiting a chairperson, 0; and Undergoing hearings, 55.

The filing months for the claims at each stage are as follows.

Awaiting a response: August 26.

Mediator: December 25; May 26; June 26; and July 26.

380 Chairperson: nil.

Undergoing hearings: May 18; July 19; February 20; April 20; June 20; December 20; March 22; July 22; August 22; September 22; December 22; August 23; December 23; January 24; September 24; October 24; November 24; March 25; May 25; June 25; July 25; August 25; September 25; October 25; November 25; December 25; January 26; February 26; March 26; April 26; May 26; 385 and August 26.

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, can I have some sort of clarification? The 5 who are down as awaiting a response who is it that has to respond in respect to what?

390 **Hon. C P Santos:** There are 5 people who filed a tribunal in August and usually they get a response as to what the next stages are, so that is what they are waiting for.

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, but the response has to come from whom? From the tribunal itself or does the claimant have to furnish some further information?

395 **Hon. C P Santos:** Are they awaiting a response from the...

Hon. D J Bossino: No, Madam Speaker, if I can assist, if I may. I think when, I have always understood the answers that the Hon. Minister has helpfully provided in this field is that when 400 claims are awaiting a response, and he has alluded to it, it is because they are more recent claims, and it is in effect within no no, I think it is a response from the respondent, because there is a period of 14 or 21 days, or perhaps even more, within which a respondent can respond to a claimant's claim. I think that is what perhaps he can confirm, whether that understanding is correct, or he does not know and needs to check.

405 **Hon. C P Santos:** I would actually need to check that, but I have no doubt that he is probably correct on this one.

410 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you Madam Speaker, when the Minister, has been able to check, if he would let me know. The figures he was giving for every month those are sort of the running totals as of that month. It is not that in January there is so much, and then in February it is an addition to the January ones. Those are what the running totals are. I ask out of sheer ignorance just to double-check that I have not got the wrong information.

415 **Hon. C P Santos:** The numbers are not accumulative. They are when they were filed per month. So, the dates that I have given are the date that the initial claim was filed.

420 **Hon. D J Bossino:** May I ask the Minister this. I think from our side I am trying to understand the dates and the statistics which he has provided. Do I take it that the Minister is satisfied with the progress of what he has been doing since he took Office in respect of the Employment Tribunal claims, or does he feel that more needs to be done by way of employment or more chairpersons and the like?

425 **Hon. C P Santos:** I am actually very happy with the work that we have been doing. There was a huge backlog when I first came into office. There were a lot of claims that were still awaiting chairpersons. We have got rid of all the backlog and the ones that are awaiting response are the ones that have recently been filed. and then the rest are not even a year old and already within the process. We were behind by quite a lot three years ago and I am actually very satisfied. We are going to recruit new mediators anyway because as I always say, we can always do more. You
430 can always do more, and you can always do better. I am actually very satisfied and very happy with how the progress of the Employment Tribunal is going.

435 **Hon. D J Bossino:** One final question. The Minister rightly points out in terms of what is happening at the start of the process, where there seems to be an improvement, and no doubt this will take a bit of time. There is quite a sizable chunk in number at the end of the process where I think he talked about 55 which are awaiting a hearing, and I think we have heard dates, which go as far back as 2018. Does he have any information in relation to that? There could be a myriad of different reasons and it may indeed be that the parties themselves it is not the fault of the Employment Tribunal because they are entering into negotiations or they do not want the matter
440 to progress for whatever reason but I know that the chairmen and chairwomen are quite insistent in asking the parties to attend and to give directions, very firm directions, for progress of the claims. Does he have any idea or any notion or any information as to why it is that some of these claims of the 55 cohort look quite stale in terms of the dates when they were first issued?

445 **Hon. C P Santos:** I do not have details of all the claims or any particulars like that. Out of 55: 1 from 2018, 1 from 2019, 4 from 2020, 4 from 2022, 2 from 2023 and 3 from 2024. The rest are less than around 12 months. I am not quite sure what holds them up but there are many different reasons as already stated. It could be a disagreement, it could be further discussions, it could be one party does not accept and the other one it could be, as I know, that sometimes the people
450 who need to attend are unable to attend, be it the claimant or the lawyers, and dates need to change, but I do not have any particulars from each individual case.

Madam Speaker: Next Question.

455

Q292/2026
Royal Caribbean liners –
Return to our shores.

460 **Clerk:** Question 292, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: When will Royal Caribbean liners return to our shores?

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

Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): Madam Speaker, I want to clarify that Royal Caribbean Group is the parent company of a number of cruise lines that have continued to make port calls in Gibraltar. These include, amongst others, the Royal
470 Caribbean Cruise Line, Celebrity Cruise Line and Silver Seas Cruises. Royal Caribbean Cruise Line only stopped coming to Gibraltar during the COVID period of 2020 and 2021. Since 2022 they have been making calls to Gibraltar.

Hon. D J Bossino: I am grateful to the Minister for clarifying that point and entering into
475 specifics, and I am also grateful that he has correctly identified what the question was about. It is actually about specifically and particularly Royal Caribbean Lines. Certainly the information that he has given surprises me somewhat because, as I understand it, and in fact this was the subject of questions that I asked his predecessor in the previous Parliament, predecessor to this one, Royal Caribbean Lines stopped coming to Gibraltar and in fact the response given by the Government
480 by way of possible explanation as to why that had happened was because it, i.e. the cruise liner company, had itself decided for whatever reason that Gibraltar was not an attractive port, but it was not necessarily because there was anything wrong with Gibraltar, but because for whatever reason, extraneous to Gibraltar, they decided not to come to our shores. I am glad to hear that in fact on checking the port information there are Royal Caribbean liners which are going to be
485 coming to Gibraltar, because it is the mainstay of many of our operators, particularly the taxi drivers, who are very keen to see the high numbers that these vessels do bring to our shores.

Can he say, is he able to expand further as to why we had that hiatus? He suggests that it was COVID related but as I understand it that was not the answer that we received across the floor of the House previously, so can he expand on that as to why it is that we had a pause in arrivals of
490 Royal Caribbean liners to our shores?

Hon. C P Santos: The suggestion was not that it was COVID related. COVID related was that there were no cruise liners in 2020 or 2021 at all, but in 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026 we have
495 had visits. It was decreased, and a lot of it comes from and I do meet them regularly, a lot of it is itinerary changes, where they are moving the ships. The Mediterranean at the moment is a complicated area when it comes to the bigger Icon class ships because of the depths and because of how the ports are prepared. We now, as we have already announced, we are looking at the development of our cruise liner terminal and the surrounding areas, so that will hopefully make it more accessible for those Icon ships to be able to attend Gibraltar, and that is when they will
500 probably see a return of higher numbers. It is all around itineraries and choices of itineraries and where those ships feel they want to make those cruise calls.

Hon. D J Bossino: I think now the response that he has given is more aligned to the response that I had from Mr. Daryanani, who was his predecessor at the time, that this was an itinerary
505 choice which the relevant company made unilaterally. But, you know, it is what it is. That is a response that we have had from the Gibraltar Government historically. Is he, does he have a notion and I see that in June he issued a press release of a conference or a meeting that he had where he hosted, in fact, it was in Gibraltar a senior leading cruise executives at the actually I think

it was in the UK at the CLIA conference, Press Release 443 of this year, where in the list of companies that he said he had met we have the Royal Caribbean Line. So, does he, as a result of that or indeed as a result of other contact that he has had, is he able to say when it is that he thinks that we are going to have the buoyant and greater numbers that we have had historically from this particular company? For the reasons that I mentioned earlier, this is a very important company, I am sure he shares that view, and we want to ensure as far as possible that we have an increased number of these vessels coming to our port.

Hon. C P Santos: He is correct, I did meet, I do meet Royal Caribbean very regularly, I do meet most of the cruise lines very regularly, we are in very close contact, that is why the numbers of cruise ships keep increasing, we have a very good relationship with them, Gibraltar is a very popular product. A lot of it is about infrastructure in general around the Mediterranean. This is something that all Mediterranean ports are finding complicated. The moment that the Royal Caribbean ships, the medium-sized ones, are being replaced for the Icon class, then infrastructure changes need to happen within the ports. So, we still get visits from the smaller ships that they have, which are the standard ones that used to come, but they are replacing their own fleet with bigger Icon class ships. The moment that we, the conversation is to get them here as soon as feasibly possible, they are very interested in returning to Gibraltar, my aim is to get them here by 2028, so that is the date we are aiming for, but I am not stating that as a fact, I am stating that as an aspiration and this is where we are aiming at, basically because of how long the itineraries take it is always an 18-month, about 18 to 24-month plan, but it is all about making infrastructure work for the ships that they have.

Hon. D J Bossino: Yes, that is actually a very interesting point, because in effect what the Hon. Minister is saying is that the reason why Royal Caribbean is not coming to the ports is because of infrastructural, structural issues, physical issues. That is the way I understood it but let me finish the point. Now, if he is saying that he is confident that he will be able to bring this company back to Gibraltar in 2028, and he has also said in response to my earlier supplementary that the construction of the new port will play a big part in relation to that, is he saying that the construction of the new port will address those infrastructural and structural issues and that it will be completed by 2028, which is when he aspires, as he put it, to bring this liner back to Gibraltar?

Hon. C P Santos: We are very close to announcing the works of the cruise liner terminal and the port as a whole, so all details will be more specifically released at that time.

Hon. D J Bossino: The Hon. Minister from a sedentary position, an intervention from the Chief Minister which suggested that I had misunderstood his answer, so can I ask him to clarify, why is it that Royal Caribbean Lines did not come to Gibraltar? He mentioned itinerary, but he also mentioned basically the size of the vessels that is the way I understood it, by implication, the size of the vessels was such that they were unable to port in Gibraltar's port. Is that the position, and that once that structural, infrastructural issue is addressed, that then Royal Caribbean will be coming back to Gibraltar? Is that the position?

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): No, Madam Speaker, it is much more complex than that, although the hon. Gentleman just wants that headline, because he wants the headline that Royal Caribbean have not come to Gibraltar because the Government has not invested in infrastructure, which would be untrue, although it would be great for him to try and pretend that that were the case.

What the Hon. Minister has said is that Royal Caribbean cruise ships and the Royal Caribbean Line, which is not just those branded as Royal Caribbean but including those that are branded as Royal Caribbean, are coming to Gibraltar, but that for the bigger ships to come, we need to make infrastructure changes. Now, so that the hon. Gentleman understands what these bigger ships

are. The Icon class, the first Icon class to cruise the Mediterranean cruised it this year or next year. I am not sure whether it is this year or next year, and so, therefore, if we had made the investment in being able to take the Icon class, then we would not yet have been able to see a return on that investment, and it would have nothing to do with anything that the hon. Gentleman asked Mr Daryanani some three, four, or five years ago.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, it is not as if the Icon class cannot now come to Gibraltar, because the Queen Elizabeth and the Prince of Wales can come to Gibraltar. The Queen Elizabeth and the Prince of Wales are not cruise ships, but they have the draft which an Icon class vessel has, but we want to make this further investment. The answer that the Hon. Minister has given him in the final part related to the Icon class, because of the way that Royal Caribbean is removing or moving around its different categories of vessels, and it is not, therefore, what the hon. Gentleman suggested. I mean, the type of answer that the hon. Gentleman wants us to give is that Royal Caribbean Airlines is not coming to Gibraltar because the Government has not made the investment for the A380 to land here. That is where the hon. Gentleman was going, and that is why he was completely wrong.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q293/2026
UKGTA –
Policy of the Government

Clerk: Question 293, the Hon. D J Bossino on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. D J Bossino: Is it still the policy of the Government not to revive the UKGTA?

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

Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): Madam Speaker, yes.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, the Hon. Minister responds in the affirmative to the question posed in the negative about the revival of the UKGTA, and I refer the Hon. Minister, and I am sure he has it in his notes, to the exchange that he had with my hon. Learned Friends, Mr. Origo and Mr. Azopardi, back on the 19th of December 2023, when he made a reference to the reason why the UKGTA as a body was not being reignited, in fact was being scrapped, in effect, because of the change of how tourism works, and it is more online, there is more of a social media presence, and all the rest of it. In that context, may I ask the Minister, given that the policy continues to be, as he set it out now, more than almost three years ago, goodness sakes, how time flies, that, that, that, given that that continues to be the policy, whether there has been any development beyond that, in terms of the social media presence and the online presence that he was talking about.

Hon. C P Santos: So, I was asked this question 19th December, just under three years ago, and yes, so two years and ten months. So, tourism, as I said back then, worked differently, so as opposed to working with one body, I regularly meet with the Hotel Association, all the different tour operators, the airlines, we have a closer contact with all international companies as well, and we use, we each use our own social media and marketing and publicity pathways in order to promote Gibraltar. We are hitting, the TV campaigns are hitting approximately 13 to 14 million people for brand awareness, just from Visit Gibraltar, and our social media the same.

610 Last year we had an increase of 358% in hits in our, not just in our social media. So, that is just the work that we do in Visit Gibraltar. Each hotel chain, each tour operator, everybody does something different, and then we collaborate when we have to.

We are just actually arranging now for the World Travel Market, where all these different associations attend with the Gibraltar Tourist Board in our stalls, we collaborate with the different
615 cruise companies, and that is how we are currently working within the tourism industry.

Hon. D J Bossino: Is he able to, if not list the names, I do not expect him to do that, but is he able to at least confirm my understanding, which is that, given that this was the UKGTA, because it was not clear in the responses that he gave back in December 2023, almost three years ago,
620 whether these stakeholders, as he puts it, these hotel operators and other operators, are based in the UK, or is it UK and Gibraltar?

Hon. C P Santos: The point of the UKGTA was to revive product Gibraltar PLC within the UK, but the main components of it, and the main members were in Gibraltar, and based in Gibraltar.
625 We meet regularly with the stakeholders here in Gibraltar, see what their needs are, and then we have a representative in Gibraltar House, who works for the Tourist Board as a consultant, and she goes to all the different roadshows and collaborates with the different tour operators over there, the airlines we meet, the ones over there, so it is all about a collaboration between stakeholders in Gibraltar and stakeholders in the UK. We work with, EasyJet, with BA, now with
630 airlines, we are in close contact with a lot of new airlines that are interested in Gibraltar, with all the different cruise liners, we work with Travel Weekly, TTG, Travel Media, all different media outlets in the UK, as well as, we work with Hays Travel, we work with Kirker Travel, we work with a lot of different operators in the UK, as well as the important market for us, which is listening to our people in Gibraltar, what they need, and how we can provide that.

Hon. D J Bossino: And I have never fully understood, in terms of reviewing the answers that he gave to Mr Azopardi in particular, in the context of the supplementaries posed by him, what the connection is between, as he put it, the different way in which tourism works, and I think it was his own desire and decision to get rid of the UKGTA. I have never quite understood it, because he
640 then goes on to say in his answers, and he has indeed said the same thing across the floor of the House this afternoon, that he is meeting all these different groupings. So why does he have an aversion to having a body, a structure in place, which can be as wide-ranging as he wants, which can be as consultative as he wants it to be, in that structure, so that he can consult them regularly?

Because at the moment, from this side of the House, it all seems rather woolly and rather
645 unclear as to which way he is going, and indeed to understand the rationale for the getting rid of the UKGTA, which has been so useful for many years.

Hon. C P Santos: Just to correct the hon. Member opposite, I never got rid of the UKGTA, it did not exist when I came into Office. I was asked whether I was going to revive it, and I did not. Back
650 in 1991, there was a need for in-person meetings, and the promotion of tourism was via published media.

It was 1991, we did not really even use emails back then. Right now, I have the facility of sending an email, and within two minutes, I get a response from the individuals without having to wait for one person within a hotel to meet all the other hotels and then meet me. I can meet all
655 of them together, I can discuss with them at the click of a finger, you know, I can just send an email and have that information at hand.

The way that you promote tourism now is through social media, and through the internet, TV, and online advertising. So, it is not 1991, which was post-Gulf War, and we needed to revive destinations in a way that we are able to do now much more efficiently.

Hon. D J Bossino: I do not fully understand the references he makes to 1991 and the Gulf War. I am simply asking him whether he would at least consider, if I can put it perhaps more mildly than in those terms, whether he would at least consider, rather than saying, I do not know, the company or the entity decides to send an email to, and with a click of a finger, send an email or whatever, WhatsApp, whatever, whether he would consider having more of a structure in place, a body in place. I mean, it need not be, it need not be like a monolith which does not move forward and is not progressive and does not develop.

It can be something very active. All I am saying is whether he would at least reconsider the possibility of having some form of organisation which he leads, and which he is in command of, and which he directs, but at least have more of a structure.

Hon. C P Santos: I direct it very successfully. We look at the numbers and how they are on the increase. Clearly what I am doing is working.

I understand he is much more analogue than me, but if that is his choice, which is fine, that may work for him. But for me, I go back to 1991 because that is when the UKGTA was formed, and there was a point to it, and a very valid one at the time, when people needed to get together, revive a tourism industry that is not where it is now. Now we use other forms which is not meeting around a room, probably smoking a cigarette and discussing how we are going to get more people to come to Gibraltar.

Now it is working differently. We see numbers increase year on year, so as opposed to thinking that what I am doing is unstructured, give merit to a department which is very well run, which has a lot of different people with different responsibilities doing the job that they are hired to do, which is making tourism work, marketing Gibraltar as a destination, and making the numbers of visitors and tourists increase.

Madam Speaker: Next Question.

Q294/2026
Music Festival –
Cost & Government Contribution

Clerk: Question 294, the Hon. D J Bossino on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. D J Bossino: What was the cost of the Music Festival held between 3-5 September 2026 and how much did the Government contribute by way of direct or indirect funding or other financial contribution or assistance?

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

Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): Madam Speaker, the costs associated with the Music Festival are currently being finalised and the producers of the event are collating costs as they have not yet received all final invoices. Once this is finalised, we will be in a position to confirm whether there is a need of support from the Government.

Hon. D J Bossino: May I ask the Minister how that is going to work? Is it that the first port of call is going to be for the organisers to fund this? I think he mentioned organisers, and then if there is a requirement for more funding, I just need to understand what he said, that the Government will step in and provide that extra bit of funding?

And just by way, perhaps not so preliminary, but at the end of the question, to add so he understands where I am coming from, surely an amount of money would have been assigned to

710 the organisers before they started on this road and organised this music festival. And if that understanding is correct, can he at least provide us, whilst I understand it is piecemeal, and so I understand he does not have all the figures, what amount of money has already been transferred to the organisers for the production of this particular music festival?

715 **Hon. C P Santos:** Well, as we said, we aim for it to be at no cost to the taxpayer, so we did get a lot of sponsorship, the organisers and ourselves, we helped them with, we got contacts and sponsors and ticket sales. So as far as I know, I do not have details of any funding per se. At the end, if we need to support the event, because it is an event that came from Visit Gibraltar and it was a good tourism-led event, then we may have to support, but ideally, it will be at no cost to
720 the taxpayer, that is the plan of this event.

Hon. D J Bossino: So, as I understand it then, there is, and I ask him to confirm whether this understanding is correct, there is a possibility and a place where there will not be any cost to the taxpayer because, you know, once all the figures are set out, it will all have been paid for from
725 ticket sales and sponsorship. It is a possibility that that could be the case and then zero pennies as far as the taxpayer is concerned, it has all been self-funded.

Hon. C P Santos: That is a scenario we set out to achieve.

730 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Is the Hon. Minister able to state by when he thinks that that information is going to be available, because I think this is of public interest, certainly it is of interest to us to understand what the cost is, irrespective of whether the taxpayer will be funding it, because this is sponsored by the Government, I think it was the Government's initiative, we would want to know what the exact cost is and is he able to say when he will have that information available to
735 him.

Hon. C P Santos: Yes, I have no problem as soon as we get all the final figures, I have no problem, I am very transparent with the work that I do, so I know that we have at least 90 days as soon as for an invoice to be paid, so I do not know exactly when, this is not something that I am
740 handling or my department is handling, this is direct from the producers and as soon as they have all the costings, they will come and break them down and let me know.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Mr Clinton had a question.

745 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Minister will appreciate there is a big difference between absolutely no cost to the taxpayer and what he seems to be suggesting, that the taxpayer could somehow be in a fallback position. Can the Minister answer this question then?
Is there a contractual arrangement with whoever put this together, that if the event is breakeven or makes a profit, the producers or the organisers keep that profit, if there is a loss, the
750 Government picks up the bill, is that correct?

Hon. C P Santos: Well, the aim and the accounting that we went into in order to make it successful, because if you look at how the artists came, we did not bring Beyoncé, you know, we brought people of a standard that was of an achievable financial budget that we could achieve.
755 So, the aim is to break even, if not, the Government will have to at some point support. I do not envisage that if we did, it would be big numbers of the numbers that we were working with before, but it is a community event, and we would need to support this event from a Government perspective.

But the aim is for it to be at zero cost to the taxpayer and that is what we set out as soon as
760 we started this process.

Hon. D J Bossino: The Hon. Minister refers to zero cost to the taxpayer and whilst I appreciate that that may be the case in the context of payment of monies, is there not also, and I would ask him, a contribution at least made by the taxpayer through the provision of human resources? So, I am thinking of, for example, employees of the GSLA who would have been made available to assist. For example, the provision of electricity and things of that ilk, in terms of infrastructural assistance, that type of assistance which would have meant in effect a cost to the Government, a cost to the Government because it is providing these services which would have gone elsewhere on those particular days.

Is he able to say whether there was any cost to the Government and indeed, as my friend Mr. Sacarello tells me, in the context of the payment of overtime for those events?

Hon. C P Santos: I would need to double check in order to confirm, but I can tell you from other events that we do, we usually pay the GSLA and we pay the overtime and we pay a bill when we have done events from the Ministry of Culture ourselves. So, I would have to check whether for this event the same has happened, because I am not necessarily that involved in the accounts, because as I said, it is a private producer, but normally when we have done the Literary Festival and we have done things over there, we end up paying the bill.

Hon. D J Bossino: Then he appreciates the point I made, that there is, beyond the payment of extra monies, there is already an underlying cost to the Government because it is providing these services.

Hon. C P Santos: No, no, no. Because the producers are paying. So, for example, when you do an event, the GSLA charges for overtime and the hire of the hall.

When we have done something ourselves from the Ministry of Culture, we pay and when Cultural Services does it, they pay. Here the producers are the ones involved, so I will double check to confirm, but usually the practice is that the event, they pay the overtime.

Madam Speaker: Alright, next question. I think this was the last one.

Adjournment

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I move that the House should now adjourn to Friday, the 2nd October, 9.30 in the morning.

Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Hon. Chief Minister indicates whether he expects, given that we have a majority on this side of the House on this occasion, maybe he wants to have our support in moving the adjournment. Is he able to indicate how long we are expected to be? Is it going to be the entire day?

I think we would be appreciative in terms of organising diaries and I am conscious that some of us have young children.

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I wonder if I do not have their support to move the adjournment, what we will do? Drink coffee? Stay in permanent session?

I mean, the hon. Gentleman's threats are, as usual, laced with ineffectiveness. But I am very happy. You need five days for an Opposition motion. So, I remind him that an Opposition motion cannot be dealt with for five days.

Madam Speaker: I think we are getting into the hypothetical here. At this stage it is hypothetical. If I put the adjournment and that is not carried, then we can see what we do after that. But at the moment, it is hypothetical.

815 **Hon. D J Bossino:** All we want is an indication from the hon. Member.

Hon. Chief Minister: Yes, Madam Speaker, I am able to give that indication, but I do think that it is quite remarkable that it should come laced with a threat. I do not see why, if I am being asked to indicate whether we are going to sit in the morning and the afternoon or just the morning, it
820 should be on the basis of it being laced with a threat. But I do recognise, Madam Speaker, that the hon. Gentleman is in the unusual position in this House of being in a majority, something which he has sought on many occasions and never obtained.

But given what he has said, I think it is incumbent on me to explain where all other hon. Members are. The Hon. Mr Feetham and the Hon. Mrs Arias-Vasquez are at the Labour Party
825 conference. The Hon. Mr Bossano is at the Commonwealth Telecommunications event. The Hon. Mr Garcia is in Liverpool also. The Hon. Professor Cortes is in Brussels dealing with issues relating to ratification. So, it is not as if there is a majority of Members of the Opposition here because the Government have not turned up.

The Government is doing the work that it needs to do and is here to answer the questions of
830 the individuals who are billed to answer questions. We shall sit only on Friday morning, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you. I now put the question which is that this House do now adjourn to Friday the 2nd at 9.30 a.m. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Passed. This House
835 will now adjourn to Friday the 2nd October at 9.30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 4.18 p.m.