



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

MORNING SESSION: 9.37 a.m. – 2.13 p.m.

Gibraltar, Wednesday, 14th January 2026

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 9.37 a.m.

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

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

Questions for Oral Answer

INWARD INVESTMENT AND THE GIBRALTAR SAVINGS BANK

Q794/2025
Rooke building –
Elderly Care Facility

Clerk: Answers Oral Questions continued.

5 Questions to the Hon. Minister for Inward Investment and the Gibraltar Savings Bank.
Question 794, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: In relation to the Rooke building, first announced by the Government as intended for use as an Elderly Care Facility, can the Government confirm whether Occupational
10 Therapists and nursing professionals were consulted on its design and suitability prior to investment?

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

15 **Minister for Inward Investment and the Gibraltar Savings Bank (Hon. Sir J J Bossano):** Madam Speaker, I understand that in providing the design specifications, the architect took into account the relevant advice for the intended use of the building.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, grateful for that answer. Could the Hon. Minister elaborate
20 on whether the advice taken was from occupational therapists, nursing professionals, given that the Government did specifically state at the time that the intended use of the facility was going to be for elderly care. Did this advice take into account professional advice in relation to room sizes, bathroom layouts, lift strategy, dementia, wayfinding, fall risks and all of these things that should be taken into account given the specific use of the facility and its intended use?
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Hon. Sir J J Bossano: This is what I was given to understand at the time because I think the architect actually had never previously engaged in designing a building for the purpose that this one was. So, he had to take advice in the sense that the previous buildings that he had been contracted to do were predominantly residential buildings which were homes but not homes for
30 elderly people. But the building was always intended to be a residential home rather than a nursing home which would have required perhaps more of the input if it had been for nursing

because of course anything that is required in terms of services from the GHA would be accessed from the GHA and not by having permanent people with those skills employed in the building.

35 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Thank you very much for that answer, Madam Speaker. But it is also my understanding that the Hon. Minister has indicated in this House that there was a survey conducted by the Government at Mount Alvernia for the residents of Mount Alvernia at some stage several years ago. Were there any signoffs or did anybody sign-off as to the suitability of the building as a residential home for the residents of the ERS before conducting this survey?

40 I assume that the Government thought that the building was appropriate as a residential home for the residents of the ERS before conducting this survey.

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Madam Speaker, I understand there is a question dealing with that that will be addressed by the Minister for Medical Services but in any event the survey that the hon. Member is referring to was not conducted by the Government. It was something that was done by the staff in the department and therefore we do not think that it necessarily reflects the numbers of people that are there that might want to move. The position of the Government from the beginning has been that nobody is going to be forced to move from Mount Alvernia so that it will be a question of whether people prefer to stay there or whether people prefer to go to the new building.

50 But my hon. Colleague will probably be able to give more information because I am not responsible for the ERS.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

55 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, can the Minister confirm whether in the context of everything he has discussed the objective remains that Rooke should be a residential facility and given that we heard yesterday that the Certificate of Fitness for the building was granted about five months ago what is the state of play of that in the context of precisely what the Minister has just ended on which is that they are not going to force people to go down there. So, if it is going to be a residential home and they are not going to put people down there which we agree with, by force obviously, then what are they going to do with the building?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: We are not going to do as a government anything with the building because the building is not ours. Let us be clear about that. It has never been ours and it is still not ours.

 What the Government will do will be access the capacity of the building to the extent that it needs to do it. That extent will be determined by, for example, there are persons at the moment in the GHA that are not being kept in hospital because they require hospitalisation. It is because there are some elderly people who when they go into hospital might have previously been living on their own and coping more or less.

 And now with deteriorating health it is not possible to just send them home because they are on their own and they would need a lot of care around the clock kind of thing. And there is not an empty slot in the existing homes that we have. And therefore, the people that move will not necessarily be from the ERS.

75 There may be also people who would have gone into the ERS if the ERS was able to take them. But until we start the process which is now being started of selecting somebody to operate it then we expect during the course of the year the thing will develop.

80 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I see, I understand. Obviously, I appreciate the Government do not technically own the building, but of course significant funding has been provided for the purposes of building this thing. About 40 million the Minister has answered before in this House.

And therefore, it is in the public interest to make use of this building clearly. And so do I take it from what the Minister has just indicated that if it is not going to be a residential home for ERS residents it will still be a residential home for alternative residents who are not present in the ERS some of which might be in their homes but need a more stable environment some of which might be in hospital. And if that is the case when does the Government expect to make an announcement of this and will the Government manage this residential home?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: The answer to the second part of the question is that from the beginning from the first day that it was first mentioned I said in this House that it would be privately owned and privately operated. That has not changed.

Madam Speaker: Next question. Sorry, has the Minister finished answering this question?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: I am very obedient madam.

Madam Speaker: Yes, before we move on to the next question the Minister may like to finish what he intended to say initially.

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: But I think we are at a stage now where we will see how it develops and it is going to be determined by need.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q795/2025
2025 Budget Address –
Equalise entitlement to state pensions

Q804/2025
Equalisation of the pensionable age to the age of 60

Q805/2025
Rates at which the pension payments will be paid

Clerk: Question 795, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Further to the Government's statement in the 2025 Budget Address that work is 'commencing to equalise entitlement to state pensions at age 60', can the Minister state what progress has been made to date, whether drafting instructions have been issued, and when the House can expect the introduction of the necessary legislation or regulations?

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

Minister for Inward Investment and the Gibraltar Savings Bank (Hon. Sir J J Bossano): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question with Questions 804 and 805.

Clerk: Question 804, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Please state when the equalisation of the pensionable age to the age of 60 will be implemented.

Clerk: Question 805, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Please provide details of how the equalisation of pensionable age between men and women at the age of 60 will work in practice to include details of the rates at which the pension payments will be paid and the delay options up to the age of 65 for men.

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

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Madam Speaker, when the Government is in a position to implement the entitlement from age 60 for male pensioners the date and the terms applicable will be announced.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, would the Hon. Minister be able to give some more clarity as to the time scale, time frame or how close the Government is to implementing this?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Well, it is closer than it was before and I would expect it to be done in this term.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just by way of slight preamble and backdrop to the question, this is a policy position which the hon. Gentlemen and ladies opposite, when they have been Elected successively to Government on the last four occasions, I think it is on each of their manifestos they promise an equalisation to the age of 60, with respect to men and women. So why is it that we are still in a position, even in a post-Brexit scenario, which they pray in aid to use as a reason as to why they can now do it, although they promised it when we were still in the EU, is it taking so long?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Well, Madam Speaker, first of all I want to remind the hon. Member of the policy of his Party in Government, which was that the Government made announcement when it decided to make the announcement and not when the Opposition asked, and that is something I accepted when I was in Opposition. And secondly, that the Opposition had no right to question any delays in what the Government was doing if they did not have it in their own manifesto and therefore, they would not have done it had they won the Election. Those were the clear policy concepts in Government.

I know that they have one set of rules in Government and another set of rules in Opposition, but I would put it to him that, you know, what is good for the goose is good for the gander, and therefore the answer is that he is not in a position to say, why have not you done it yet, because he would not be doing it at all if he was on this side. But of course, I will give him a very simple example of something that is difficult to integrate, and this is not going to happen until everything is signed and delivered, and we know that the position that we are in, in terms of who may be eligible or may not be eligible, but one of the issues that, and I am just doing it to give an indication, we are going to be doing a change which is the opposite of what everybody else is doing in the European Union.

So, you have got a situation where you have to have account taken for some people but not for others as a result of the changes. So the people in the European Union that were previously eligible will not now necessarily be eligible to have access to our system if they spend some time here, but we are going to have a situation where there will be new groups that are eligible if and when the deal becomes reality and the new rules apply. And therefore, at that point in time, we will have to have a situation of saying, well look, how do we do the accounting of entitlement when you are giving people a right at 60 and they are partly accessing that right at 60 because of employment somewhere else where the right does not happen until 67.

That is not a problem that anybody else has because they are all going to 67. It is a problem that only we have because we are going in the opposite direction. That is just to give an indication that it is not as simple an exercise as it might seem at first glance.

180 If nobody outside Gibraltar was going to be able to access this, then it would be a much simpler exercise.

Hon. D J Bossino: Well, Madam Speaker, I have been following the hon. Gentleman from a very young age. Today is my 54th birthday and I take this opportunity to wish the Deputy Chief Minister
185 a happy birthday on his birthday as well, which is the same period of time that the hon. Gentleman has been in this House. And I certainly do not have this recollection of him being so compliant as he is coming across, he was when he accepted positions taken by the GSD Government when he was in Opposition, as he is alluding to.

190 But shall I put it in these terms? Is it the case that, or can he explain why it is that this analysis which he is now undergoing before he makes the announcement about the equalisation of pensionable age was not able to have been done when they were first Elected into Government, when they said that they were going to be equalising pensionable age at 60 in 2011? Then they did so again in 2015, and then they did so again in 2019 in a post-Brexit scenario.

195 And here we are in a post-2023 scenario where they are still promising the same thing. Can he explain why it is that we have had now four consecutive terms of delays in respect of this electoral promise, which is very clear, it has always been very clear. Their promise was that they would be equalising, and I accept that it is not happening anywhere else in the world, in the Western Hemisphere, where pensionable age is going down instead of going the other way.

200 But that is their electoral promise, that is where they have decided to place their policy in relation to this.

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: The hon. Member opposite, Madam Speaker, seems to have a bad memory, because he keeps on repeating questions to which he has had answers before. Every time that he has asked why the delay is happening, we tell him that the delay is happening
205 because, and I have just repeated it, to do it in 2011 would have been to do it in the European Union, and therefore the numbers and the methodology would have been in the context of a single market, right? To do it after requires a different assessment of what needs to be done, okay?

210 But in any event, however long it takes us, it will be done. And if he was in Government, it would never be done, because they do not have it in their manifesto and they do not want it done. So, if his policy is that it should not be done, he should be happy to see it not done, because that is what he wants.

Madam Speaker: Next question.
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Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, I think I have asked two supplementaries, and I have two questions on the Order Paper. I mean, if the responses are lengthy, then that is a matter for them.

Madam Speaker: It is not because the responses are lengthy. The reason I have asked to move
220 on to the next question is because this is becoming a debate, and the questions are in a similar line and the answers are in a similar line, and I am not going to keep rehearsing the same thing. If there is a separate and different question, then I will allow one more.

Hon. D J Bossino: I have literally asked two supplementaries in respect of two questions in the
225 Order Paper.

Madam Speaker: Is there a question? I am not going to have a debate on whether the questions are legitimate or not. Next question.

Hon. D J Bossino: This is not a debate. I am not debating.

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Madam Speaker: Is there a question, or if the hon. Member insists on having a debate with me as to whether his questions are appropriate or not, I will ask him to move on. If there is a question, then the hon. Member should put it now without preamble.

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Hon. D J Bossino: I expect I will be limited on the preamble, which I was going to make, in response to the comments made by the hon. Member opposite. The reality is, what he has shown clearly is that there has been a breach consecutively in four Elections of an electoral promise. And clearly, we are honest on this side of the House, and they are not.

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That is what he has shown in his response. But can I at least eke out of him, when he answered the question, I think, of my hon. Friend Mrs Sanchez, he said nothing in terms of the substance. However, outside of this House, he has given some information, and I would ask him to develop that, if he can, inside of this House, where he said in a GBC interview of the 20th of June last year, and I quote:

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I can now say with confidence, we can go ahead and introduce the 60, and it will be, as I have mentioned on previous occasions, when I have been interviewed on this, it will be introduced on the basis that anybody, be it male or female, can take their pension at 60 [anybody] or delay it and get a higher pension.

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Can I ask him to be more particular and give more information as to how the last limb of that answer works? And I pointed, and I emphasised these words, where he says: "you can take it at 60 or delay it and get a higher pension".

What did he mean by that?

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Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member is not supposed to ask questions about something that is already in the public domain, because he knows the answer. The position that I gave then is the same now as it was when I gave it, and any further information will be put in the public domain when the Government decides it is necessary to do so.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

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Q796/2025

**Renewable and fossil fuel power generation –
Newly proposed data centre**

Q797/2025

**Newly proposed data centre –
Environmental Impact Assessments conducted**

Q798/2025

**Newly proposed data centre –
Type of water will be used for the cooling –**

Q799/2025

**Newly proposed data centre –
Volumes of water will be required to run the cooling operation**

Q800-801/2025

**Newly proposed data centre –
Projected import duty and PAYE revenue attributable & annual Treasury receipts**

Q806-808/2025

**Project by Pelagos Data Centres –
Planning process, location & investment attraction**

Q809/2025

**Pelagos Data Centres –
Memorandum of understanding, development licence or building lease**

Q810/2025

**Pelagos Data Centres –
Powered outside of the Gibraltar power grid**

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Clerk: Question 796, the Hon. C Sacarello.

Hon. C Sacarello: What is the intended split, in percentage terms, between renewable and fossil fuel power generation for the newly proposed data centre?

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

Minister for Inward Investment and the Gibraltar Savings Bank (Hon. Sir J J Bossano): Madam Speaker, I will answer the question with Questions 797 to 801 and 806 to 810.

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Clerk: Question 797, the Hon. C Sacarello.

Hon. C Sacarello: Given the location cited is next to a significant and growing residential population, could the Minister please present the House with any Environmental Impact Assessments conducted prior to the announcement in the press of the data centre including all potential risks and noise pollution levels, given the close proximity of many households?

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Clerk: Question 798, the Hon. C Sacarello.

300 **Hon. C Sacarello:** What type of water will be used for the cooling of the anticipated 250MW data centre facility?

Clerk: Question 799, the Hon. C Sacarello.

305 **Hon. C Sacarello:** What volumes of water will be required to run the cooling operation of the newly announced 250MW data centre facility?

Clerk: Question 800, the Hon. C Sacarello.

310 **Hon. C Sacarello:** What is the projected import duty and PAYE revenue attributable to the £1.8bn data centre build?

Clerk: Question 801, the Hon. C Sacarello.

315 **Hon. C Sacarello:** What are the projected annual Treasury receipts in terms of PAYE and Corporation Tax for the £1.8bn data centre business, once it is up and running?

Clerk: Question 806, the Hon. D J Bossino.

320 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Please confirm that the recently announced data centre project by Pelagos Data Centres will be subject to the planning process and appropriate studies such as Environmental Impact Assessments.

Clerk: Question 807, the Hon. D J Bossino.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Where, precisely, will the Pelagos Data Centre be situated?

Clerk: Question 808, the Hon. D J Bossino.

330 **Hon. D J Bossino:** How is the figure of £1.8 Billion in terms of investment attraction arrived at in the context of the Pelagos Data Centre announcement?

Clerk: Question 809, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

335 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** What are the key terms of any memorandum of understanding, development licence or building lease entered into or to be entered into with Pelagos Data Centres in respect of the proposed new data centre in terms of length of lease and premium, business assistance or other key terms?

340 **Clerk:** Question 810, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: How will the proposed new Data Centre announced by Government and to be developed by Pelagos Data Centres be powered outside of the Gibraltar power grid?

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

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Madam Speaker, there is not yet a formal agreement regarding the proposed site for the data centre and the project will not be receiving any financial assistance from Government. I refer the Hon. Members to the statement issued by the Company on the launch of the project and the commitments to produce more information in the first quarter of this year. I will pass the questions table to the Company so that they may be aware of the areas

of interest to the Members of the Opposition when they do the next press release and explanations.

But I doubt that even they could answer some of the questions.

Madam Speaker: Any supplementaries from the Hon. Mr Sacarello on 796 to 801?

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, I was just going to get rid of mine because I think they are more nit if that is okay.

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

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: So, do I understand then from the Hon. Minister's answer that even though this announcement was made with great fanfare, there are absolutely no agreements. In other words, so there are no buildings, there is no development licence, but short of that, there is not even a memorandum of understanding signed in relation to that issue. So, I just wanted to see on what basis there was the big announcement made on this.

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Well Madam Speaker, the big announcement was not made by me, it was made by the people who are spending the money, and they are spending the money. And of course, as Minister for Inward Investment, my job is to help it to become a reality. I mean this is the biggest investment, inward investment that we have had in all the time that I have been in this Parliament.

It is a project that is in line with where our civilisation is going. This is about having the capacity to House artificial intelligence. It is something that is happening in the United Kingdom, in the European Union, in the United States, in China and in Gibraltar.

So those are the competitors that we have and I think that the people that are committed to doing this are serious people and it is real money. These are people that have got the resources to commit to this, and it is an opportunity that we must not miss out.

Therefore, as far as I am concerned, I am very confident that it is going to happen because the people that are doing it are serious people. And we will do the things that need to be done to make sure that it happens, which will be to the benefit of the whole of Gibraltar because we need to be finding additional and new sources of revenue given the recent developments that there have been in the taxation of what was, until now, our biggest source of revenue.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, the Minister says that it was announced by the company and that there was not a Government press release. But I beg to differ because I am staring at it now of the 4th of September 2025 where the Minister is quoted and so is the Chief Minister making this big announcement. And what I am trying to probe is, in the context of the big announcement that was made under cover of a Government press release, is he saying that they are not in negotiations with the entity at all in relation to any aspect that requires an agreement?

There is not a Memorandum of Understanding. They are not in negotiations for anything else in respect of any other agreement. Is that what he is saying?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: The press release and the support that it reflected was a support to a private investor who is committed to investing in a project which would not happen without him. That is not a project that we could do as a Government. What we did was to give him the support that he deserves because we want him to proceed with this, we want this to happen. It will be transformational for our economy and a huge plus for guaranteeing our economic survival. And therefore, my job is to make it happen and not to keep the hon. Member happy in terms of the information that he gets. I have told him what the position is.

It may not be the position that he wishes. The position that I wish is not that he should be satisfied with my answer but that the data centre materialises and brings in new money to the private sector and to the Government. That is what I am paid to do.

405 So, I have given him the information that we have got at the moment. As I said, many of the questions other than the one that he has put, but have been put by other Members of the Opposition, are things that even the company would not at this stage be able to provide because there are too many variables. I mean, a big chunk of the investment will not be investment in Gibraltar in the sense that it will be sourcing.

410 That is, the manufacturing of the data centre cannot happen here. It will be hosted here, right? But the important thing is that that data centre will be then used to store information, which is for data processing in conjunction with artificial intelligence for which there is a global demand and a shortage of supply.

So, we are preparing to receive an investment in an area where there is, at the moment, 415 insufficient capacity globally. And therefore, you know, probably it would be difficult to attract people here if there was a surplus of data centres everywhere of the calibre and the capacity that is required. A big chunk of the cost is the cost of the equipment.

But of course, bringing it here does not just bring that particular business here. It brings us into the spectrum of where all this is happening, and as happened with gaming when it first started 420 under the first socialist Government in 1988. Once somebody moves to Gibraltar to do something, there is a tendency globally that the competition to that person at least is attracted to come to Gibraltar to find out why he is here.

It is what happened with the gaming companies. We gave one company very good terms and a contract that we would not allow anybody else. And that attracted a lot of other people, and it 425 has happened more than once.

So, you know, this is big in its own right. And we are very lucky that they have looked at the possibility of doing it here and not, for example, across the border and it could be the beginning of something even bigger.

And I think, and I would hope that the Opposition sees, has the vision to see how big and how 430 important that can be for Gibraltar and would want to be supportive of it as well.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, we certainly welcome big inward investment into Gibraltar or the prospect of inward investment into Gibraltar. Data centres are hugely important. Clearly, the technology is hugely important for the future.

435 And it is not about keeping me happy. I am just trying to probe, seeking information on a Government press release, which I am not asking. I mean, I am asking, the Government made a statement.

So, I think I am entitled to try to understand whether there are commercial or financial negotiations going on with the Government because the Government issued a statement. And the 440 things that I am seeking to probe are just simply things that the Government has said publicly. For example, my understanding is that data centres consume a huge amount of power.

And the Government statement, this is not the company, the Government statement says “the data centre will be powered independently of Gibraltar's existing grid”. So, because this is a Government statement, I have asked the question, how will that be done? So, with all due respect 445 to the Hon. Minister, for him to refer me to the company, this is a Government statement.

So surely the Government knows how this will be done. And I am asking him again to try to give us a bit of information on that. Because if there is not an alternative power source, well clearly our own power grid is under pressure.

So, I understand the logic of the Government statement saying that the data centre will be 450 powered outside of the grid. But how will that be done then?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Yes, Madam Speaker, I accept the legitimacy of the point that the hon. Member is making. The data centre will not access the energy from our generating station. The generating station is not big enough to supply the energy they require.

455 There will be no energy left for anybody else. It could not be done without having a new supply. But of course, we do not necessarily want to advertise how exactly we are going to bring it here for the benefit of others who might then go about trying to stop it reaching us.

Surely, he can work that one out by himself. If we are bringing the electricity in from outside, do we want it to arrive or not?

460 **Madam Speaker:** The Hon. Mr Bossino, do you have any supplementaries? Well, I am going backwards now because I have started with Hon. Leader of the Opposition, so I am going backwards. So, the Hon. Mr. Bossino on Questions 806, 807 or 809.

465 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Shall we, I think, make a start, if I may, on the last question in the Order Paper which is 809. In terms of format and form, I know that we are asked to ask supplementaries in a very organised way when questions are bunched together by hon. Members of the Opposition. But the reality is that normally other Ministers make a specific reference to the questions that they are answering.

470 Whilst the Hon. Minister is entitled to do so, gives us an overall answer in response to the seven or eight questions he has bunched together. Which is fine, but then it makes it more difficult to try and extrapolate from that answer supplementaries in respect to the specific question that we have put on this side of the Order Paper.

475 **Madam Speaker:** The longer the preamble, the less time to ask the questions.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, in relation to the £1.8 billion investment, which is one of the questions which the Hon. Minister, has brushed to one side by saying, well, because he has done that with all the questions, this is a Pelagos private initiative and I am not in a position at this stage to answer because it is nothing to do with me, almost. If I can characterise it that way. But the reality is, that as my hon. Friend, the Leader of the Opposition has rightly pointed out, there has been a Government statement.

480 And in that Government statement, it is clear that the Government has a lot of skin in the game. They have welcomed this. This was announced at the Chief Minister's office, where it is said and highlighting and making a lot of emphasis on the fact that this will bring investment to the tune of £1.8 billion, which is a very big figure. The question was, how has that been arrived at? And this is one of the questions in a bunching together, this is why the preamble, the Minister has said, I cannot answer that question, nothing to do with me. He has associated himself and the Chief Minister in particular has associated himself to this particular figure.

490 So, I would like to know how the Government says, on what basis is the Government saying that they are happy with this figure and to associate themselves with this figure?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Well, I have already partly answered that question, because I have already said that a big chunk of that will be the cost of the data centre, which is not going to be manufactured in Gibraltar. And of course, the figure is being made by serious people that do multi-billion investments elsewhere. Now, if we were to receive potential investments in Gibraltar by cross-examining the investor, like the other Member likes cross-examining me, I do not think we would get much investment.

500 So, we have to put the welcome carpet, if we want people to come here. Gibraltar is not something special in the planet, other than for the Gibraltarians. For the rest of the planet, it is not a special place.

And therefore, attracting somebody here is something we have to work on in competition with other people, which have got more assets, more land, more cheap labour, more subsidies. We are

not giving anything. We just persuaded him that this is a fantastic place to do what he wants to do.

And therefore, the hon. Member must understand that I am glad that the Leader of the Opposition says that he welcomes it as much as we do. And therefore, he should be more welcoming, so that they can be convinced that this will continue to happen if by some disastrous event they were able to get in Government instead of us. Because of course, if they keep on sending hostile messages, the guy may say, well, wait a minute, maybe I better wait till the Election.

And be sure that the people who understand what I am doing, appreciate what I am doing, and want me in Gibraltar, are still there.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, I do not agree, do not subscribe to the view that if there were to be a change of Government, which I think will happen, it will be a disastrous event. Not at all. But clearly, once in Government, if this is still in the throes of being negotiated, we will then take a view on it.

Once we see the individuals, because there is very little information out there. Once we have been able to understand the detail of it, because very little detail has been provided across the floor of the House. But is not the sum total of the answer that he has given, which is quite frankly remarkable, coming from the Minister of Economic Development, who participated in the excitement of the Government side of this particular project.

An announcement which I dare say has all the hallmarks of failing, because it seems very flimsy in terms of the substance behind it. Is not the sum total of what he has said that he has, he does not know. He simply does not know on what basis, because they have not done the analysis themselves of the £1.8 billion investments. He is simply relying on these investors who are selling their wares and trying to persuade them to come into Gibraltar, have told them.

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Madam Speaker, I do not think he has put a question, I think he has paraphrased my answer.

Hon. D J Bossino: The question, I have put a question. I have put a question. The question was, is not the sum total of his answer the way I have paraphrased it for him?

Yes or no? And the answer must be yes, because I think I have accurately paraphrased it.

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Well, if it is going to stop him, I will give him just to keep him happy. But in fact, the answer is the answer that I gave originally. I mean, if he thinks that my transmitting the request for information to the people who may be in a position to answer it, is something that is not worth having, then I will not transmit the request for information to those concerned.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Mr. Sacarello, do you have any supplementaries?

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, I have got supplementaries. I have got supplementaries on 808. Madam Speaker, I have got supplementaries on 807.

Madam Speaker: I warned the Hon. Minister, the longer the preamble, the less time there is for questions. I am not going to have question time becoming a debate. There is no need for such long preambles.

If the hon. Member uses his time on preambles, then there will be less time for questions.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, on a Point of Order, I think inadvertently referred to the hon. Gentleman as a Minister. He has tried on four occasions and never achieved it.

Hon. D J Bossino: Maybe it is a premonition.

Madam Speaker: If I did then I apologise, the hon. Member I meant to say. The Hon. Mr Sacarello.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, I have supplementaries on 807 and 806.

Madam Speaker: Then the hon. Member should have used the time to ask the questions and not to make such long preambles. I am not going to have an argument.

Hon. D J Bossino: I am not having an argument, I am seeking clarification from the Chair. Is it the position that from now on we are going to be limited not just on the number of supplementaries, of which there have not been that many, we are going to be limited on the time that we spend asking questions?

Is that going to be the position from the Chair? I think that is very serious development.

Madam Speaker: The first position is that when the Chair speaks, hon. Members should sit down and allow the Chair to speak. The position is, as it has always been, that it is up to the discretion of the Chair to decide how many supplementaries are appropriate for each individual question, depending on the nature of the question, depending on the information and depending on many other factors.

I have said this before, and it is in the rules. Supplementaries are for the posing of a question. If there are lengthy preambles that delays the process and time is taken up in preambles rather than in questions, what is the net effect of that?

The net effect of that is that we have question time becoming a debate and question time should not become a debate. It is very difficult for the Chair to control fairly the number of supplementaries. Yesterday we had eight supplementaries on one individual question.

Other days you may have three, other days you may have two. If the hon. Member looks back at rulings by previous Speakers, he will see that it is a delicate situation as to how many supplementaries to allow. I have said this before, and I will say it again.

If time is taken up by lengthy preambles akin to a debate, there will be less time for supplementaries. If the supplementaries are short, sharp, with only the necessary preamble, the hon. Member will have more time for supplementaries. It is as simple as that.

I am not going to have a debate on this. I am not having a debate. The hon. Member has had the clarification from the Chair.

He can either accept it or reject it, but I am not going to have a discussion.

No. No. No. (Interjections).

No. I have said no. I am asking the hon. Member to take a seat. Take a seat. Take a seat.

The Hon. Mr Sacarello, any supplementaries?

Hon. C Sacarello: Yes, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much. I fully understand and sympathise with the political and commercial sensitivities of the project.

However, it does not take a genius to work out that the power supply required is at least three or four times the order that we currently have the capacity to produce. Therefore, any foreign actors would quickly jump to the conclusion that the power needs to be sourced externally. With that in mind, and given the high level of public interest and the potential impacts of such a large project, I would be grateful if the Hon. Minister, the Father of the House, could provide a little bit more information on, for example, the location of any substation that would be required to receive where this electricity would be landed and if it would be in the vicinity of any residential areas.

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: The site that has originally been identified is still under discussion with the MOD for possible impact on aircraft and stuff like that. So, there may be potential sites in another area which is not an open area but inside the Rock where it would be different. But these things are being done on the basis that they are all sensitive things of which a company which is spending all the money is discussing, not with me.

I mean, I know what they are doing, but they are not doing it with me. I mean, I am not involved in the discussions on the technicalities of how I can tell the hon. Member that the intention, because we are talking all the time about things that are going to happen in the future, right, and we are at an early stage in that process. But the intention is that the delivery of electricity would be sufficient to supply Gibraltar as well as the data centre and therefore produce an alternative and less expensive source of electricity for us.

But of course, if I say that which is a possibility, which is intended, and I then get a particular Member of the Opposition who likes to say, you promised that this would happen and now you are less honest than me because it has not happened, then I will not tell him anything. And then I cannot continue being honest, like him. So the answer is that at this stage, it is not written in tablets of stone where it is going to be exactly and how it is going to be operating, because when you are doing something that is as big as this, which has never been done before in Gibraltar, then when you start looking at the problems that there are in one side or in another side, and you have to consult a lot of other people, you have to make adjustments.

But I mean, when something is definite, then the intention of the company is to provide more detail of where it is going to be, how it is going to operate and so on, but that is when all the boxes have been ticked. I mean, if there is an environmental problem or a problem of the RAF, and those problems have not yet been totally resolved, then there is no point in saying it is going to be of such a height and in such a place, only to say later, no, it is not going to be of such a height and in such a place. So, I hope that what I am trying to convey to the hon. Member, that this is at the moment, this is something that is going on as an ongoing process, which means that where they started is being adjusted, right?

So the height is being adjusted and other things are being looked at, because whenever you start with any project, even when some of the homes that we are building, you start with the project and then you suddenly find that when you go and dig in the ground, there is something there that nobody knew was there, right? And you have to make a change. So at the stage that they are, and they are still totally committed to doing it, we are still totally committed to supporting it, because it is big and it is good for Gibraltar, and therefore if there is anything that they want specifically to know, I can get the company to give me whatever information they want, and pass it on to the hon. Member, but preferably not passing on things publicly, because we do not want to make things more difficult for this project. We want to make it easier so that it will happen quicker, the money will be coming in quicker and there will be more activity. But, for example, the questions on the effect on Government revenue and so on is something that is impossible to quantify until the thing is functioning.

A big chunk of the money is not going to be money that is going to be spent here, because what we are bringing is a huge asset into Gibraltar. Just like, for example, the cost of the Generating Station was not money, a big chunk of that Generating Station was not money spent in Gibraltar. It was money spent in Germany where the machinery was manufactured.

But, of course, it is an investment in Gibraltar of millions. It would have been the same with the one that they were going to put at the top of the Rock to suffocate us all with diesel fumes. But, you know, I am trying to be as helpful as I can, but I think we need to be conscious of how important this is, and we must do things that will make easier instead of more difficult.

Hon. C Sacarello: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Minister for his answer, and I am fully aware of the commercial and political sensitivities in this matter. Nonetheless, we must remember that a project of this size, huge as it is, has an impact, a real-life impact on people, so there is a huge amount of public interest, and that is where my questions are stemming from. So

I will put aside the source and the potential source of the electricity for now, but in terms of the environmental impact, so with regards to Question 797, given the fact that the site for the project is in a highly busy area in terms of commercial usage, residential, and other sites like ports, etc., has an EIA already been conducted, and will it be published, including concerns such as noise pollution, fire risks, like I said, given the sensitivity of the area?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Well, as I have already said, there are changes being made. For example, I think there has already been a reduction in the height, so whenever the final design is reached, and it has to go for approval, whatever the law requires to be done will be done.

Hon. C Sacarello: Will there be a consultation with residents in the area as to the impacts and their concerns?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: I do not know whether that is normal, but from what I know about buildings in Gibraltar, when you consult people about going into a tower block where they are going to buy a property, they are all in favour, and then when they occupy their tower block and you consult them about the next one, they are all against it. So, I am not sure that you actually consult neighbours of what you are going to do. If you consult the people who are going to be in the building, they are all in favour.

If you consult the ones who are already in the building and have newcomers coming in, they are all against it, from my experience.

Hon. C Sacarello: That is understandable, but I would be grateful if you could answer if they would be consulted or not, because this is a project of much larger significance and impact. On to my next question, regarding the water. The water required for a project of this size would be similar to the total amount of water produced with rudimentary calculations already produced in Gibraltar.

Where will the water be sourced, how will it be sourced, and what type of water will be sourced?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: The type of water? I think all the water is H₂O. I do not think there are different chemical compositions of water.

But I do not know, and I have not asked them, but of course the water may not be water that they obtain from AquaGib. It may be that they will source their own. I do not know whether it is just a coolant.

I do not know whether it has to be water specifically or whether it can be something else, because the need for water is because of the temperature that is generated in the activity of processing data, like you have with a computer. I do not know whether technically the only way of keeping the data centre at the temperature that it has to be kept is by using water. There may be other things other than water that can be done.

I do not know. But it will be done in the way that it is done elsewhere. But I think, again, even that, at the moment, at the stage of them looking at...

I mean, the two priorities at the moment are ensuring that the supply of the electricity is there. Obviously, if there is not that, then it cannot happen. And that is now almost 100% certain that it is going to happen, which is really the most crucial element.

The second part is exactly where and how it is going to be built. That is still in the stage of having discussions with different people to take into account whatever conditions have to be taken into account. Now, as I say, the only thing I can say to the hon. Member, as far as I am concerned, they contact me when they have a problem.

And my job is to solve the problems for them. I mean, the Ministry for Economic Development in supporting inward investment supports the investment by helping them to get things done, not by giving them money. We are not in a position to give anybody money.

But, of course, if they do not knock on my door, then for me it is a good sign that they are able to do the things they need to do without my help. I do not knock on their door to say I want to know how this is going. I mean, these people are professionals, they know what they are doing, you know, and therefore, if they have a problem, they know that if something is taking a long time, if, you know, they think they need an answer for something, because sometimes, crucially, paying or ordering equipment has timelines, and they are waiting for some response from some Government department.

And what I try to do is help them get an answer which may be stuck in a queue, because if it does not get the answer quickly, they may lose the opportunity to, where other people, I mean, the competition for this is driven because the demand is hugely more than the supply. That demand currently is growing faster than the supply, because with every new stage of artificial intelligence, the level of data processing is speeding up. So, it is going up in volume and in speed, right?

That is where the technology is taking us. And therefore, one of the important things for them and for us is that the quicker you get this done and put it in the market, the more success it will have because of the shortage. And if it brings people which are not the people that are dealing in billions, but the people that are dealing in trillions in the world, to use and access a facility in Gibraltar, this is a fantastic opportunity for us.

Those people will never look at the map and see Gibraltar, but they will see the data centre. And we need to understand just how big this is. And this is not something that I say I am taking any credit for.

This is not something that we were looking for. They came with a proposal to us. And of course, given the potential benefit to Gibraltar and the potential impact, not just in the actual product, but where it puts us in the global supply of data processing, we thought this is something that is too big to miss.

We have to do everything we can to make sure that it happens and that is where we are. And because these are people that have the money and we know they have the money, they do not have to go and borrow it from anybody, we are confident that it is going and they are confident that they will be able to deliver it. And of course, we hope that does whoever is in Government because it is going to be good for Gibraltar.

Madam Speaker: Any more supplementaries?

Hon. C Sacarello: Yes, Madam Speaker, thank you. Madam Speaker, there is a huge amount of public interest in this, as I mentioned before. The impact of production of the water alone would be, like I said, tantamount to the entire water production that Gibraltar has at the moment.

So of course, there is going to be a huge amount of impact physically and visually on people within the vicinity of this. In terms of what type of water, this is a question I tabled in September 2025. With respect, the Hon. Minister has had plenty of time to look into it.

There are, of course, many different types of water. So, for example, if it is fresh or potable water, then there are concerns about the wastefulness of this finite resource. How will it be produced?

If it is saltwater, then it raises concerns on biofouling, what filtration systems would be used and then the environmental regulation that would be required to ensure that there is no environmental harm with the waters released as a result of it. If it is recycled, then clearly it would be coming from, possibly from the Sewage Plant in the South District. But of course, that is a wrong location.

So perhaps the Minister would be able to provide a little bit more information on which of the types of water are envisaged.

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Well, one thing that I know has been looked at is the fact that if you warm the water, that is, seawater, then the process of desalinisation consumes less electricity. That is

to say, warm seawater can be filtered with less consumption of energy than cold seawater. So if you use the seawater for cooling the data centre, and then the water is hot when it is cooled, the data centre, because it removes the heat, and you can then produce drinking water from that hot seawater at a cheaper price than if you get it straight from the sea.

And I know that that is one thing that is being looked at, but it may not be where we finish.

Hon. C Sacarello: Can I ask for some clarification? Am I allowed a further question? I just wanted some clarification on...

I am okay to ask, am I? Okay, thank you, sorry. So, the Hon. Minister has explained that a large part of the manufacturing will take place, and hence the economic activity will take place in the build or preparation of the projects outside of Gibraltar.

But of course, the figure published is 1.8 billion, which of course would reflect the size of the project. But actually, in relation to Gibraltar, would you be able to answer questions on the actual economic benefit to Gibraltar in terms of the economic markers? Have any deals been struck with regards to PAYE or Corporation Tax to attract this level of investment? I will leave it there.

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: The Corporation Tax and the PAYE will of course inevitably happen when we are in the next term, still in Government. So, I welcome that he is asking me where we are going to be there, where we are heading when we are there.

But it is totally speculative. I mean, the hon. Member has also to take into consideration that today we are in a world where things are no longer labour incentive. So, the development of our economy in looking into the future is going to be an economy that depends less on PAYE because like everybody else, there will be more automation and more artificial intelligence and less humans needed.

This is inevitable. This is going to happen. And the people who do not do it will be the people that will go bust because a competition will be doing it.

So, it is Corporation Tax is where for us the attraction is because labour in Gibraltar is not the cheapest in Europe. But the Corporation Tax we have got competes with the Irish Republic and I think they are the ones that are also attracting the big data companies. And that is where the example of the economy of Ireland is that they went from being relatively poor compared to the UK to having a massive surplus from multinationals that are based there.

That is an ideal model for us to follow where it is not from labour that we get our money but from huge businesses that are doing all the business from Gibraltar and not in Gibraltar. The potential for Gibraltar's economy to develop by doing things in Gibraltar is limited. It is limited by size and it is limited by population.

The potential of doing things from Gibraltar into an economy of 480 million now on the verge of being extended with a market of Mercosur that is going to have free trade with the European Union and therefore we will be included in that treaty by definition is the way we have to see where our future is. And our future is in getting people that use Gibraltar as their base and therefore in this case they are going to be using it as their base, and they are also going to be in effect manufacturing from Gibraltar a capacity for data processing. As long as we are able to grow on that given the fact that we have got more space inside the rock than outside if that presents new possibilities this could become very big.

But it is all speculation and really although we are not supposed to be dealing with speculation the message that I want to convey is that this is not something that we are getting straws from the air. This is something that is what the real world is. It is not something that is unique to Gibraltar.

It is something in which we are not it is a market in which we are not present now. It is a market where we need to be present if we want to be able to be as well off in the future as we have been with what we have done in the past. But it is difficult to give specific answers to something that is two years away. I hope to still be around two more years.

815 **Madam Speaker:** All right we are going to move on now. And before we do for the avoidance
of doubt and so that no hon. Member feels they have been treated differently to others I will just
highlight that the Hon. Leader of the Opposition had three questions and three supplementaries.
The Hon. Mr. Bossino had three questions three supplementaries and the Hon. Mr. Sacarello had
820 six questions and six supplementaries. That brings a total of 12 on this subject and I think this
subject has been sufficiently aired so we are going to move on to the next question.

Q802/2025

Financial security –

National Mint Limited obtained from Community Credit Union Co-operative Limited

Q803/2025

National Economic Plan –

Role of Community Credit Union Co-operative Limited

Q924/2025

Principal Auditor's Report for 2018/2019 –

Loan to Community Credit Union Co-operative Limited

Clerk: Question 802, the Hon. R M Clinton.

830 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Can the Government advise what financial security has the Gibraltar
National Mint Limited obtained from Community Credit Union Co-operative Limited in respect of
loan notes purchased from or money advanced to Community Credit Union Co-operative Limited
by the Gibraltar National Mint Limited?

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

835 **Minister for Inward Investment and the Gibraltar Savings Bank (Hon. Sir J J Bossano):** Madam
Speaker I will answer this question with Questions 803 and 924.

Clerk: Question 803, the Hon. R M Clinton.

840 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Can the Government advise the role of Community Credit Union Co-
operative Limited within its National Economic Plan?

Clerk: Question 924, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

845 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Specifically how and to what extent has the £50.5M loaned to Community
Credit Union Co-operative Limited and referred to at pp50 and 52 of the Principal Auditor's Report
for 2018/19 (in two tranches of £40M and £10.5M respectively) been further used, transferred or
further loaned, to whom and for what purpose providing the date of each transaction, the specific
850 corporate vehicle, entity or person receiving any funds derived from the said monies and the
purpose for which the funds have been received?

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

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Madam Speaker Community Credit Union does not have a role within the National Economic Plan however the Savings Bank invests in loan note issued by the company. It provides funding to private sector projects that promote economic and social benefits to Gibraltar. The GSB has invested £906 million in nine money lending entities in Gibraltar and £210 million in 36 money lending entities in the UK in addition to the amount invested in Community Credit Union.

None of these money lending entities publish a list of the customers to whom they have made loans. Loan notes purchased from Community Credit Union are secured by a first charge on all the company assets. The investments in the other money lending entities do not provide any security.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I have not asked about the other money lending institutions for which I assume he means banks. I do not know but it is not the question I asked. I asked about the £50.5 million and for what purpose they have been used. Will the Minister answer that question or is he saying he is not willing to answer it? He gave an answer, but the answer does not suggest he is either willing or unwilling to answer it. So, I am giving him a second opportunity to answer the more specific question I asked in relation to the £50.5 million and what it is been used for.

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Well, the answer that I have given him is that the use of the money by Community Credit Union is in promoting investment in Gibraltar. I appreciate that what the hon. Member is saying is he is not interested in the £210 million that are used by companies in the UK to create jobs in the UK and pay PAYE in the UK because that does not interest him. And he is not interested in how the £900 million that is in local lending institutions are being spent.

He is only interested in this one for some peculiar reason that is not evident to me. So, the answer that I gave him in saying that the company does not publish because the company is not a Government company. The company does not publish the projects that are being supported by the company.

The company is not doing anything different to all the others. So that is the reason why I gave him the information that he did not ask for, was to put it in the context of why it is that the information is not one that I can give him. Because it is not information that is put in the public domain by any money lending institution.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: But, I mean, with all due respect, I mean, other money lending institutions, I assume he is meaning banks, right? No one thinks that Community Credit Union Cooperative, is the same as NatWest Bank or Barclays Bank or Lloyds Bank or whatever other bank. And so, and I have asked, it is not that I am not interested in other investments.

I am interested specifically, if I were to ask about other things, Madam Speaker might call me out of order because I have not filed a question on this. I am asking about the £50.5 million. Why am I interested in it?

Because the Principal Auditor's report refers to it. It is the biggest transaction referred to in the Principal Auditor's report. And people are interested in what this company is doing with that money.

With his responsibility for the Savings Bank, is he saying that he does not know what this company is doing with this money and that he thinks that is, okay?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: I am not saying that I do not know, and I think it is okay. I am saying that it is not okay to expect a company that lends money to publish who its customer is and what they are doing. That is what I am saying.

It is not normal. It is not done by anybody else. The fact that the Principal Auditor, amongst his many errors, expected that this should be made public, well, look, the comparison he did was to

say, well, you mentioned the name of the entity that the Savings Bank pays when it buys a loan note.

910 Yes, of course. We provide a list of all the people that get the money from the Savings Bank. We then do not provide another list where they all deal with the money.

The fact that the Principal Auditor chose to use this exception is only evidence of one thing, of how much in tune the Principal Auditor is in the thinking, the former Principal Auditor, was in the thinking of the hon. Member opposite. I mean, does he really think that you can have a lending
915 institution in Gibraltar that, because the Government of Gibraltar through the Savings Bank, gives support because we know that it is a Government, that money is being invested in Gibraltar and it is not being invested outside Gibraltar. The fact that we know that it is being invested in Gibraltar does not mean that we say, because we know that you are investing the money in Gibraltar, you now have to publish it.

920 The Principal Auditor might think that. The hon. Member might think that. We do not think that is legitimate or correct.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, the Minister has said that Community Credit Union Cooperative Limited has no role in the National Economic Plan. He has spoken about his National
925 Economic Plan and the objectives of it, but it has no role in it. And yet, the Government, through the Savings Bank, he has just said, has agreed to structure a loan of £50.5 million to this company for use of investments. But he is being opaque with the House, and the people of Gibraltar, in relation to the purposes for which this money is being used. Does he seriously think that people are not interested or have a right to know where this money is going? I mean, at least will he tell
930 the House who is deciding who gets the benefit of the £50.5 million?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: The benefit of the £50 million? Who gets it? The benefit is Gibraltar and it is the citizens of Gibraltar and the people who get employed as a result of that investment. The same as with all the other money that is reinvested in Gibraltar. Those are the beneficiaries.

935 And if there is a situation where there is an institution that can provide money to the private sector, then we are willing to support that institution to do it. We are doing it with banks in Gibraltar. But the banks in Gibraltar, there is no, the hon. Member opposite says, well, NatWest, there is no problem in giving the money to NatWest.

Well, there is no problem in giving the money to NatWest. But then NatWest may say to a local
940 business, no, I cannot lend you the money or you have to pay me more interest for the money. So, the beneficiary may not be here.

The money in NatWest may not be reinvested here. And therefore, if I have to choose as Minister for Economic Development to provide funding to somebody that is going to spend the money in Gibraltar and create economic activity in Gibraltar and somebody that may not. So, this
945 is a company that is supporting investment by local companies in local projects.

And they are not, there is no requirement just because the former Principal Auditor thought it was a good idea to ask who are they that does not entitle him to do it. The fact that he asks does not entitle him or the Member opposite to require us to say to this company you have to publicise what no other lending company in Gibraltar does. The fact that tomorrow another lending
950 company may come to us and say look, we are interested in issuing loan notes.

If we bought £10 million of loan notes in a bank for a particular project it is not up to me to tell them I need to know when you are going to do it but you are going to have to go and make it public. And that is a position. If the hon. Member thinks otherwise well, he is entitled to think otherwise.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I think the hon. Member misunderstood the question because he talked about beneficiaries over vaguely and I am interested in beneficiaries, but he did not give me a specific answer. I asked him who takes the decision. Who takes the decision this £50.5 million that was parked with this structure who then takes the decision of who gets the benefit of that money?

960 Is he aware who takes the decision and is he aware for the purposes for which this money has been used as Minister is he aware of those things?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: When they request funding and we issue loan notes an assessment is made and currently we are now working with other banks in Gibraltar to extend a similar provision so that other banks for example in Gibraltar have got a difficulty in making loans beyond a certain size to one particular customer and we are now working with them to do the exercise that previously we were doing on our own of assessing the viability of the investment and assessing of course the security that is a normal thing that we do before we approve any investment.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Can I ask the Minister then who is 'we' and is he then saying that he is involved in the ultimate decision making as to the deployment of parts of this £50.5 million and can I ask him on a final occasion to tell the House the specific purposes for which the money has been made?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: The specific purposes have been for projects that are resulting in economic development and activity in Gibraltar. A number of different projects with a number of different people and the case is presented by the person, that is, the entity, Community Care Union puts to us what the project is that they wish to fund and they understand how the repayments are going to be and how the money is going to be spent. Therefore, an assessment is made by that by the people in the savings bank that need to approve and then it comes to me for final approval.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, just extending. Madam Speaker, and I am not being difficult with my supplementaries because I have asked in my original question what the specific purposes are and I have asked him again and he says they are for projects, all right, but I have asked in my original question what the specific projects are and I have asked him for the specific names of the corporate vehicles and the specific projects.

Is he unwilling to give me that answer? This is not taking him by surprise because it was in my original question. Is he unwilling to give me the answer that I have asked for in my original question?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: It is not that I am unwilling, I think he is not entitled to that information and I think he is not entitled to come to Parliament and say that I should divulge information that is commercially, I would say probably against data protection, to say well look if you are providing funding to a company in the private sector you have to go to Parliament and tell Parliament what the project is and who the person that is doing the investing of that money is. So I do not believe it is a legitimate question in the sense that I do not think it is entitled to require for that information to be put in the public domain because no other competing entity in Gibraltar or UK who we supply money to, many more millions than this, is required to tell us how they are using the money.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Mr Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Thank you Madam Speaker. I will try and be brief in my questions, but you will appreciate it is a fairly complex topic. Madam Speaker, if I can just turn to perhaps the simplest one which the Minister can answer in relation to 802 in which I asked about the security given to Gibraltar National Mint by Community Credit Union Cooperative Limited and I believe the Minister said, I just asked him to confirm, I believe he said a first charge on the Company's assets.

I do not know if the Minister has checked but the last time, I had a look at the Companies House website there was no charge registered. Is it the Minister's understanding that there should be a charge registered?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Well I do not know whether it should be whatever it is that is looked but what I know is that we have it in writing and that the assets are in excess of the amount that is owed, that I can tell you.

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Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, I just want to unpack my Question 803 together with an element of what the Leader of the Opposition asked about and in 803 he was asking about the role in the National Economic Plan and the Minister told the House that he has no role in the National Economic Plan but then when we we try and delve into what this entity is doing, which by the way for the information of the House was incorporated on the 17th of January 2023 so not a new entity and is owned by Community Initiatives Limited which is a registered charity of which we have come across before in this House and as we know Community Initiatives has a whole group of other entities such as the Rooke site and other elements which Sir Joe Bassano is well familiar with. But can I ask him this firstly, he said that or words to the effect that this is a money lending institution, can he clarify what he means by that because I do not believe it is regulated by the Financial Services Commission, I do not believe it is a bank.

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Hon. Sir J J Bossano: It is a money lending institution because it is licenced to lend money.

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Hon. R M Clinton: I am grateful to the Minister for that, I think I had a question pending on that at least now we have the answer and he talks about Madam Speaker promoting investment in Gibraltar for the benefits of Gibraltar and the citizens of Gibraltar and investing in local projects and that ultimately the Minister gives final approval for these projects. But Madam Speaker I mean I have in front of me three charges of three local companies which are charges registered by Community Credit Union Cooperative Limited. I am not going to name these companies across the floor, but the Minister will be fully aware of these three entities and these three entities as far as I can tell are not developing new economic projects in Gibraltar but instead buying up other businesses in Gibraltar.

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I mean the number of companies is changes by the day, the last number I heard was like 32 companies. I mean does the Minister consider this an appropriate use of Savings Bank money effectively giving it to a private investor to buy local businesses to increase their personal wealth. Where is it this is the generation of economic activity in Gibraltar if all this money is being used for is to buy other businesses?

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Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Well, I do not agree that all the money is being used for what the hon. Member says but of course I have already said that I am not going to say what it is that the money is being used for. First of all, the Credit Union does not depend solely on the Savings Bank for funding, it has its own other sources of funding. And secondly the fact that somebody may buy a company that is on the verge of going bankrupt is something that is of benefit to stop the bankruptcy or the fact that somebody may consolidate a business to make it more efficient is still something that is worth supporting from the point of view of the performance of the economy.

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So he may have a particular view of what is happening but what is happening is that as far as the money that is sourced from the Savings Bank is sourced for the Savings Bank for something that demonstrably has a positive effect on the economic factors and the performance of the economy. There may be other things that are being done which are not necessarily financed with the money that we have provided which may be which would not fall into that category. And as I have already mentioned this is now I am in the process now of doing similar exercises with other banks that have approached me to to be able to provide more money to private business sector where they have a problem in being able to finance things and business says have difficulty in expanding.

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And given that that you know I believe that private sector has to be supported and helped to be able to grow. I am happy to look at doing similar things with other entities.

Hon. R M Clinton: Can I ask the Minister, I mean we have spoken ad nauseum in the past about Credit Finance in this House. Why is the Government using this particular vehicle and not Credit Finance? I mean you have Credit Finance already in existence with a money lending licence which is doing such a thing.

Why the need for this entity which is not actually Government owned but of which the Minister is making decisions? I just do not understand.

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Well, I have on many occasions in the past told the hon. Member that we are here to give information that they are entitled to, in our judgement, of what we do, not necessarily of why we do it. You know that is a we take a policy decision but I also have told him that the primary role of Credit Finance from the beginning was to be able to finance the conversion of pensions which is now running at £60 million a year into the basic thing was a reverse annuity. So, whether we are with an annuity you know you convert a sum of money into a flow of income and what we are doing is the reverse.

We buy the flow of income from the Civil Servant that wants to do it, and we give him a pot of money. That is the main role of Credit Finance and then that money finishes being deposited in the Savings Bank. we provide the most competitive role which in his budget speech he drew attention to that I had said that as if that meant that there was no value we were doing because all we are doing is providing competitive role. Well the capitalist system believes in competition and the capitalist system believes that the people that produce competitive products are what makes the system work and therefore we provide competitive rate for a very simple reason because we are more efficient than anybody else in terms of our costs. Therefore have smaller margins and because we do not have to have debt capital like others because we have got 70 odd million or 80 million in reserves because you choose to have because as the hon. Member has told me the law says we do not need to have it. He has recommended to me that we should not have it and that we should pass the money to the Government rather than leave it there. But the fact that our operating costs are lower and that we do not have capital to service means that we can produce more competitive rates and because we compute more competitive rates we pass the part of the value of that to the private sector, therefore provide better terms to private businessmen in Gibraltar and we have got a queue of people wanting to access this and as I have said, banks wanting to cooperate with us in doing it and that is a good thing because it will mean that things that might not happen for lack of access to capital at affordable costs will happen because we bring the cost down.

Hon. R M Clinton: I am grateful to the Minister for expanding on his answer. If I may ask Madam Speaker, he just mentioned as a queue of people wanting to access the services or facilities provided by presumably meant Community Credit Union Cooperative Limited. Can I ask how does one go about doing that I mean where is it advertised I mean is there a leaflet people can pick up because you know we do not know anything about this in the public domain other than what we read in the Principal Auditors report. I mean where do you know private sector investors access information on this facility.

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: In Gibraltar you do not need to advertise anything the reality is that without advertising people approach me so why should I have to advertise it. I mean, the whole of the private sector of Gibraltar is very small everybody in every sector of the private sector knows what everybody else is doing or easily either he is living in a different Gibraltar to the one I know or he has not taken that into account the reality is that the mechanism that we are using is sufficiently in the public domain by word-of-mouth for people not to need to be advertised. I mean this is not an initiative that has been started by me in terms of this is what I want to do in the National Economic Plan, and this is you know part of it. I mean this is an initiative from the business community because the initiative from the Government was in the area of the companies that have been funded which have a specific role to do a specific thing which was the thing that

we put in the manifesto which was the creating a more accessible price for pensioners to be able to downsize from their property which is the one that we are doing in the in the Laguna. So that I mean there is no mystery about what that company is doing that company is doing that and nothing else so you do not need to ask a question what does it do what it does is what it says it was it set out to do so we have got that company that is funded by loan notes from the Savings Bank and it is doing a particular thing which is a something that the Government wanted to happen. It is not being done by the Government in the sense that the Government is actually responsible for the building, it is done as a private sector initiative funded by us in and therefore delivering a something that we think was a gap in the provision of housing in Gibraltar. Why was it done? again because somebody came to me and said look I have got a problem because I my my children are grown up, we are in a big house, we bought that house long ago and now it is worth much more money but I cannot go into the pensioner homes that are built by the Government for rental. Because the rule is that homeowners cannot go into Government rental property, otherwise they would just sell the houses and go back, and this would be never-ending. But elderly people who have been encouraged to become homeowners have a right to expect that we could find a way of helping them what the way of helping. We then said well okay let us see if we can get somebody to take on the responsibility of producing homes which will be sold at cost and therefore somebody may say, well what I bought for say £50,000, 20 years ago as I now sell for £30,000 and then I can buy a pensioner home, I sell at a price of £300,000 and I buy for £200,000 and that pensioner has got £100,000 and it is got a smaller home. That is what we are trying to do, I think it is a good thing to be doing. I would imagine that the hon. Members also think it is a good to be doing and therefore there is no doubt what that is what that thing is doing. That's why we are funding it and we are funding it as well with the security that if the property is not all sold then if there was nobody willing to buy it or we have exhausted that market we can always be sell it not to a restricted market. Therefore, we are confident that the capital value that we are lending against is in excess of the money that we are providing. The other one is what we are doing the pre-war refurbishments which hon. Member asked about and that you know it is a slow process but we go from one to the other and you know I think we have done about eight or nine of them now. So apart from that you know that the other thing that were the third element is this initiative of finding ways of giving support to the private sector to either expand or make their businesses more efficient or amalgamate businesses or buy new equipment or so it is all about increasing the efficiency of a private sector which is to the benefit of the businessmen in the private sector and to the benefit of the economy.

Madam Speaker: One last one.

Hon. R M Clinton: Thank you Madam Speaker. My last question. Everything the Minister described in terms of what Community Credit Union is doing with their money lending licence but by lending directly to private sector companies and effectively what the Minister has said of which I understand correctly is assisting businesses where other banking institutions may find they breach their large exposure limits and therefore cannot lend large amounts of money to particular entities. Given the private sector equity nature of this and you know the complex financing decisions that are required I mean what sort of financial expertise does this entity have access to or is it that the Minister's providing input from the Treasury Department. Does the Minister have any sense of how the risk is being managed in this entity?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Madam Speaker there has to be a business case made and that business case is I do not assess the business cases, these are assessed by the people we have got in the Treasury but the political decision of whether we do it or not is mine. I am responsible for the Savings Bank and I have to satisfy myself that independent of the advice that I get that there is negligible or zero risk in in in the in the investment that we are supporting and that is something that I am prepared to do politically and defend politically but of course I do not get involved in the

details of that that precede the decision. I would not have the time to do it I have the ability to do it, but I do not have the time.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Mr Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Yes if I may Madam Speaker in relation to the sources of income which this entity receives and it is Community Credit Union Cooperative Limited the Hon. Minister said that it did not just receive income from the Savings Bank and he made a reference to other sources, is he able to provide us with indication of what those sources are?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: I mean if somebody else other than the Savings Bank buys loan notes from something that is not in the Government why does he think that I should tell him who they are? What does it have to do with him or me or anybody else? It's not the Government.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker I know we have been at it now for two hours is it a convenient moment to break for 15 minutes before we start questions from the Hon. Minister for the Environment?

Madam Speaker: To my understanding there are still two more questions outstanding for the Minister for Inward Investment and Gibraltar Savings Bank. Perhaps the Hon. Minister would like us to finish with those two questions before we adjourn.

Hon. Chief Minister: Yes, sorry I thought the indication was we were starting with the with the new Minister, but we should finish questions to the hon. Member and then have the break.

Madam Speaker: Question 921.

Q921/2025
Registrar of Cooperative Societies –
Cooperative Societies Act 1971

Q922/2025
List of societies registered –
Cooperative Societies Act 1971

Q923/2025
List of entities to whom permission has been granted –
Cooperative Societies Act 1971

Clerk: Question 921, the Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Can the Government advise who is the Registrar of Co-Operative Societies, under the Co-Operatives Societies Act 1971?

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

Minister for Inward Investment and the Gibraltar Savings Bank (Hon. Sir J J Bossano): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 922 and 923.

Clerk: Question 922, the Hon. R M Clinton.

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Hon. R M Clinton: Can the Government provide a list of societies registered under the Co-Operative Societies Act 1971?

Clerk: Question 923, the Hon. R M Clinton.

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Hon. R M Clinton: Can the Government provide a list of entities to whom it has granted permission to use the word 'co-operative' under s 58 (1) of the Co-Operative Societies Act 1971, including the date of such permission?

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

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Madam Speaker currently there are no there is no Registrar of Cooperative Society appointed. There are currently no societies registered under the Cooperative Societies Act and no permission has been given to use the word cooperative, and Community Credit Union no longer makes use of the word cooperative.

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Hon. R M Clinton: I am grateful to the Minister's answer. If I am to understand him correctly in his last response are we to understand that what we were calling Community Credit Union Cooperative Limited has now changed its name is that what the Minister is telling in the House and if so what is its current name?

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Hon. Sir J J Bossano: It has now removed the word cooperative from name.

Madam Speaker: All right I understand then that ends the questions to the Minister for Inward Investment and Gibraltar Savings Bank.

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Before I call the adjournment, I would like to remind Members of the importance of giving way to the Chair when the Chair is speaking and of accepting a direction from the Chair. It is vital that hon. Members do not disrespect Parliament. Courtesy and respect for parliamentary procedure is what gives Members the right to remain in this Chamber during any given session. It is vital that rules and procedure are observed because without that cooperation from hon. Members this House cannot function with integrity and on that note, I will now recess for 15 minutes.

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The House recessed 11.32 a.m. at and resumed at 11.45 a.m.

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1260 **Clerk:** Questions to the Hon. Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

EDUCATION, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Q738-742/2025

Pupils attendance –

Broken down by school & intervention by the Department of Education

1265 **Clerk:** Question 738, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: How many pupils have had an attendance rate of 85% or lower between 1st September 2023 and the present date, broken down by school, by month, and by attendance rate band (for example: 80–85%, 70–79%, 60–69%, and below 60%)?

1270 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):
Madam Speaker I will answer this question together with Questions 739 to 742.

1275 **Clerk:** Question 739, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: How many pupils have remained below the 85% attendance threshold for:

- 1280
- (a) one term;
 - (b) two consecutive terms; and
 - (c) the full academic year to date?

Clerk: Question 740, the Hon. A Sanchez.

1285 **Hon. A Sanchez:** What have been the main recorded reasons for pupils having an attendance rate of 85% or lower since 1st September 2023, categorised under:

- 1290
- (a) Physical illness or medical reasons;
 - (b) Mental health or emotional well-being;
 - (c) Family-related issues or caring responsibilities;
 - (d) Disengagement or truancy;
 - (e) School-related factors (e.g. bullying, academic difficulties); and
 - (f) Any other category recorded.

1295 **Clerk:** Question 741, the Hon. A Sanchez.

1300 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Since 1st September 2023, how many pupils with an attendance rate of 85% or lower have been referred to, or involved with, external agencies such as the Care Agency, or any other relevant entity? Can the Government provide a breakdown by month indicating the number of pupils and the agency or entity to which they were referred?

Clerk: Question 742, the Hon. A Sanchez.

1305 **Hon. A Sanchez:** What measures of intervention or support have been implemented by the Department of Education or individual schools to assist pupils whose attendance has fallen to 85% or lower?

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

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: The answers are set out in a slightly different way from how they were requested, and I will explain. The statistics are collected for under 85% and not 85% *and under* for all children of compulsory school age, and they are collected by term rather than by month. I therefore hand over a schedule with information on attendance for under 85%, set out by term.

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ACADEMIC YEAR 2024-2025			
NUMBER OF PUPILS UNDER 85% in one term	NUMBER OF PUPILS UNDER 85% 2 terms Consecutively	NUMBER OF PUPILS UNDER 85% 3 terms Consecutively	NUMBER OF PUPILS UNDER 85% 2 terms non- Consecutively
973	301	235	111

ANSWER TO QUESTION 742**ANSWER TO QUESTION 738**

Secondary Schools		2023-24			2024-25		
* DOES NOT INCLUDE YR 11		AUTUMN TERM	SPRING TERM	SUMMER TERM *	AUTUMN TERM	SPRING TERM	SUMMER TERM*
SCHOOL	% ATTENDANCE	NUMBER OF PUPILS					
Bayside	80-84%	100	84	65	100	84	72
	70-79%	110	90	40	82	73	113
	60-69%	32	36	108	22	26	38
	BELOW 60%	54	80	113	52	34	52
Westside	80-84%	80	19	146	100	124	106
	70-79%	86	104	158	96	100	89
	60-69%	40	49	71	45	33	39
	BELOW 60%	45	69	77	64	88	59

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Lower Primary Schools		2023-24			2024-25		
		AUTUMN TERM	SPRING TERM	SUMMER TERM *	AUTUMN TERM	SPRING TERM	SUMMER TERM*
SCHOOL	% ATTENDANCE	NUMBER OF PUPILS					
Notre Dame	80-84%	15	22	27	15	10	24
	70-79%	10	15	38	7	11	22
	60-69%	3	4	3	4	4	8
	BELOW 60%	1	2	6	4	4	3
Governor's Meadow	80-84%	14	15	9	4	4	9
	70-79%	11	10	8	9	9	8
	60-69%	3	3	8	2	2	8
	BELOW 60%	3	3	1	2	1	1

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St. Paul's	80-84%	11	12	8	2	5	10
	70-79%	6	5	10	0	7	5
	60-69%	0	4	1	0	1	1
	BELOW 60%	0	1	1	0	0	1

St. Mary's	80-84%	3	6	6	6	1	0
	70-79%	3	1	12	4	6	10
	60-69%	2	1	0	1	1	3
	BELOW 60%	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Bernard's	80-84%	10	5	10	4	9	11
	70-79%	4	3	8	5	3	11
	60-69%	1	3	1	3	3	4
	BELOW 60%	1	1	2	1	1	0

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St. Joseph's	80-84%	10	10	8	10	5	13
	70-79%	10	7	13	7	9	3
	60-69%	1	4	2	0	0	1
	BELOW 60%	0	0	0	0	0	0

Upper Primary Schools		2023-24			2024-25		
		AUTUMN TERM	SPRING TERM	SUMMER TERM *	AUTUMN TERM	SPRING TERM	SUMMER TERM*
SCHOOL	% ATTENDANCE	NUMBER OF PUPILS					
St. Anne's	80-84%	29	31	44	15	35	25
	70-79%	17	9	32	20	11	35
	60-69%	5	3	13	6	7	4
	BELOW 60%	9	1	11	3	4	9

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Bishop Fitzgerald	80-84%	28	21	31	25	35	26
	70-79%	17	14	26	11	14	27
	60-69%	6	3	11	3	2	5
	BELOW 60%	1	0	6	0	3	10
St. Bernard's	80-84%	18	21	16	8	21	19
	70-79%	12	23	22	9	15	25
	60-69%	1	2	3	0	2	5
	BELOW 60%	0	3	4	1	0	2
St. Joseph's	80-84%	6	7	12	12	14	1
	70-79%	9	15	11	10	17	3
	60-69%	0	5	4	0	3	2
	BELOW 60%	0	1	1	0	2	1

Madam Speaker: That is for 738.

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker 738. Madam Speaker, in relation to Question 739, the information is as follows. For the academic year 2024–25, the number of pupils under 85% in one term is 973. The number of pupils under that percentage for two consecutive terms is 301. The number of pupils under 85% for three consecutive terms is 235, and the number of pupils under 85% for two non-consecutive terms is 111.

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Madam Speaker, the main recorded reasons for pupils having an attendance rate under 85% or lower since 1 September 2023 are physical illness or medical reasons, including matters relating to mental health or emotional well-being. Low school attendance is a complex issue, Madam Speaker. It cannot be attributed to a single cause, as a range of interconnected factors can influence a young person's ability or willingness to attend school regularly.

These include family-related issues, such as caring responsibilities, instability at home, or wider social pressures. They also include school-related factors, such as bullying, academic difficulties or a sense of disconnection from the school environment. Crucially, these factors are often closely linked to a young person's mental health and emotional well-being. Anxiety, low mood or other emotional challenges can both contribute to and be exacerbated by periods of absence, creating a cycle that can be difficult to break without timely and coordinated support.

That is why, Madam Speaker, we take a holistic approach that focuses on early identification, strong collaboration between schools, families and local services, and providing targeted support to address the underlying causes of non-attendance.

In relation, Madam Speaker, to Question 741, there have been 21 pupils referred to the Care Agency since 1 September 2023 where the primary reason for the referral was missing from education. In September 2023 there was one referral involving two children. In October 2023, two referrals involving three children. In November 2023, one referral involving one child. In February 2024, one referral involving one child. In May 2024, one referral involving one child. In June 2024, one referral involving two children. In July 2024, one referral involving one child. In November 2024, three referrals involving five children. In December 2024, two referrals involving two children. In March 2025, one referral involving one child. In May 2025, two referrals involving two children.

There may have been more since May, but my figures have not been updated. I can provide that information after today's session. Children are not referred to external agencies solely on the basis of attendance concerns. Referrals are made according to the underlying issues affecting the child. Where safeguarding concerns are identified, referrals may be made to the Care Agency, and where matters relate to emotional well-being or mental health, appropriate referrals are made to the relevant mental health services.

Some young people have also been referred to a new initiative, the Youth Compass initiative, which is a joint initiative between the Youth Service of my colleague to my right, the Ministry of Youth, and the Department of Education. This initiative is designed to provide a safe, engaging and nurturing environment to foster resilience, personal growth and reintegration into education, training, employment or the community. Its aim is to help young people develop self-confidence, a positive identity and coping mechanisms in order to thrive in a changing world. There have been 12 referrals since its inception in April of last year.

I am just going to amend this, as it was drafted before the end of December. Where low school attendance has been a central concern, the following referrals have taken place. In April 2025, one referral. In May 2025, one referral. In June 2025, four referrals. In September 2025, two referrals. In October 2025, three referrals. In November 2025, one referral.

In answer to Question 742, I can confirm that interventions for pupils whose attendance falls below 85% are determined on an individual basis and are guided by a clear attendance policy and protocol, which are regularly reviewed and updated by the Department of Education, although a child does not necessarily have to fall below 85% to receive support. The policy promotes early identification of barriers to attendance and the provision of tailored, multi-agency support to address the underlying causes of absence.

Actions may include therapeutic and pastoral support, such as counselling, mentoring or well-being interventions for pupils experiencing emotional or mental health difficulties; flexible educational arrangements, including adjustments to individual timetables, phased or reduced attendance plans, modified start and finish times, or the removal or adaptation of lessons or activities known to trigger significant anxiety; a supportive school environment, including access to quiet or alternative spaces during unstructured times to promote emotional regulation and a

sense of safety; additional adult support in school to help pupils build trusting relationships, manage anxiety and re-engage with learning; school transfers where these are deemed to be in the pupil's best interests; remote learning provision, including access to home-based work or live online lessons through platforms such as Zoom, as part of a phased reintegration plan; referral to specialist or alternative education programmes, including the Youth Compass initiative; pre-16 college routes for vocational engagement; TLC placements for outreach support from the TLC team; outdoor and experiential learning opportunities, including activities such as climbing or paddleboarding to build resilience, confidence and social skills; regular communication with parents and carers to ensure a shared understanding of plans and joint decision-making; collaboration with other agencies, including health, youth and social services; signposting to additional support and community initiatives; and training for school staff in trauma-informed practice, enabling educators to better understand and respond to the needs of pupils affected by adversity.

This, I think you will agree, Madam Speaker, is a comprehensive, child-centred and collaborative approach designed to remove barriers to attendance, promote emotional well-being and ensure that every young person in Gibraltar Government schools has the opportunity to engage fully with their education.

Madam Speaker: In relation to Question 738, the hon. Member has been provided with a schedule. We can return to that if she would like some time to consider it, unless she wishes to deal with it straight away. Otherwise, we will start with Question 739.

Hon. A Sanchez: But as we are here, I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for that extensive answer. In terms of the attendance strategy, do you want 739 now? Yes?

Madam Speaker: will deal with 738 when the Hon. Miss Sanchez is ready, and I will take any supplementaries to that at that time.

Hon. A Sanchez: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In terms of the attendance strategy that I believe the Hon. Minister has discussed in this House before, can the Hon. Minister elaborate on whether the Department uses the UK standards and benchmarks in relation to absence in schools, such as persistent absence, severe absence and the percentages used in the UK? And is that adopted by the Department, and is it used?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the UK standards are a background for information, but we do not necessarily adhere to them. We have our own protocols, and we assess the needs and the different conditions separately. So, it is there as a background to the Department, but we do not follow it completely because the local situation is not the same as the standard in the UK.

Hon. A Sanchez: Would the Hon. Minister be able to provide us with some background as to how the attendance strategy is developing, how it is working and the impact that it is having on attendance? And perhaps give us some information as to whether it is having a positive impact overall, or whether it may be the case that it is having a positive impact on, let us say, the 90% cohort, but perhaps not such a positive impact on those hardest hit, such as those in the 60% band. Is that the case, or is it generally having a positive impact overall?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I think my earlier answer gave a great deal of information on what the strategy is. Essentially, the strategy is what I summarised in my answer. As to its effectiveness, I believe the answer is yes; I think it is making a difference.

I would rather look at each individual child or young person and see how their particular attendance is improving as a result of these interventions, rather than look at overall figures, because the overall figures do not necessarily reflect each and every child's journey. But my overall

1480 assessment, and from what I hear from the Department, is that these interventions are positive. Certainly, the Youth Compass initiative, which is a multi-agency initiative, has certainly helped individual young people in dealing with issues that were keeping them away from education.

1485 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Just a final question. Could the Hon. Minister clarify whether there have been any additional employment or any new posts created as a result of this attendance strategy? For example, has there been any creation of posts such as attendance support officers, or any posts of this nature, to assist in the deployment of the strategy or to further support its development?

1490 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, not within the Department of Education. This is work that is generally done by the Education Advisors.

Madam Speaker: Anything on 740, the Hon. Mrs Sanchez? Nothing on 740? You have on 741, yes?

1495 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In 741 the Minister gave us a figure of 21, if I am correct, of students that were referred to the Care Agency. Does he happen to have a breakdown of whether they are lower primary, upper primary or secondary, or does he only have the overall figure of 21?

1500 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I do not have that information with me, but I can obtain it for him. If the hon. Member does not mind, as he usually does, sending me a note to remind me, I will provide that information to him right away.

1505 **Madam Speaker:** Anything on 742? Is the hon. Member ready on 738? All right; the Hon. Mr. Reyes had a question on 738.

1510 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you. On 738, I am presuming the reason why there are no statistics for the College is because the students there are over 16 and therefore past compulsory school age. That leads to two small questions. One is, when we have the figures for Bayside and Westside, are we therefore not taking into account Years 12 and 13 because, like the College, they have passed compulsory school age? That is part one.

1515 The other question that was prompted arises because, in part two of my question, the Minister indicates that the statistics do not include Year 11 for the summer term. I am intrigued, because I know that at the end of Year 11 is when students embark on public examinations, such as GCSEs, but those normally do not start until May. The summer term begins straight after Easter, and we return to school not later than mid-April, so there is a month to six weeks' worth of schooling. So, are no registers taken from the moment pupils return after the Easter break until the point where we officially break off formal delivery of classes? I know that some teachers offer voluntary classes, but I am intrigued as to why those statistics have not been included.

1520 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, we would have to double-check. I suspect that, on the second part of the supplementary, attendance in Year 11 becomes much more flexible in the last term, as he himself knows. Therefore, the attendance register, I suspect, is kept but would not need to be strictly applied, because some of the students might have permission to spend more time studying at home. I would have to check.

1525 In relation to the College, the College runs in a very different way. It is much more open, almost similar to a university, in which the students do not have to be there if they do not have specific lessons. It is a very different approach. But I will check both, and once again I will offer that information to the hon. Member.

1530

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am going to ask the Minister whether the Department is going to take any particular issue with what appears in the statistics. If one looks at the figures for Bayside and Westside, that is, the secondary school sector, let us take the autumn term of 2024–25. There are one hundred pupils in the 80 to 84% bracket in Bayside, and another hundred in Westside. Together they make two hundred pupils.

If we add, for the same period, all the students from all the upper primary schools, because all upper primaries feed into either Bayside or Westside, the figure gets nowhere near that two hundred. So there seems to be a bigger increase in non-attendance once pupils move on to secondary school. I am asking the Minister whether the Department has noted that and is investigating why that should be. The transition from upper primary to secondary can be traumatic for some students, but that figure of two hundred pupils does, for me as an ex-teacher, stand out. It seems quite high.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Well, Madam Speaker, I think it is very clear, and we have said this publicly, that we are not happy with the overall attendance. We believe that we have an issue with attendance in schools. I think this is not just in Gibraltar. There was a significant uptick in school absences following COVID in many countries, including the UK.

I think you would expect that secondary school pupils would tend to have lower attendance percentages than primary school pupils. They are more independent. Some of them will be above compulsory education age. Some of them may be 14 or 15, and perhaps less dependent on their parents getting them to school. So, I think it is not surprising that attendance drops in secondary school.

I would be more concerned if the attendance figures for primary schools were worse than those for secondary schools, because that would indicate other problems that perhaps we cannot see. I think the whole community needs to recognise that our school attendance figures should improve and, at the very least, return to what they may have been pre-COVID. As I say, after COVID, for some reason, attendance fell in many countries.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thanks for the explanation, Madam Speaker. One more thing I want to ask. I know there are provisions within legislation stating that attendance at school is compulsory. Is the Minister aware whether there have been any legal proceedings, letters, warnings or legal action taken? They do happen far and few between, but it would be interesting to know whether we have reached a stage where formal legal notices have had to be issued. Is the Minister aware of any of those figures?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: No, I am not. This is a matter for the Director, not the Minister. The Education Act, which we passed here not that long ago, provides for this. I think the Director would have informed me of anything that had actually gone to court.

One tries to avoid legal proceedings against parents and against young people, particularly when there are many other measures that can be put in place, as I have explained, in order to encourage those particular children or young people to go to school. I suspect we have not used the legal avenue yet. I would be very hesitant to use it, except in extreme circumstances where the culpability is clearly on the part of the parents, beyond perhaps social problems that they may have, because they may themselves need assistance as well as the child.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Mrs Sanchez had a question?

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, I had a question in relation to the figures provided for attendance at each school. I note that St Martin's is not — and there could be... [inaudible]

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: St Martin's is dealt with in a different way. We are aware that the children there may have medical and other issues, and therefore attendance does not form part of this

because there are social and health issues that are taken into account. So, it is not treated in quite the same way. Issues of attendance there are dealt with separately.

1585

Hon. A Sanchez: But when parents receive reports, there is still an attendance box in the reports they receive, and they still get an 85% attendance and so forth. So perhaps, given that it is still one of our schools, for accuracy, when we ask for figures it should be included in the figures, we receive so that we can view the attendance of all the schools. That is just a note, and perhaps I could write to the Minister, and he can provide these figures.

1590

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the figures were given in the context of measures taken and, because St Martin's is a different case, they were not included. However, I will seek those figures, and I will send them to the hon. Member. Again, I would appreciate an email or a WhatsApp message to remind me, because I really want to be able to provide that information, as I do with the Hon. Mr Reyes.

1595

Madam Speaker: Next question.

1600

Q743/2025
Historic City Under Siege Exhibition –
Restoration

Clerk: Question 743, the Hon. G Origo.

1605

Hon. G Origo: In relation to the recent announcement of the upgrade and restoration of the historic City Under Siege Exhibition, can the Government confirm what the proposed total costs of the restoration and upgrade to this project are?

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

1610

Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, there is zero cost to the Government for this restoration. It is a privately funded project.

1615

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, may I ask the Hon. Minister, and he may correct my understanding if it is wrong: I believe an expression of interest was conducted, but no formal tender process was engaged. My understanding, based on information I have, is that a company by the name of Wright Tech was the successful entity chosen to carry out these restoration works. Can the Hon. Minister confirm whether other entities or companies expressed an interest and, if so, on what basis this company was selected?

1620

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, there was an expression of interest published, I believe well over a year ago. There were other companies that applied. Other companies have been given, or are in the process of discussing, allocations of different parts of the Nature Reserve. For this particular site, the panel that considered the applications concluded that this was the best option for that site.

1625

1630 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, may I ask the Minister, because I believe this expression of interest was for the restoration and refurbishment: can he advise who will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the site? Is that included in the expression of interest or the commercial agreement entered into with this company?

1635 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the same entity would have to maintain that particular site.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, will the restoration and development of the site have any impact on the Upper Rock tourist fees in any way?

1640 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker.

Hon. G Origo: Finally, Madam Speaker, I note from the artistic impressions of the restoration and development of this site that there is one exhibition room which, on the way up to it, requires visitors to traverse a series of steps in order to enter. Can the Hon. Minister confirm whether the site intends to be fully accessible and, if so, whether this can be taken into consideration so that all members of our community have access to this new restoration and refurbished site?

1650 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I do not have the detail relating to those particular steps. The intention will be to make it fully accessible, although the hon. Member will appreciate that, in some heritage sites, the heritage value may suffer if changes are made in a way that impacts the original structure. In other words, instead of removing steps and laying a concrete ramp, one might need to install a temporary or removable wooden platform.

1655 These matters will be considered and taken into account by the entity responsible. I do not, however, have the detail for those specific steps. Once again, I am very happy to enquire and to facilitate the provision of that information.

Madam Speaker: Next question

1660

Q744/2025
East Side Rubble waste characterisation

1665 **Clerk:** Question 744, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Can the Government confirm whether tests have been carried out on the east side rubble and if so, can it confirm what were the results of the waste characterisation?

1670 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, the sampling of the East Side rubble is carried out by the contractor. The Department of the Environment will check the analytical results and determine whether the material is suitable for use as fill material. This reclamation will only be done with inert and non-hazardous material, as per the Environmental Impact Assessment.

I have checked with the contractor and can share some information here. Madam Speaker, two million metric tonnes of material had been tested at the time of preparing this answer, which would have been a couple of months ago. Only 4,000 tonnes were classified as hazardous, and clearly were not used, solely because of the lead content in these samples. No other parameters

1680 exceeded the guideline values. This equates to 0.2% of the total material, which will now not be used on site. The Department is currently in discussions with the contractor to determine what will happen to this material.

1685 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I recall the Minister stating that the tests were carried out by the contractor themselves, but that the Government, in some form of capacity, was supervising or analysing. Can he clarify whether the Government or a Government department independently supervises the process? In other words, what we do not want is a situation where we have the contractor self-certifying its own tests and stating everything is clean and suitable for the purposes of the development.

1690 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the contractor takes the sample and pays for the sampling. The Department supervises it in the sense that the tests are carried out by a fully accredited lab, to European Union standards, which performs all the screening. The Department has access to those results from the lab directly, so it is the lab that determines the result. It is not filtered by the contractor.

1700 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I take from the Minister's original answer that parts of this rubble were deemed hazardous. I think he said there were about 4,000 tonnes. May I ask what the intention of the Government is regarding removal of this rubble? Will it be exported to Spain, or what is going to happen to it? And if that is the case, who will pay the cost? Is it the Government or the developer? Who bears the liability?

1705 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the liability is entirely with the developer. As I said in my answer, we are currently in discussions as to what the destination will be. It will not be Gibraltar. It will have to be a properly accredited site elsewhere. It could be Spain; it could be elsewhere.

1710 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Could the Minister kindly explain if I understood correctly that the only contaminant was lead? Were there no other contaminants such as asbestos, of which Gibraltar is riddled?

1715 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, as I said, the only guideline value that was exceeded was lead. That is the answer I have, and therefore the answer must be that there was no other contaminant that exceeded the guideline value.

Hon. C Sacarello: So, as I understand it, there is a level which is acceptable and a level which is deemed unacceptable. Therefore, it is implied in the Minister's answer that there may be other hazardous waste at acceptable levels. Could the Minister clarify?

1720 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, if you sample the dust here, you will probably find traces of something at a level below the hazardous level. There are contaminants all over the place, but there are certain standards set internationally. This lab judges it by EU standards, which, if not exceeded, are deemed to be safe. I cannot confirm, because I do not have the full analytics in front of me, what levels there are of every single substance. But the only one that exceeded the level considered safe was lead.

1730 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q745/2025
Eastern Beach –
Cleanliness

Clerk: Question 745, the Hon. G. Origo.

1735 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, further to the Minister's admission that he was not satisfied with the cleanliness of parts of Eastern Beach, and given that dusty sand continued to dominate conversations among beachgoers during the summer months, how is the Government going to ensure that such issues do not reoccur next year?

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

1740 **Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, it is hoped that the winter storms will have washed the beach and removed a large amount of dust. Similarly, the pre-season works will include sifting and movement of the sand, which will assist in the displacement of any remaining dust.

1745 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I recall that during the summer months, in an interview, the Hon. Minister confirmed that additional efforts for cleaning were being undertaken in respect of the beach areas of concern. Given the commentary from members of the public, and I believe there was a programme where a news outlet asked beach users for their views, and the conclusion was that they were not satisfied with the cleaning efforts, has the Government engaged with the contractor responsible for cleaning services to assess their overall performance, given that they must have been paid a substantial sum of money to carry out enhanced cleaning efforts?

1750

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the cleaning was carried out throughout the summer season. It then stopped after the summer season. I think I said at the time that we hoped there would be sufficient natural movement from the sea to wash the beach. That has happened. We now need to keep an eye on it as the summer season approaches. It is possible that the sea will wash some silt ashore, which then dries and converts to dust. I am very much hoping that the beach dynamics will ensure that the beach is much clearer of dust this coming summer season.

1755

1760 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I believe the Hon. Minister also said in that interview that steps were being taken to ascertain the source of the dust and other contaminants. May I ask whether the Government has managed to ascertain where the problem arose? Was it linked to developments, or to persons refurbishing houses in nearby estates? It would be useful to know whether the source has been identified so that we do not find a similar situation next year.

1765

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: No, Madam Speaker, it was not possible to fully ascertain. However, there has been no construction along the side of the beach this year, so if that was a source, that source is no longer present. And obviously, as the works at Hassan Centenary come to a virtual end, there will be less activity there. But no, it was not possible to ascertain exactly what the source was.

1770

Madam Speaker: Next question.

1775

Q746/2025
Little Bay –
Construction of a pier

Clerk: Question 746, the Hon. G Origo.

1780 **Hon G Origo:** The Government recently confirmed that it is still considering plans for the construction of a pier at Little Bay. Can the Minister provide further details on the proposed project?

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

1785

Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, plans for the construction of a new pier, among a range of other beautification improvements, are still active.

1790 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, may I ask the Hon. Minister what issues are being considered that will lead to the Government's determination on whether this project is going to go ahead? Is it the results of an Environmental Impact Assessment? Is it the cost of the proposed project? I would like to understand what issues are preventing the Government from making a determination on whether this should go ahead.

1795

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, it is a variety of matters, including most of those mentioned by the hon. Member. It also includes considering the opportunity to revamp the area of Little Bay, as well as possible approaches from sources of funding outside the Government that may wish to support this project. There are therefore a number of factors currently under consideration. Hopefully we will have some clarity before too long and be able to make some changes in Little Bay.

1800

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, may I ask the Hon. Minister whether he has in mind a long-stop date by which he would like to take a decision on this? Is this something he wishes to decide by, or before, the beginning of the summer months? Is it something he hopes to progress within the lifetime of this Parliament? Does he have an indication of when he wishes to settle this point?

1805

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: I think we can see some improvements by this summer, but I think the full plan will probably not be until next.

1810

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q747/2025
Bayside Road cycle counter –
Trips recorded

1815

Clerk: Question 747, the Hon. G Origo.

1820 **Hon. G Origo:** Can the Government confirm how many trips have been recorded by the Bayside Road cycle counter, broken down by months, from January 2024 to date?

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

Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):

1825 Madam Speaker, I now hand over a schedule with the information requested.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 747

The data are as follows:

Date	Count
January 2024	72888
February 2024	66612
March 2024	70981
April 2024	74863
May 2024	78948
June 2024	49747
July 2024	76749
August 2024	78628
September 2024	81125
October 2024	86736
November 2024	72383
December 2024	50064
January 2025	60704
February 2025	79884
March 2025	83475
April 2025	85109
May 2025	90754
June 2025	88246
July 2025	94859
August 2025	86372
September 2025	96989
October 2025	103150
November 2025	88319
December 2025	73980
January 2026 to date	22675

Madam Speaker: We will move on to 798 and revert if necessary.

1830

1835

Q748/2025
Fixed speed cameras –
Fines issued

Clerk: Question 748, the Hon. G Origo.

1840 **Hon. G Origo:** Can the Government confirm how many fines have been issued in respect of contravention to speeding limits via the fixed speed cameras in Gibraltar, broken down by months and camera location over the last 12 months?

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

1845 **Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I will now hand over another schedule in respect of this question. Please note, Madam Speaker, that between May and July 2025 there was a technical fault in the system that required substantial work to be carried out on the servers. During this time, the speed cameras were not functioning. Other gaps in the data are due to individual cameras malfunctioning for a period.

1850

ANSWER TO QUESTION 748

2024	DTRWest	DTRWest	QWay	ROSIA
October	19	8	17	35
November	27	1	26	36
December	26	2	29	38

2025				
January	26	0	14	18
February	13	0	23	5
March	26	0	13	0
April	21	0	11	0
August	26	36	27	71
September	0	32	29	58
October	0	28	20	0
November	0	9	32	14
December	0	15	28	9

1855

Madam Speaker: We will move on to 749 and then revert if necessary.

1860

Q749/2025
Foreign registered vehicles –
Fines issued

1865

Clerk: Question 749, the Hon. G Origo.

1870

Hon. G Origo: Can the Government confirm how many foreign registered vehicles have been issued with fines for speeding, as a result of being captured by the fixed speed camera systems in Gibraltar, for the following years 2023, 2024 and 2025 to date?

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

1875

Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, no foreign-registered vehicles have been issued with fines for speeding. This is due to technical issues. As this situation is not acceptable to me, I can confirm to the House that legislation will shortly be published, possibly in tomorrow's Gazette, otherwise I think next week, and new mobile speed cameras are being purchased so that foreign-registered vehicles will be fined on the spot.

1880

1885

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for his assertion that this is not satisfactory to him. In light of his answer, does he not accept that the inability to enforce speeding offences against foreign-registered vehicles seriously undermines equality before the law in Gibraltar with respect to traffic offences?

1890

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, this is precisely why we are taking steps to rectify the situation. Unfortunately, despite our attempts to access the procedures necessary in order to issue these fines, we have not been able to do so. Therefore, if I may put it in a certain way, we have had to take the law into our own hands, and we are introducing legislation and acquiring new equipment so that we can deal with this on the spot, without having to rely on a long-distance method of procuring fines.

1895

Hon. G Origo: If I may, Madam Speaker, while I appreciate that no fines have been issued for speeding for the years under consideration, may I ask whether these offences are at least recorded internally, so that we have an idea of the severity of the number of foreign-registered vehicles contravening speed limits?

1900

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I have to assume so, but I would have to ask the Royal Gibraltar Police for that information, and I am happy to do so.

1905

Hon. D J Bossino: In answer to 749, which is— the question posed by my hon. Friend. He says that he has not had access to the procedures necessary. I think he said that. Can he expand more on what he means? I think I know what he means, but can he expand and state more explicitly what he is referring to?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, there is currently no active agreement enabling the processing of speeding fines across jurisdictions.

1910

Hon. G Origo: If I may just pull on that thread, is that position likely to change with the results of a treaty? Is this something that we might see in future, allowing for reciprocity with other EU Member States, if we were to enter into such an agreement, which is expected to land sometime soon?

1915 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, possibly. However, it is not something I am prepared to wait for, which is why we are going to introduce other measures to rectify this ourselves, and then we will see what happens in the longer term.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

1920

Q750/2025
Traffic Act 2005 –
Amend legislation

Clerk: Question 750, the Hon. G Origo.

1925 **Hon. G Origo:** Further to Question 84/2025, does the Government intend to amend the legislation under the Traffic Act 2005 so as to bring section 36(1) in line with the UK standards?

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

1930 **Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, yes ma'am.

1935 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I recall from the previous exchange on this question, which I have just referred to, that at the time the Government noted they were undergoing discussions with medical professionals because they wanted to address the serious deficiency in this section. May I ask the Hon. Minister whether those discussions have now finished and, if so, what issues are preventing the changes to this particular section?

1940 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, nothing is preventing it. The discussions are ongoing and the drafting is proceeding. We have some Law Draftsmen actively working on it. I hope to be able to publish the amendments within the next couple of months.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

1945

Q751-753/2025
London-style hybrid taxis –
Projected cost, metrics used & favourable loans

Clerk: Question 751, the Hon. G Origo.

1950 **Hon. G Origo:** Can the Government confirm what the projected cost is for the purchase of one of the new London-style hybrid taxis?

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

1955 **Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 752 and 753.

Clerk: Question 752, the Hon. G Origo.

1960 **Hon. G Origo:** Following the recent trial of a new London-style hybrid taxi, can the Minister provide details as to what metrics will be used to assess “suitability” under Gibraltar’s “unique conditions”?

Clerk: Question 753, the Hon. G Origo.

1965

Hon. G Origo: In a press release, the Government stated that it would offer “favourable loans” to Taxi License holders to purchase the new London-style taxi. Can the Minister provide details on the proposed favourable loan terms which it is considering offering?

1970

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

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, in answer to Question 751, the London Taxi Electric Company’s pricing documentation states that the starting recommended retail price for the basic model is £65,916. The actual price may rise or fall based on bulk order negotiations and required extras, such as the accessibility ramp. At this point in time, therefore, it is not possible to confirm the likely cost of the initiative.

1975

In answer to Question 752, the metrics used for suitability were range, comfort of ride, navigation through the road system and performance in various parts of Gibraltar, in particular areas with steep hills, narrow roads and the more popular destinations.

1980

In respect of Question 753, the terms of the loan have not yet been finalised.

Hon. G Origo: I am going to take these questions in turn. I will start with 751. May I ask the Hon. Minister whether he deemed the trial successful? Can he confirm whether it has concluded and whether he is happy with the success of the trial? Is it the intention to mandate the replacement of future taxis with these types of vehicles?

1985

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the trial was successful. Certainly, my Ministry officials were happy, and so was the Taxi Association, which was able to use the vehicle for a period of time to carry out its own trials. We are in discussions with the Taxi Association as to the next steps.

1990

Hon. G Origo: May I ask the Hon. Minister to clarify, because I do not think he answered the question directly. Is the Government stating that the replacement of current taxi vehicles with these new and better hybrid vehicles is going to be a voluntary decision for taxi licence holders, or is the Government saying that it will engage in a process in which it will actively encourage licence holders to make the switch?

1995

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: We are currently in negotiations, or discussions, with the Taxi Association. Personally, I would welcome the fact that they are electric, and the fact that they have the London cab look, the British look, which I think we would all welcome. But we are in discussions now to see how we can progress with this project.

2000

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, one final question on 751. I believe the Minister referred to one of the most attractive features of the new model being its disability-friendly design. In light of that, and recalling from memory that he stated in answers to previous questions that we had in our fleet two disability-friendly vehicles, and that we were going to acquire five or six more, may I ask the Hon. Minister whether we have already managed to acquire these vehicles to complement the fleet?

2005

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I believe the Taxi Association or their members are in the process of doing so.

2010

Madam Speaker: 752?

2015 **Hon. G Origo:** I know that the Hon. Minister may have answered this in part. He stated that the trial, in his view, was successful. May I therefore have his confirmation that the Government has found a suitable vehicle and is no longer looking for a different model, and that this is the model we intend to pursue in order to standardise a look for Gibraltar?

2020 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I can confirm that we have identified a suitable model. I should point out that these are intended for the city and airport service, and not, for example, for the Upper Rock tours. These vehicles would not be suitable for that, as we are looking at a larger number of passengers. This would be mainly for the airport and city service.

2025 **Hon. G Origo:** Finally on 752, I note that the Minister said that the Association had access to the vehicle to satisfy themselves with the model. May I ask him to provide more information on what role they played in selecting the vehicle and how much time they had to assess it? I note that during National Day week, the Minister was using the taxi quite often, so I know he must have a good impression of what the car can and cannot do, and that he is happy with it. I simply want to know how much of a part licence holders, taxi drivers and the Association played in assessing the vehicle themselves.

2030

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker I believe they had use of it for two or three weeks and several drivers used it and all the feedback that we have had is positive.

2035 **Madam Speaker:** 753?

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker on 753 I note that the Hon. Minister said that the terms of these favourable loans were still under discussion but if I may query in respect to the press release in which this information was provided and I quote the Government stated that the vehicles would be available for purchase by licence holders and also the Association themselves has a Government been given any kind of indication whether the Association intends to purchase any of these vehicles.

2040

2045 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, we are currently in discussion with them as to the next steps.

Hon. G. Origo: If the Association is currently in discussions, should it purchase one of these vehicles, would there be an impact on the Association fees from licence holders? I am trying to understand how the Association is going to fund and purchase this in its own right.

2050

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I do not think there will be such an impact, but we are discussing it.

2055 **Madam Speaker:** The Hon. Mr Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: When the Government says in its press release that the Government could offer loans, can the Minister explain what he means by “the Government”? Is it literally from public funds, meaning that we would vote on it here in an Appropriation Bill? Or does it encompass, for example, the Savings Bank, which is used for matters under the National Economic Plan? Or indeed, would it include the company we discussed earlier, which may not fall under the Government but clearly has governmental input through the Minister for Economic Development? Could he explain further what he means by “the Government”?

2060

2065 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, all options are open. It could even be, in some of the discussions we are having, that funding may not come from any local body at all, at least for some of this.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

2070 **Q754/2025**

**Press release 516/2025 –
Earnings for the Manager post**

Q755/2025

**Recent Refuse Collection Reform –
Adopted overtime controls**

2075 **Clerk:** Question 754, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: In Press Release 516/2025, the Government confirmed that “Earnings for the Manager post have now been brought in line with what the public rightly expects”. Can the Government advise on what objective criteria were used to define the “level the public rightly expects”?

2080 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): I will answer this question together with Question 755.

2085 **Clerk:** Question 755, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Can the Government provide details on the process in place regarding the newly adopted overtime controls set in the recent Refuse Collection Reform?

2090 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

2095 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, in respect of Question 754, the post of GIC Manager earnings are now more consistent with other management roles in the wider Civil Service and are within the band of salaries set for the Senior Officer grade. Existing arrangements will be reviewed later this year in consultation with the Union, if necessary.

2100 In answer to Question 755, the newly adopted overtime controls include, but are not limited to, the following: reduced ability to cover on overtime for refuse collection runs following the reduction of manning levels; the removal of previously established extra collection runs; the removal of collections on specific bank holidays; removal of broken-truck overtime allowances; restricting supervisor and GIC Manager cover on any potential future extra collections; and the GIC Manager is not eligible for any overtime and is paid basic salary only.

2105 **Madam Speaker:** 754?

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, in respect of 754, the Hon. Minister alluded to determinations being made on the basis of comparative grades and roles in different departments. Is it therefore the case that no actual public consultation was carried out to determine what the public rightly expects for this grade?

2110 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I do not really understand the question. Is the hon. Member suggesting that there should be public consultation in setting salary levels?

Hon. G Origo: No. What I am trying to clarify is how the Government, in its press release, stated that the salary was being brought in line with a level that the public rightly expects, when
2115 in fact there was no consultation with the general public. Rather, it seems the assumption was based solely on the salary bracket for the grade. I simply want to know whether any consultation took place.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: I think the statement in the press release can be taken as rhetorical. The public has expectations, and we believe we have now brought the salary more in line with what I
2120 think the public has a right to expect.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, in respect of 755 and the newly adopted overtime controls, may I ask the Hon. Minister whether there will be any penalties or corrective measures for
2125 breaches of these overtime controls? And who would be responsible for supervising compliance with the new restrictions?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the Manager is responsible for this, but overall supervision will come under the CEO of the Department of the Environment. One must remember
2130 that pay and overtime are prepared by the administrative staff of the Department of the Environment, and therefore there is oversight of expenditure and its source.

Hon. D J Bossino: In relation to Question 755, this touches on a hugely controversial aspect of the most recent Principal Auditor's Report, where people were aghast at the high earnings
2135 received by these individuals. It is good to hear that the Government is tackling this. But the Hon. Minister referred to a list of measures that have been implemented. Could he tell us when they were implemented, and what other measures are being taken? He did qualify his answer by saying "includes but is not limited to", and I am interested to know what additional measures are being considered or implemented to deal with this issue.
2140

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, these changes were implemented around the time that the agreement was signed. I cannot recall the precise date, but I believe it was in the early part of last year; March rings a bell, although I cannot say that categorically. They were implemented at
2145 that time. Other measures include much closer oversight by the Department of expenditure and the authorisation of overtime. A lot of this has been pulled back centrally to ensure that the agreed changes are actually implemented.

Hon. D J Bossino: I assume, but I invite him to confirm, that he is satisfied that these measures will not have a negative effect on the service; that he is satisfied that the cleaning of our streets
2150 and the collection of rubbish will not suffer.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, yes, that is the case. I am sure I have said that before. I am not certain whether I said it in this House or elsewhere, perhaps in an interview. But we are of the opinion that it will not worsen the service in any way.
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Madam Speaker: Next Question.

Q756/2025
Refuse Collection reforms –
Benefitted disproportionately

2160

Clerk: Question 756, the Hon. G Origo.

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Hon. G Origo: With respect to the Refuse Collection reforms, what specific actions have been taken against individuals found to have benefitted disproportionately from the historic overtime arrangements, and how much money does the Government expect to recover?

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

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Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, the Government is actively looking into this and is not in a position to comment at this moment in time.

2175

Hon. G Origo: I appreciate that the Minister says that these are still ongoing and active consultations with the individuals involved. Has the Government made a determination on how it expects to recover these funds? Will these be individual repayments back to the Government? Are we going to withhold future pay and overtime, which is one of the restriction controls he has already alluded to? Or are there other mechanisms the Government is considering in order to recover some of the overtime arrangements which were deemed to be somewhat disproportionate?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I am not one who usually says this, but I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I have just given.

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Madam Speaker: Next question. Did the hon. Member have another question?

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, if the Hon. Minister will not elaborate, may I ask: what recourse does the Government have available should it not reach an agreement with the individuals in question? If the Government intends to recover some of these historic overtime payments, does it have a legal basis to do so should agreement not be reached?

2195

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I resist the temptation to repeat the answer I do not normally give, by actually reading it out again. We are not in a position to comment at this time.

2200

Hon. D J Bossino: This matter has ignited a huge amount of public interest, certainly at the time of the publication of the report. The Government is effectively admitting that it is considering the option of recovering what has been paid to these employees by way of overtime. I believe it is entirely legitimate for the Opposition to ask the hon. Gentleman whether one of the options being considered is the taking of legal action against these individuals. Can he not provide an answer on that point? Within the full range of options available to the Government, is it considering taking legal action against the individuals who received overtime payments as a result, I suppose, of mismanagement on their side?

2205

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the Opposition is perfectly entitled to ask, and I am perfectly entitled to reply that I am not in a position to comment at this point in time.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q757/2025

**Recent refuse collection reforms –
Elimination of additional collection runs**

2210 **Clerk:** Question 757, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Can the Minister confirm whether there have been any increases in refuse-related issues, given the recent refuse collection reforms, which included the elimination of additional collection runs and changes to the collection times?

2215

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

Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, this is what I thought I had answered before, but I had not yet answered it. Obviously, I had seen the answer. Madam Speaker, there have been no refuse-related issues reported to the Department as a result of the recent refuse collection reforms.

2220

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, if I may, what the Hon. Minister confirms is that there have been no complaints reported directly to the Ministry. Has the Ministry itself engaged with residents, tenants and business owners who, as a result of these changes, may have a view on whether these collection reforms are working for them?

2225

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I suspect that if there had been big problems, I would have seen them in Speak Freely and heard about them very quickly. Normally we have our Cleansing Supervisor and our Environmental Monitors, and they regularly travel the streets. We have had no reports. Businesses and so on know that they have open access to my office, and we have received no reports. If anybody out there listening to this has any concerns, then obviously they can report them, and we would look into them right away.

2230

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, I am glad to hear that the Hon. Minister is looking at social media to check whether complaints are being raised informally, because we are dealing with a de facto social-media Government. It is surprising that they have not been able to note the number of complaints that I have seen online from individuals and businesses who complain, for example, about overflowing bins or the fact that they remain full for long hours in the evening. Is it therefore the Minister's position that there are no teething issues whatsoever, and no further reforms or adjustments required, in order to deal with these newly adopted reforms which appear not to be working for some members of our community?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the answer states that there are no reported increases. There will always be instances where there has been some spillover, and it has not been collected in time. These things happen on a day-to-day basis. But has the service worsened? No. I think it has actually improved, and that is the answer.

2245

Madam Speaker: Next question.

2250

Q744, 747 & 748/2025
Supplementary

2255 **Clerk:** Question 758, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Madam Speaker: Can the hon. Member rise and put his microphone on so that I can hear what he's saying.

2260 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam speaker I note that before we move on, Mr Reyes, I had two questions that we skipped.

2265 **Madam Speaker:** I am going to give the hon. Member time to look at that one. Can the hon. Member ask his questions so that then we can revert to those? If the hon. Member wants to take the supplementaries now without having looked at the schedule properly, I am happy to do that.

Hon G Origo: I did manage to look at them...

2270 **Madam Speaker:** Is the hon. Member in a position to ask supplementaries? Yes? All right, then we will take them. Question 747.

2275 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, the Hon. Minister provided a table with the count of the bicycle road counters. May I ask whether there are any specific periods during which the counter failed to record data? In previous exchanges, we discussed that, at times, the counter would not display the actual counts but was still recording the number of trips. Is this still the case, or have there been periods in which it was not operational?

2280 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, as I explained at the time, the counter was not displaying the figures, but it was receiving the data. So, this reflects the real data, even for those periods when it was not being displayed live.

2285 **Hon. G. Origo:** Madam Speaker, can I ask in terms of checking the reliability of these numbers, is there a validation or verification process to confirm that these are actually bicycle trips? Or is it the case that if I walk on the bicycle lane, the counter will record me as a tick and include me in the statistics?

2290 **Hon. Prof. J. E. Cortes:** That is because it does not distinguish between bicycles and scooters. I need to check whether there is a way of checking against pedestrians, possibly based on speed, unless the hon. Member is jogging. I would need to check that. What I do know is that it counts cyclists and users of scooters.

2295 **Hon. G Origo:** Finally on 747, Madam Speaker, is the Government satisfied with the numbers being recorded, and will this impact its decision to roll out further bicycle infrastructure in future? If so, when can we expect this rollout?

2300 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I think the figures speak for themselves. If you look at the data month on month, there has been an increase in 2025 compared to 2024. The biggest number is 103,154 in October 2025, compared to just under 87,000 in October 2024. If you compare month on month, almost without exception – there may be one I have missed – 2025 usage was higher than 2024.

I think we must remember that these are mainly cyclists and scooter users who are not driving on those stretches of road, therefore adding to safety and reducing pollution.

Madam Speaker: Question 748.

2305 **Hon. G Origo:** Question 748 concerned the fines from fixed-speed cameras. I believe, in his answer, the Hon. Minister said that there was a technical fault which meant that some months had no fines issued as the cameras were not operable.

Who is responsible for the management, maintenance and operation of these fixed-speed cameras, and how have we allowed eight months, in respect of two cameras, to be inoperable for so long?

2310 If it helps the Hon. Minister, from September 2025 to December 2025 there were no fines in Devil's Tower Road East, and in Devil's Tower Road West there were zero in January, February, March and April 2025.

2315 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, there are cameras serviced by the Royal Gibraltar Police, and others serviced by the managers of the car parks, Car Parks Limited. They undertake servicing and replacement. I believe that the major problem was a server technical problem which required a lot of work, and sadly we missed those months. I have no further information on the technical issues that occurred during the other periods.

2320 **Hon. G Origo:** I am grateful to the Minister, but given the importance of fixed-speed cameras in improving road safety, is the Minister satisfied that the RGP or the Technical Services Department allowed these cameras to be inoperable for at least eleven months in the table he provided?

2325 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, this is not cumulative. We are not talking about all cameras over eleven months; we are talking about one major outage of three months. Without knowing the technical details, I cannot criticise anyone, because sometimes, as we know, technical issues are complex and take time to resolve. Very often in Gibraltar, we rely on importing hardware from elsewhere, and that takes time. Without sitting down and analysing each particular case, which would not be a good use of time, I cannot answer in more detail.

2330 **Hon. G Origo:** Finally, in respect of Devil's Tower Road East, I note that, based on the way I posed the question, I was provided figures up to December 2025. From January onwards, for the last four months, it appears the camera was not operating. Has that technical fault now been resolved?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker I would have to ask that question.

2340 **Madam Speaker:** The Hon. Mr Sacarello.

Hon. C Sacarello: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Two notable absentees from this list of fixed-speed cameras are Europa Advance Road and North Mole Road. Is there a reason for that? Are these cameras permanently out of action now?

2345 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, this is the information that I have been provided. I will ask the relevant officials.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

2350

Q758/2025
Academic year 2025/26—
Number of pupils enrolled in our schools

Clerk: Question 758, the Hon. E J Reyes.

2355 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government provide statistics in respect of the number of pupils enrolled in our schools for the academic year 2025/26, broken down by educational establishment, school year and gender?

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

2360

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

ANSWER TO QUESTION 758

<u>Lower Primary Schools</u>	Nursery		Reception		1		2	
Educational Establishment	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
St Bernard's Lower Primary School	18	8	8	10	14	19	21	11
St Mary's Lower Primary School	15	15	15	14	18	19	17	19
Governor's Meadow Lower Primary School	36	45	25	37	22	36	23	36
Notre Dame Lower Primary School	30	37	32	43	42	42	39	48
St Paul's Lower Primary School	27	43	27	47	34	41	33	35
St Joseph's Lower Primary School	29	20	37	31	31	33	34	39
St Martin's School	5	13	4	9	5	13	5	13

<u>Upper Primary Schools</u>	3		4		5		6	
Educational Establishment	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
St Martin's School	1	5	4	10	2	2	0	2
Bishop Fitzgerald Upper Primary School	56	64	73	62	55	64	56	67
St Anne's Upper Primary School	52	53	49	39	45	57	58	58
St Bernard's Upper Primary School	33	30	39	32	47	39	47	40
St Joseph's Upper Primary School	46	44	43	35	43	46	65	65

2365

<u>Secondary Schools (Part 1)</u>	7		8		9		10	
Educational Establishment	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
St Martin's School	1	6	1	2	1	4	0	3
Bayside School	101	89	110	97	103	120	117	93
Westside School	122	119	97	113	99	124	108	108
Gibraltar College of Further Education							15	27

<u>Secondary Schools (Part 2)</u>	11		12		13	
Educational Establishment	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
St Martin's School	0	2				
Bayside School	113	125	72	70	70	51
Westside School	133	119	71	56	66	59
Gibraltar College of Further Education	62	77	50	38	34	17

Madam Speaker: We move on to 759 and come back if necessary.

2370

Q759/2025

**St Joseph's Lower and Upper Primary Schools –
Updated details**

Clerk: Question 759, the Hon. E J Reyes.

2375

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide updated details and time scale of the works it intends to carry out at St Joseph's Lower and Upper Primary Schools inclusive of the playground, together with details of what alternative locations are planned to be used whilst these works are carried out?

2380

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

2385

Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, both St Joseph's schools have worked carefully to ensure that learning provision for children continues in a full and meaningful way during the refurbishment period, despite some of the usual facilities within the schools not being available for use as a result of the refurbishment and upgrading works.

These works will include refurbishment of the older parts of the school, which is what is currently used as the school, and the construction of classrooms in the current playground area, with a playground on the roof of that annex. The focus, as always, is on guaranteeing pupil and staff safety, and on making the alternative plans as straightforward as possible for pupils, parents, carers and staff, without compromising learning provision for the children.

In respect of St Joseph's Lower Primary, they have put some alternative arrangements into place for the start of the school day. As the playground is unavailable, while parents and carers drop their children off at the forecourt gates as per the usual routine, pupils are using the ground-floor classrooms rather than the playground. Pupils have been directed to their classroom as per the usual routine.

For morning playtime, pupils are enjoying staggered break times to ensure each year group has space to move, run and play. These are held across the school park, forecourt, and the outer area of Central Hall, as assigned per year group.

As the lunch hall is not available for use, alternative lunchtime arrangements have been organised. These involve children in Years 1 and 2 using the Senior Citizens Club for lunchtime, and the forecourt for their playtime session. Reception children, who are just starting their lunchtime routine, are eating lunch in their classrooms and using the school park for their lunchtime play session. I would like to thank the Senior Citizens Club for providing these facilities without hesitation.

As the school gym and the music room in the annex are not currently accessible, the school is using the forecourt, the Central Hall, and the Girl Guiding room next door for PE, music and movement lessons. I also thank the Girl Guides Association for supporting the school in this way.

In relation to St Joseph's Upper Primary, they are using the school's front playground instead of the back playground. The school holds its breaktime two-year groups at a time to ensure that there is sufficient space within the front playground. For lunchtime, classrooms and the front playground are being used instead of the lunch hall and back playground. For PE sessions, when the school gym becomes unavailable for use, the adapted South Pavilion car park and the Dolphins Youth Club will be used, and once again I thank the Youth Service for supporting us.

Madam Speaker, we have put the children front and centre in all our planning and will continue to review arrangements on an ongoing basis to minimise disruption and continue to provide a happy, positive learning environment for all children under our care. While there may be some short-term compromises, these works will ultimately result in far better long-term provision for pupils at St Joseph's.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for that explanation. I posed this question in September, and the parliamentary calendar has not allowed us to hear an answer until now. I take it the Minister's answer is as of January 2026 rather than September.

Can I ask: has he found it necessary to make modifications to what was originally planned and announced to pupils, parents and guardians in September 2025? Because I recall that, quite early in the academic year, there were particular difficulties in the movement of pupils. As the Minister said, on some occasions you had to go to Central Hall. Unfortunately, as a result of a fall of one child onto another, we even had fractures occurring.

Can the Minister explain what has been learned, what has happened, and what has been modified?

I should perhaps declare an interest: one of my grandsons attends St Joseph's Lower Primary. And typical of Gibraltar, whenever I arrive at the school there is a swarm of contemporaries — now also grandparents — who immediately share their views on what the solution should be. Everyone in Gibraltar is an expert in providing solutions. So, I would like to hear what the Minister concludes the ideal solution would be.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I declare a retrospective interest: my grandchildren were there, and in fact my granddaughter was there until last year. She is not very happy with me, because she says I waited for her to leave before improving St Joseph's School. But there we go.

2440 Madam Speaker, issues were identified very early on. The initial idea was that the schools would use the excellent sporting facilities in Lathbury for their recreation. That did not prove workable. There was an expectation that parents would drop children off at Lathbury at the same time as dropping off siblings at St Joseph's. There was also the issue of walking back, which is a fair distance, and crossing Europa Road.

2445 Therefore, following discussions with the schools, we made alternative arrangements with the car park, Central Hall and the youth clubs, so as to avoid that happening. The arrangements are now much more contained within what has essentially become a slightly extended St Joseph's campus, all within easy reach. And the children have responded tremendously.

2450 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q759/2025

**BTEC Courses currently being undertaken –
Location where these courses are delivered**

2455

Clerk: Question 760, 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?

2460

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

2465 **Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the Department of Education is currently offering the following BTEC courses to pupils across its three secondary settings: Westside, Bayside and the College.

BTEC Award in Digital Information Technology
2470 BTEC Certificate in eSports
BTEC Tech Award in Travel and Tourism
BTEC International Level 3 Travel and Tourism
BTEC National Extended Certificate in Performance (Acting)
BTEC National Extended Certificate in Music Performance
2475 BTEC International Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma in Information Technology
The following provides information on where these courses are being delivered:

- Bayside and Westside Schools:
 - BTEC Award in Digital Information Technology.
- 2480 • Gibraltar College:
 - BTEC Certificate in eSports
 - BTEC Tech Award in Travel and Tourism
 - BTEC Level 3 Travel and Tourism
 - BTEC Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma in Information Technology

2485

- Acting (Performance): Delivered through Gibraltar College, with lessons taking place across the College campus, GAMPA premises at Hospital Hill, and the Magazine Studio Theatre.
- Music Performance: Delivered through Gibraltar College, with lessons taking place at GAMPA premises at Hospital Hill.

The following provides the estimated costs of the BTEC courses currently delivered. In addition to the wider cost of running our schools – which includes staffing, resourcing, estate management and utilities – the delivery of these specific courses represents an additional annual investment of approximately:

- BTEC Award in Digital Information Technology: £76 registration/exam fee per pupil, plus embedded operational cost per annum.
- BTEC in eSports: £133 registration/exam fee per pupil, plus embedded operational costs.
- BTEC Travel and Tourism: £80 registration/exam fee.
- BTEC Level 3 Travel and Tourism: £405 registration/exam fee.
- BTEC Certificate in Performance (Acting): £470 registration fee plus £6,800 operational cost per annum.
- BTEC Certificate in Music Performance: £470 registration fee plus £32,300 operational cost per annum.
- BTEC Level 3 Diploma in Information Technology: £405 registration/exam fee per pupil.

The following provides information on expected completion dates:

- Current Year 13 and Year 12 students will complete their qualification in June 2026 for the following:
 - BTEC Digital Information Technology (Bayside and Westside)
 - BTEC Extended Certificate in Acting (College)
 - BTEC Music Performance (College)
 - BTEC Level 3 Travel and Tourism (College)
 - BTEC Subsidiary Diploma in IT (College)
- Current Year 12 and Year 10 students undertaking these courses will complete their qualification in 2027.
- The following BTECs are one-year courses and any students currently undertaking them will complete their qualification in June 2026:
 - BTEC in eSports
 - BTEC in Travel and Tourism (both through the College)

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, there is a lot of information there which one needs to look at in detail. What immediately springs to mind is that, when the Minister gave us details of operational costs, some appeared to be very high compared to others. Is there a particular explanation he can provide to help us understand this?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, some of the courses are outsourced. As the hon. Member knows, he has asked questions about this frequently. The Acting and Music Performance courses are outsourced to the Gibraltar Academy of Music and Performing Arts. The others are provided by existing staff, and those costs are absorbed within the normal day-to-day running of the College. That is why some courses show a specific operational cost here, because they are outsourced.

2540 **Hon. E J Reyes:** At the beginning of his answer the Minister mentioned registration fees. Does that include the examination fees as well? For example, in a normal school, when a pupil is entered for a GCSE examination, the school absorbs the exam fee set by the awarding body. In the figures the Minister provided, is there a registration fee followed by an additional examination fee later, or is that already included?

2545 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** I believe it is included. I can double-check, but my understanding is that this is the registration and examination combined.

Hon. E J Reyes: If he could just double-check so that I do not have to ask for the actual examination fees later. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

2550 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q761-763/2025

**Mandatory scholarships, discretionary scholarships & distance learning scholarships –
Awarded in 2025**

2555 **Clerk:** Question 761, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: How many new mandatory scholarships have been awarded in 2025 and what is the total number of mandatory scholarships currently being funded?

2560 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):
Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 762 and 763.

2565 **Clerk:** Question 762, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: How many new discretionary scholarships have been awarded in 2025 and what is the total number of discretionary scholarships currently being funded?

2570 **Clerk:** Question 763, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: How many new distance learning scholarships have been awarded in 2025 and what is the total number of distance learning scholarships currently being funded?

2575 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

2580 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, in answer to Question 761, as of 19 September 2025, 392 new mandatory scholarships have been awarded for the 2025/26 academic cycle. As at the same date, the Government is currently funding 854 students via the mandatory scholarship route.

In relation to Question 762, as of 19 September, 53 new discretionary scholarship awards have been made for the 2025/26 academic cycle, and as at the same date, the Government is currently funding 77 students via the discretionary scholarship route.

2585 In answer to Question 763, as of 19 September, 32 new distance-learning scholarship awards were made, and at the same date the Government is currently funding 59 students via the distance-learning scholarship route.

2590 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you very much. Because it has just struck me, I recall the Minister explaining to me in the past, probably around a year ago, that although someone may be undertaking distance learning, for accounting purposes they are recorded as a mandatory scholarship, because that student chooses to “cash in”, if I may call it that, their mandatory scholarship via distance learning.

2595 So, when he gives me figures for both mandatory and discretionary, can I take it that within the 392 new mandatory scholarships it is possible that some students are actually doing distance learning? Which would therefore mean that the total number of distance-learning students, currently stated as 59, could actually be higher?

I know I may be contradicting myself, but I am referring to what I recall from answers in the past.

2600 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** I believe that these have been separated out for ease of reference.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q764/2025
Current Teaching Complement –
Employed on a substantive or supply basis

2605 **Clerk:** Question 764, the Hon. E J Reyes.

2610 **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. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

2615 **Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I now hand over a schedule with the information requested.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 764

SECTOR	EDUCATIONAL SETTING	PERMANENT TEACHERS	NON-PERMANENT TEACHERS
SECONDARY	Bayside	94	20
	Westside	97	23
	Gibraltar College	25	5
UPPER PRIMARY	Bishop Fitzgerald	35	7
	St Anne's	30	13
	St Bernard's	21	5
	St Joseph's	28	1
LOWER PRIMARY	Governor's Meadow	26	3
	Notre Dame	29	1
	St Bernard's	11	1
	St Joseph's	23	3
	St Mary's	16	2
	St Paul's	24	4
OTHER SPECIALIST SETTINGS	St Martin's	22	12
	Teaching and Learning Centre	1	3
	English as an Additional Language	1	0
	Learning Mentor Team	4	0

Madam Speaker: Alright let's move on to 765 in the meantime.

2620

2625

Q765/2025

**Teachers' Representatives –
Review behaviour and discipline issues in schools**

Clerk: Question 765, the Hon. E J Reyes.

2630 **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. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

2635

Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, the Government, through the Department of Education and Industrial Relations, continues to engage proactively and collaboratively with NASUWT, the Teachers' Union, concerning the matters the Union raised prior to the summer recess.

2640

All Westside staff were invited to respond to a survey in which feedback on the school's revised behaviour policy was documented. The information collected was anonymous. Senior staff of the Department of Education have conducted a detailed thematic analysis of the responses received and are in the process of discussing the findings with Industrial Relations and the senior leadership team at Westside School.

2645

Senior staff of the Department have also liaised with Industrial Relations in order to organise sharing these findings with NASUWT, so that the Department's school-wide findings can be considered alongside NASUWT's results, with a view to moving this work forward constructively. Industrial Relations have exchanged communications with NASUWT to this end, and I have been informed very recently that there will, in fact, be a meeting tomorrow with Industrial Relations and NASUWT to take this to, hopefully, the final stages.

2650

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, I note the ongoing meetings. If I recall correctly, towards the end of the last academic year the Minister informed us that he and senior members of the Department of Education had met with teachers' representatives, NASUWT Gibraltar and others and that this was an ongoing process expected to continue during this academic year.

2655

Has the Minister himself sat in and chaired such meetings during this academic year, which started in September?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: No, Madam Speaker. The meetings have been held between the Department, Industrial Relations and the Union, which is correct. They will agree their policy, and that will then be referred to me for an overview. I have excluded myself from those meetings because I do not think it is necessary at this stage.

2660

I do meet with the Union regularly, but on this particular subject I am allowing the Department and the good officers of the Industrial Relations Office, led by my hon. Friend Minister Bruzon, to deal with these discussions.

2665

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, because I was not entirely clear. When the Minister does not attend himself, but his Director of Education and senior representatives do, what is the additional role of Industrial Relations? Is that similar to a Human Resources function? He has now hinted — or rather clarified — that Minister Bruzon is involved.

2670

What is their role in this issue? Because, in my question, I was referring to behaviour and discipline issues in schools. I do not quite see how Industrial Relations ties into that.

2675 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, it is perfectly legitimate. When there is an issue raised by a Union to a Government department, that is an issue of Industrial Relations. Therefore, it is correct that the good officers of the Industrial Relations Office assist.

Sometimes they chair the meeting, sometimes they contribute, and they are able to carry out research or look into policies in other areas. They assist the process, and I believe it is correct that they do so. If I may say so, they do an excellent job.

2680 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, just to help me clarify something further: in these discussions, are we looking into behaviour and discipline issues generally — perhaps widening that definition to include allegations of bullying and so on?

2685 Is this not restricted to a particular school or sector, but something that concerns other schools and school sectors as well? One hears that certain processes may be ongoing. Can the Minister confirm this?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, yes. This will be a general, school-wide or cross-school piece of work. We can use what may or may not have happened in a particular school as an example from which to learn and then cascade improvements to other schools.

This will determine policy on discipline and behaviour across the educational sectors.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am not going to press the Minister on a particular issue across the floor of this House, because it may not be appropriate for him to answer.

2695 Would the Minister be available at some stage — perhaps if we meet behind the Speaker's Chair — so that I can think aloud with him regarding some of the rumours one hears? This would allow him to give a proper explanation.

Is the Minister happy with that? Just for the record, so that Madam Speaker knows we do have follow-ups.

2700 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Member knows the answer to that question. Of course — absolutely delighted.

2705 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q766/2025
End of every bathing season –
People's belongings

2710 **Clerk:** Question 766, the Hon. C Sacarello.

Hon. C Sacarello: Following the end of every bathing season, at Sandy Bay, people's belongings left behind are gathered into huge plastic sacks and dumped at the southern end of the beach. While it is understandable that a reasonable period of time is afforded to beachgoers to retrieve their possessions, should residents and visitors alike need to suffer this sight of neglected belongings into November?

2720 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, beach users need to be given sufficient time to remove belongings. The delay this year has been due to the fact that we had a pending question in the Order Paper. The process will therefore now commence.

Hon. C Sacarello: Thank you, Madam Speaker. So, can I understand that nothing has been done because this question was submitted?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, as there was a question on this, we were not able to issue a press release to deal with it, because that would have gone against the rules and procedures of Parliament.

Madam Speaker: Any supplementaries?

Hon. C Sacarello: Madam Speaker, the question was submitted in November. Could the Minister at least commit that next year there will be a much more reasonable cut-off date, and an earlier one, so that this problem can be addressed in advance?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I do not know how to define “reasonable”, because whenever we put the notice out there are always complaints. Normally, people would be given sufficient time, so this would usually go out around the period when the question was asked — around November — and that is the normal process. Some people remove their property without the need for an official notice; some do not; some seem to abandon it. It is not that simple.

Hon. C Sacarello: So just to confirm, there is no commitment from the Government to remove these earlier than, say, December 2026?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, we would intend to have the beaches clear by December. Otherwise, the weather can, so to speak, take care of it. Clearly, at Sandy Bay it is more protected because of the groynes and the offshore breakwater, but one would expect that by December we would be able to deal with this.

**Q758 & Q764/2025
Supplementary**

Madam Speaker: Is the Hon. Mr. Reyes in a position to ask any supplementary on 758?

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Very simple: 758 gives us the list of pupils and so on. I am grateful, and I note that when it comes to St Martin’s School, the Minister has kindly broken down the pupils between what would be the lower primary and upper primary.

For the secondary schools, in part one, the Minister gives figures for Year 10 students: 10 female and 27 male. These are Year 10 students, aged 14 rising to 15 during the academic year.

I want to connect that with a previous answer he gave me regarding attendance statistics. These pupils, the eldest being 15, are still within compulsory school age. I pre-empt this so that in future dealings, these must be accounted for in that particular section.

That is, it — the rest is statistics. If I have any query, I can email him, but I simply wish to flag that among these suspensions, there are pupils of compulsory school age who were not accounted for in a previous schedule.

2770 It is a simple question, which leads to the next one: this list is as at the start of the academic year in September. The Minister was kind enough in another answer to give a precise date in September. We are now in the second term, so are these figures as of January 2026 or still September? Because figures may have altered by one or two.

2775 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, this would be September. I have updated most of the questions, but this one — because of the large number of entries we would have needed to check — is valid as of September. There would have been changes: some new arrivals, some departures. Again, I am sure that if the hon. Member wants further detail, I am very happy to share it, but this is as of September.

2780 **Hon. E J Reyes:** I hope Madam Speaker does not turn me off, but I hinted at this earlier. For Question 764 — the teaching complement — is that also as at September?

2785 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, that one is a little bit later. I think it would have been around October, but there will have been only minor changes. For example, if a teacher has gone on maternity leave, a permanent post would be replaced temporarily by a non-permanent teacher. There will not have been too much change since the date these figures were collected. So yes, they are around that time.

2790 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, the reason why one asks this is because, from experience, maternity leave does play a factor and, for some odd reason — I have my suspicions — some teachers do not retire at the end of the academic year. December seems to be a popular retirement date. So, figures can change by more than one or two between September and January.

2795 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Absolutely, Madam Speaker. There will be retirements; usually people leave the profession upon retirement rather than resign early. There must be something about the profession — and there are several teachers in this Chamber.

2800 There will be teachers who retire halfway through a term, and we will need to fill those vacancies by acting appointments or, at the basic teacher level, by supply teachers. This happens regularly.

But I think, for the purposes of the hon. Member, we have provided the information he wanted.

2805 If I may offer additional information: the total number of teachers, when added up, comes to 565. The complement is 560. So clearly, we are not relying too much on supplies, except for special cases, and I think we are meeting our target of keeping the complement stable.

Madam Speaker: Well, does that deal with 764? All right, next question.

2810

Q767 & 768/2025
The Gibraltar College –
Relocation and building cost

Clerk: Question 767, the Hon. D J Bossino.

2815

Hon. D J Bossino: What is the cost of relocation and building of the Gibraltar College at the alternative site at Europa Point?

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

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Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 768.

Clerk: Question 768, the Hon. D J Bossino.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Is the developer of the Monument Plaza project paying for the relocation and building cost of the Gibraltar College at the alternative site?

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

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the full cost of the relocation and building is currently being finalised as design details are confirmed. In answer to Question 768, that is the intention, Madam Speaker, although there may be final adjustments depending on the actual cost.

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Hon. D J Bossino: If I may deal with the last question, 768, because it is fresh in my mind. Is it the position that the developer will be paying for these costs, but that the amount it contributes will not necessarily be one hundred per cent, depending on what the final cost amounts to? Can I start there? Is that a correct understanding?

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Hon. Prof. J. E. Cortes: That is a correct understanding, Madam Speaker.

Hon. D. J. Bossino: And would it be fair to assume — but I ask the Hon. Minister to confirm — that should there be an extra layer of costs, once the analysis is made, that extra cost would have to be met by the Gibraltar Government? Is that the position?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: I think that is a hypothetical question, so we would need to wait and see what the actual cost will be. Madam Speaker without knowing the cost, one is necessarily delving into a hypothesis.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Is it the Government's position that it would not have difficulty contributing to the cost in order to ensure that its decision to relocate the College can take effect? In other words, is the Government willing to put its hand in its pocket if required?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the Government will take the decision if and when that situation arises. Despite the hon. Member's attempt, I think we are still dealing with a hypothetical situation, although he has tried well to change the wording.

2860

Hon. D J Bossino: I was trying to understand whether the Government, in principle, would be prepared to put its hand in its pocket, but I do not think I can pursue the matter further. I seem to be facing a brick wall.

In relation to Question 767, when will the Government be in a position to say what the relocation costs are?

2865

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, I have been called many things, but I do not think I deserve the definition of "brick wall", given the many pages of information I have provided to the Members opposite.

I think it will be very soon, Madam Speaker. The final designs are being prepared. There is already work ongoing on site, so we will soon know, for example, what type of foundations are required. I think quite soon, but I would need to take advice as to when the full cost will be known.

2870

Hon. D J Bossino: If I may, Madam Speaker: is he able — and I stretch the question a bit — to give information as to when he thinks they will be able to break ground at the new site? I am assuming that planning permission has been granted, and therefore the location at Europa Point will not change.

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, yes, it has planning permission. That is the location, and there are already preparatory and investigative works taking place on site.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

2880

Q769&770/2025
Comprehensive schools –
Resident in Gibraltar for less than 5 years and 10 years

Q771/2025
Given mandatory grants –
During the last 10 years

Q772/2025
Mandatory scholarships –
Change in eligibility criteria

2885

Clerk: Question 769, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: At 27 October 2025 how many pupils in our schools had been resident in Gibraltar for less than 5 years and of those how many are at Comprehensive schools?

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

Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):
Madam Speaker I will answer this question together with Questions 770 to 772

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Clerk: Question 770, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: At 27 October 2025 how many pupils in our schools had been resident in Gibraltar for less than 10 years and of those how many are at Comprehensive schools?

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Clerk: Question 771, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: How many students were given mandatory grants during the last 10 years broken down by each academic year and of those how many were students who had been resident less than 10 years in Gibraltar but resident for more than 5 years?

2905

Clerk: Question 772, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Given the change in eligibility criteria for mandatory scholarships to a residence qualification of 10 years will the criteria or determination process of the discretionary route be amended in any way and if so, how?

2910

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

2915 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, in relation to Question 770, my preamble holds for 770 and 771 because we do not have the information in the way that the Hon. Leader of the Opposition has asked. The Department does not hold information on the length of time that a pupil has been resident in Gibraltar. That information is sought only at the time of application for a scholarship.

2920 For the Department of Education to be able to answer this question in full, we would need to provide the Department of Immigration and Home Affairs with a list of all the pupils in our schools — approximately 7,000 — so that they could provide us with the date each individual took up residency in Gibraltar. Madam Speaker, I consider this to be unreasonable and therefore unjustifiable for me to make such a request of the Department of Immigration and Home Affairs.

2925 So, Madam Speaker, in relation to the other questions, the information is as follows.

This is — I believe — Question 771. There is a typo in my answer, but I am referring to 771. In relation to the number of mandatory grants per year for the academic year 2025–26, working backwards, the figures are:

- 2930
- 463 (2025–26)
 - 461 (2024–25)
 - 438 (2023–24)
 - 472 (2022–23)
 - 403 (2021–22)
- 2935
- 490 (2020–21)
 - 519 (2019–20)
 - 469 (2018–19)
 - 492 (2017–18)
 - 418 (2016–17)

2940 All students awarded the mandatory grant during this period met the eligibility criteria of five years ordinarily resident in Gibraltar.

The Department does not hold information on the length of time each student has been resident at the time of application, as I have already said. To extract this information, we would have to request extensive support from Immigration and Home Affairs.

2945 In relation to Question 772, the answer is no, Ma’am.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I think the Hon. Minister said — perhaps unintentionally — that his preface was for 770 and 771. I think he must have meant 769 and 770. I assume that is correct.

2950 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, there seems to be a typo in my script. As long as the Hon. Leader of the Opposition understands which questions I am answering, I am comfortable that I have not misled.

2955 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I am clear, and I proceed on that basis. I think the hon. Member said that when an application for a scholarship is made, that is the point at which the applicant declares how long they have been resident. Given the numbers he has read out — which over the last ten years are between 403 and 519 — does he not have information within those years about whether people have been resident for between five and ten years?

2960 That is the question I am trying to get to, at least in relation to those numbers, because I accept his answer regarding the difficulty of analysing all 7,000 pupils. But in relation to the 400–500 scholarship applicants per year, if people are telling you how long they have been here, it must be possible to answer the question for those cohorts.

2965 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, it would still be quite a bit of work — though achievable — but I do not think the Hon. Leader of the Opposition asked me in that way. The question, as I read it, was how many pupils in our schools have been resident in Gibraltar for less than ten years.

For example, Question 770:

2970 “How many pupils in our schools have been resident in Gibraltar for less than ten years, and how many of those are in comprehensive schools?”

That is a much broader exercise than he has now qualified.

I do accept, however, that in Question 771 it could be read in the way he has explained, and that information was not provided. I am happy to request it, but they will need to go through every single record. Even though we are talking about four to five hundred entries per year, over
2975 ten years that amounts to around 5,000 entries. It is a considerable amount of work.

I know exactly what the Hon. Leader of the Opposition is driving at, but it is information I do not have readily available, and it will take some time to obtain.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: With respect, which is the question I asked. That is precisely what Question
2980 771 asks: “How many were given mandatory grants during the last ten years in relation to students who have been resident for less than ten but more than five years?”

So, to clarify as I understand the Minister’s answer, the numbers he has given me are not that.

Are the numbers he has given me the answer to Question 771, or are they merely the total number of mandatory grants in each year?

2985 If it is the latter, can he write to me with the answer I actually sought?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, my draft indicates — and I believe the Hon. Leader of the Opposition is correct — that these are the total numbers. I will check, and, as I normally do when asked for this type of information, I will write to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition and copy
2990 you, Madam Speaker, so that the information is on the record.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I am grateful. Madam Speaker, the purpose of my questions is this: The Government has taken a policy decision to change the residence eligibility criteria for
scholarships, and I want to understand on what basis this has been done.

2995 If the Minister does not have the figures readily available to answer the very questions that illuminate this issue, then on what analysis has this policy change been made? What expectation of numbers? What data?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, to extract this information involves thousands of entries
3000 and therefore requires a considerable amount of work.

We must recognise that, in relation to the reasons, it is absolutely clear — and the Chief Minister made this clear at the beginning of last year — that we were adjusting procedures in various areas in order to prevent potential abuse of our education system by individuals coming to Gibraltar, or claiming to come to Gibraltar, in order to access our scholarship system.

3005

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Yes, but that is exactly what I am driving at.

Is this simply a generic, bold statement, made without any statistical analysis beneath it? Is there any real information underpinning the decision?

3010 Because the fact that someone has resided here for five, six, nine or eleven years is not abuse; it is simply a matter of time.

So, is the Minister agreeing that this policy change has been undertaken without first performing statistical analysis of the numbers of pupils granted scholarships who have been resident between five and ten years, or more than ten years?

3015 **Hon. Prof. J. E. Cortes:** I think the decision has been taken on principle, and that principle does not depend on the precise number of cases.

I must, however, say that I have received representations from students. I have attended meetings with students who have made those representations. I am considering them.

3020 **Hon. Dr K. Azopardi:** Does he understand, then, that having taken a non-statistical approach — grounded in no factual analysis — and basing the change instead on a broad, populist statement, this has caused concern to people who have made Gibraltar their home, contributed to society, and lived here for many years?

3025 Will he therefore take these representations on board and consider whether changes should be approached in future on a more measured, analytical, evidence-based basis rather than broad political statements?

3030 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I am probably more aware than anyone of those concerns, having spoken to parents and to students. As I have said, I am taking those representations on board and giving them their due consideration.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

3035

Q773/2025
Supervision of road works

Clerk: Question 773, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

3040 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Is the Government satisfied with the supervision of road works?

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

3045 **Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, roadworks are supervised by the entity carrying out the works, for example the utility providers, and these are not all Government entities. In general, works are done to an acceptable standard. On occasion, works by contractors are not carried out to the complete satisfaction of the Technical Services Highways Team, but these are then rectified through a snagging process, and payments are withheld until works have been completed to an acceptable standard.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: So, supervision is done on what basis? it is not done in the moment, as it were; it is done afterwards on the basis of a quality assessment of the works? Is that how it works?

3055 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, it depends. It is not one-size-fits-all. For example, resurfacing works very clearly come under the Technical Services Department. They are contracted out and put to tender every year. The contractor will carry out the works; they will have their own supervision, but the Technical Services Department will have oversight.

3060 I can give an example, Madam Speaker, where the work was not to the required standard in the Watergardens area. They had not taken into account the manholes, and the contractor had to rectify it so that we did not have a large bump there. That was supervised by the Technical Services Department.

3065 AquaGib will have its own processes, and GEA will have its own processes, as will Gibtelecom and others who may need to dig up the road surface. What the Technical Services Highways Department does is authorise the digging; it does not supervise the digging itself except in contracts that it has directly awarded.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: But the digging of roads — to be clear — is instructed by different departments or utilities, as you said. Is it always carried out by the same list of approved contractors, or is there no list of approved contractors?

3070 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, there is a list of approved contractors. I would need notice of the question to provide a full list of those who have been used for roadworks. I know one or two off the top of my head, but it would not be fair to mention them here without mentioning them all.

3075 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** The reason I ask is because I often hear comments — and it is something everyone can experience when walking or driving — that the surfacing of roads is like a patchwork quilt. It is not done evenly; sometimes it is even, sometimes not. I am intrigued by the quality-assessment process and wondered whether he had more information.

3080 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, quite frankly, the state of the roads has improved since I took over responsibility for transport. We are now resurfacing on a regular basis. We choose not to resurface roads where we know there will be very heavy wear and tear. For example, some areas around Europa Point, where there is construction, are not being resurfaced yet. We are not doing major resurfacing of Europa Road because of the works at the former casino was because
3085 that would be asking for trouble.

But we have resurfaced many roads, with snagging carried out to reach the required standards. Minor repairs, such as potholes, are responded to very quickly. My department supervises some of those works but not all of them. In some cases, they simply authorise the opening of the road and redirect traffic while other utilities carry out the work.

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Madam Speaker: Next Question.

Q772/2025

Facilitate automatic number plate recognition – Greater resources

3095 **Clerk:** Question 774, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Is the Government considering putting in place greater resources to facilitate automatic number plate recognition of vehicles?

3100 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, the Government already uses automatic number-plate recognition cameras for various purposes.

3105 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** So, if it does, does it not have the capability for this to also work in the context of — there was a recent item on the news about the number of vehicles that had not done the MOT and were still circulating on our roads. Is it not possible for the system to allow enforcement at that level?

3110 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Madam Speaker, and that is an extra piece of equipment that we will be acquiring in order to dedicate to that purpose.

3115 The recognition system, for example, already operates in the Upper Rock and at the entry to the Upper Rock so that we can regulate and identify who may or may not be accessing it. We are in the process of acquiring a system in order to be able to recognise whether vehicles have their MOTs up to date.

3120 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I see. So, the answer to the question is yes, you are doing this but you cannot do it right now; you need to purchase this particular piece of equipment. Can we know what the cost of that equipment is?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the answer is yes, and I do not know the cost, but I can find out for him.

3125 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q775/2025
Charles V Wall –
Preliminary works recently conducted

3130 **Clerk:** Question 775, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

3135 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Are the Government aware of and if so, have they consented to the preliminary works recently conducted on the southern side of the Charles V wall part of the Flat Bastion fortification and what is the purpose of such works?

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

3140 **Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the Government is now aware of the works that were erroneously started south of Charles V Wall, below Flat Bastion Road. They were carried out by a contractor who misunderstood a discussion on the possibility of construction on the site as an instruction to access and inspect the site.

3145 As soon as the Government became aware, the works were halted. The works were assessed by the Gibraltar National Museum, with the conclusion that nothing significant had been done and that there was no impact on the fortifications.

3150 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** So, a confusion between a contractor and someone having a conversation about granting access and the contractor thought he could build? Is that what it was? Does the person who instructed the contractor have the right to build on that land?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, there was no instruction. There was a discussion on the possibility of doing something there, and the contractor, I assume, took it upon themselves and went on site. As soon as we were alerted, the works were stopped.

3155 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** But is this not Crown land? Is this not land held by nobody except the Crown? So, this conversation must have been with someone, was it with a department? And what was the nature of the works they thought they were meant to be doing?

3160 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I am not aware of the detail. I responded upon being alerted to the works and ensured they were stopped, but I am not aware of what may have gone before.

3165 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Are there any plans by the Government in relation to that site which may explain why the conversation took place?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, there may have been, but there are no longer. The only thing that I think would be a nice idea is to remove all the scree from tunnelling in the past and reveal the fortifications, but there are no plans for construction there.

3170 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q776/2025

**New urban waste water treatment plant –
Waste produced**

3175 **Clerk:** Question 776, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: What waste would be produced by the new urban wastewater treatment plant in terms of residue or product and how will that, in turn, be treated?

3180 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

3185 **Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** the Madam Speaker, the waste produced would be as follows. The preliminary-treatment waste will comprise screenings, basically the wipes, grit, and the FOGs: fats, oils and greases. All of these, except the wipes, would be recycled.

The waste arising from the secondary treatment consists of the sludge cakes. It is intended that the waste from the sewage-treatment plant will be treated at the new waste-to-energy facility. This will then allow us to have industrial symbiosis, adding to the circular economy and increasing our self-sufficiency in waste management.

3195 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I see. And excuse me, the Minister for the Environment will know more about this than I do, so forgive me if the question sounds ignorant. But it is good to hear that most waste will be recycled except for the wipes.

May I ask him to comment on two things: firstly, what will happen to the wipes; and secondly, when the matter is treated and ends up as a product that can be recycled, what actually happens to it? Is it transported elsewhere? Because I assume we do not convert it into anything here.

3200 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, very happy to respond. The wipes would have to be treated with the refuse that is not recyclable. That would be, presumably, exported or managed in whatever way the refuse is treated at the time.

As far as the recycling is concerned, the new waste facility is intended to have an energy-from-waste plant. The sludge cakes would essentially be burnt there and converted into energy. The other recyclable materials would, in all likelihood, be sorted here but then exported.

3205 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q777/2025

**West Nile Virus –
Monitoring of the mosquito population**

3210 **Clerk:** Question 777, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: How is monitoring of the mosquito population to enable an assessment of the risk of the West Nile Virus been conducted?

3215 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, I am not going to be a brick wall on this one. Gibraltar has been carrying out constant surveying for mosquitoes since 2016, before the arrival of the tiger mosquito *Aedes albopictus*. The UK Health Security Agency works with various colleagues in Gibraltar, including the Environmental Agency and the Botanic Gardens, to trap insects and determine what types of mosquitoes we have here.

3220 Conclusions from the last UKHSA medical entomology visit also stated that regional West Nile virus (WNV) outbreaks are associated with wetlands where birds congregate. None of these habitats exist in Gibraltar, so there are unlikely to be comparable rates of enzootic transmission between infected birds and ornithophilic mosquitoes, in other words, mosquitoes that feed on birds, as have been reported in Spain.

3225 There is no significant number of equines, such as horses and donkeys, so there is no sentinel population. Horses and donkeys tend to show symptoms before humans. Equine outbreaks of West Nile virus are often reported before human outbreaks, as they too are incidental, dead-end hosts. This is why we call them sentinels: it comes to them first and then we are alerted. Small numbers of equines, fewer than five exist in Gibraltar, so it is not likely to be enough to act as sentinel animals that may highlight the presence of West Nile virus.

3230 There are no poultry farms, with very few backyard poultry. Humans and horses are dead-end hosts for mosquito-borne transmission; only infected birds can infect mosquitoes. Therefore, a returning traveller to Gibraltar does not act as a source of infection to mosquitoes for onward transmission.

3235 In the outbreak in Spain, of the 32 positive mosquito pools, 31 were of another species, *Culex perexiguus*, and only one was of *Culex pipiens*. The *Culex perexiguus* seems to be more important in driving the enzootic transmission that may lead to onward bridge-vector transmission to humans, and there is no evidence that either of these mosquitoes occur in Gibraltar.

3240 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, the answer was so complete that the Hon. Minister has answered all my questions.

3245 **Madam Speaker:** Next Question.

Q917/2025

**Oil spills at Waterport Wharf –
Measures are being taken**

3250 **Clerk:** Question 917, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: What action and or measures are being taken to avoid oil spills at Waterport Wharf as recently raised by the Environmental Safety Group?

3255 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for the Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, under the Petroleum Act all petrol stations, including maritime ones, are required to meet the conditions of the licence issued by the Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service.
3260 These conditions include, among other things, clean-up kits for any spills. Furthermore, checks are carried out at these locations by staff of the Environmental Agency when matters are brought to their attention, and these are then referred to the GFRS.

Hon. D J Bossino: Whilst I appreciate that that is a generic response, is the Hon. Minister able
3265 to enlighten the House as to what was done specifically in respect of this particular oil spill?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker. Contact was made with the GFRS the Port Department and with the management of the adjacent marinas. On at least one of the occasions, there was no evidence that the spill came from the petrol stations. In fact, there was evidence
3270 that it had come from one of the vessels berthed in the marina. Action was taken. Apparently, there was a fault in one of the vessel's systems and it was leaking. Action was taken to prevent it happening again.

Hon. D J Bossino: In that context, once a fault is attributed to a particular entity or vessel
3275 owner, does his department take any prosecutorial measures, or are matters left as they are? I am also thinking about compensation.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, the responsible marinas are spoken to and there is an ability to fine, although that has not been exercised so far. What I can say is that I have arranged
3280 to meet the management of all our marinas in the coming weeks in order to step up measures to prevent this happening again.

Hon. D J Bossino: And finally, is the Minister consulting or engaging, perhaps that is a better
3285 word, with the ESG in relation to this particular issue?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Madam Speaker, absolutely. We are in regular contact with Janet Howitt and other members of ESG.

Clerk: The Hon. Deputy Chief Minister.
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Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia): Madam Speaker, may I request a recess until 3.30 p.m. when we will take questions for the Minister of Health.

Madam Speaker: All right. The House will recess until 3.30 p.m.
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The House recessed at 2.13 p.m.