



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.00 p.m. – 6.48 p.m.

Gibraltar, Wednesday, 1st July 2026

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 3.00 p.m.

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

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

Questions for Oral Answer

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Wednesday 1 July 2026. Answers to Oral Questions continued.
5 Questions to the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change and Education.

EDUCATION, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Q146-7/2026

BEACHES AND SWIMMING POOLS – INSPECTIONS CARRIED OUT

Clerk: Question 146, the Hon. A Sanchez.
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Hon. A Sanchez: In respect of inspections carried out on accessible equipment used at beaches and swimming pools, could the Government state whether any defects, deficiencies or safety concerns were identified, detailing by location:

- 15 (a) the issue identified;
(b) whether replacement equipment was ordered;
(c) the date of order;
(d) the date received; and
20 (e) whether the equipment is currently operational?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam
25 Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 147.

Clerk: Question 147, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Would the Government state when the most recent inspection, servicing and certification of accessible equipment used at Gibraltar's beaches and swimming pools was undertaken, identifying the equipment inspected and the certifying body?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, new required equipment was identified at the end of the 2025 bathing season and ordered inclusive of new amphibious chairs with sufficient time for this to be available in time for the 2026 bathing season. All faults and issues identified during the pre-season inspections were addressed and resolved in time for the start of the season with all active equipment fully operational by then. A pre-season inspection was carried out on the 24th of March this year. One amphibious chair, size XXL, at Western Beach was found to have broken straps and another one, size L, at Catalan Bay was found to have broken straps and a damaged armrest. Two overhead hoists at the Changing Places facilities at Eastern Beach and Camp Bay were found to be faulty. Required equipment was ordered at the beginning of 2026 and received during the month of March 2026. During the official bathing season all equipment is inspected daily prior to the start and at the end of the service period.

During this period the service provider delivers an on-call service to assist and deal with any damages or faults suffered by any of our accessible equipment, providing spares where necessary. Wherever possible these repairs are carried out on site. Whenever this is not possible the pertinent equipment or affected sections of it are removed from the particular beach for the necessary repairs to be carried out at the service provider's workshop. All equipment is currently, at the time of the answer being drafted, probably about a week ago, fully operational.

In answer to question 147, all accessible equipment used at Camp Bay was inspected, serviced and certified prior to the Easter period in time for the pre-season weekend and bank holiday beach service. All accessible equipment used at the rest of Gibraltar's beaches and public bathing facilities was inspected, serviced and certified in time for the 23rd of May 2026, the earlier opening of the official bathing season this year. The equipment certified encompassed mobile hoists, overhead hoists at Changing Places facilities, and electronically adjustable adult changing beds at Changing Places facilities. The entity carrying out the required inspections, servicing and maintenance of the pertinent equipment is Mobility Care Centre. The certification is carried out by Cervitest, factories' ordinance certified examiner, in accordance with the factories' building regulations and in compliance with LOLE, the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations.

Hon. A Sanchez: I am grateful for that answer, Madam Speaker. The Hon. Minister mentioned that in 2025 several accessible equipment including amphibious chairs were purchased. Does he have the figures of how many were purchased? (*Interjection*) He mentioned that in 2025 several amphibious chairs and other equipment were purchased or ordered. Does he have the exact figures of how many were purchased or ordered?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: No, I do not have that, Madam Speaker. What I do have is, as I have said in my answer, the fact that any that were damaged were replaced or repaired. However, I do not have the specific number of each different type of equipment. If the hon. Member wants that information, I will obtain it for her and send it to her.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, in relation to Question 147, the Hon. Minister has provided the dates for the most recent inspection. Would he be able to clarify whether these inspections are carried out annually or are they carried out more frequently?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: As I said, there is an inspection carried out on a daily basis at the beginning and end. The most thorough inspection would be carried out certainly at the end of the bathing season, as I explained in my answer, in order to identify any equipment that has to be repaired or replaced.

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Madam Speaker: Next Question.

[Q148/2026](#)
[North Mole Road –](#)
[Beautification](#)

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Clerk: Question 148, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Does the Government have any plans to beautify the area along North Mole Road?

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

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

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, can I ask the Hon. Minister whether the beautification plan or project for North Mole Road is as it is contained in the Government's manifesto, and I will refer to a small extract if I may quickly, which states port estate improvements, and I quote:

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We will organise North Mole Road ensuring parking is available on both sides of the road with delineated parking bays, new greenery and shaded areas, rain shelters for pedestrians will also be added. The buildings in the north boundary will also be refurbished and we will provide sewage infrastructure so that port operators can have sanitary facilities and toilets for tourists and seafarers.

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Can the Hon. Minister confirm whether this is still the Government's policy or project for the beautification of North Mole Road?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I cannot enter into all the detail, certainly that is the intention. The question was to beautify. The hon. Member has extended it well beyond a beautification, looking more at infrastructure, but that remains the aim of the Government.

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, if I may, in so far as the beautification, the greenery and the shaded installations, does the Hon. Minister have a timeline of when he expects this beautification project to take place?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, this is being designed and discussed in collaboration with my hon. Friends, the Minister for Tourism and the Minister responsible for the Port. I do not have a timeline at this point in time.

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, given the Hon. Minister confirmed it is still at design and discussion stage, can he therefore confirm that at this moment there is no particular contractor or company in mind for the beautification project, as everything is still going through the processes before the project will take lift-off?

130 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** There is no contractor currently engaged, certainly in any of the aspects that directly affect my departments.

135 **Hon. G Origo:** Finally, Madam Speaker, can the Hon. Minister confirm whether he expects this beautification to happen in the lifetime of this Parliament? I ask purely because a few weeks ago there was a DPC approval application for works which involved sewer lining or piping in the area. I would imagine that this would certainly work to delay this project. I just want to ascertain whether the Minister has any timings in mind for its completion.

140 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, when you are dealing with a project of that size and complexity, there will always be things that can happen which may make you change your plans in some particular way. I think the hon. Member opposite would agree that if there is a need for a major replacement, for example, his mention of a sewer, then clearly that perhaps would take priority and it is something that he may be surprised to hear me say might take priority over landscaping an area. It is infrastructure and these complex projects do have these considerations.

145 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

[Q149/2026](#)
[Waterport and North Mole Road –](#)
[Cycle lanes](#)

150 **Clerk:** Question 149, the Hon. G Origo.

155 **Hon. G Origo:** The Government recently painted bicycle road markings on Waterport Road and North Mole Road. In an interview to the Chronicle, the Minister stated that these were “a temporary measure to make people aware of cyclists while we prepare to install proper cycle lanes.” Can the Minister provide more details on the ‘proper cycle lanes’ he proposes to install?

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

160 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the road markings recently introduced on Waterport Road and North Mole Road are indeed intended as an interim measure to increase awareness of cyclists and promote safer interaction between all road users while longer term options continue to be assessed. As hon. Members will be aware, the Government's active travel strategy considers a range of potential interventions along this corridor, including options for enhanced cycling infrastructure, the latter being considered for this area.

170 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, if I may, I believe the Hon. Minister in the extract I quoted, or at least in the interview he gave, stated that they were preparing to prepare proper cycle lanes, which inferred or gave the impression that they were different to the road markings which are currently painted. Can the Hon. Minister confirm whether he intends to adopt the similar position with the bicycle lanes which have previously been installed, that is that they will be segregated lanes which will run maybe dual way and that that is going to take over what we currently have in place of the road markings?

175 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the intention and the option that is being considered is a segregated cycle lane.

180 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, do we have any projected costs of what the segregated cycle lane will cost us for this particular area in question? I believe that the road markings were both on Waterport Road and North Mole Road, so does the Government have any indication of how much it is going to cost to introduce cycle lanes in these two streets?

185 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** That is part of what is being considered for the area, the design and the costing, so I do not have that information.

190 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, and in respect of design, because we have also spoken about beautification in Waterport Road and similar areas, can the Hon. Minister confirm whether this proposed new cycle lane runs the risk of being removed due to perhaps developments in the future, as we saw the case being with the one in Bayside Road which was previously installed but then had to be removed for development? Can he assure that this will not be the case with respect to North Mole Road and Waterport?

195 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the Bayside Road cycle lane has not been removed, it has been moved without the re. It has been moved within the demise of the former Victoria Stadium in order to allow infrastructure works, important sewage infrastructure works, to be carried out along where the cycle lane was. In the same way as a section of the Sundial roundabout has had to temporarily be converted to a road in order to mitigate the narrowing of the road as a result of those works. It has been moved, it has not been removed, and it will be replaced in the same place
200 that it was placed without the re.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q150-1/2026

Taxis –

Number of licences; Passenger transport capacity

205 **Clerk:** Question 150, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: How many taxi licences are currently in issue, including private hire taxis?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 151.

215 **Clerk:** Question 151, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: What is the passenger transport capacity of the entire taxi fleet?

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

220 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, there are 112 taxi licences and the Gibraltar Taxi Service has 7 private hire licences. The maximum capacity would be 952.

225 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I will take a supplementary to the first question, number 150, on the number of taxi licences. Can I ask the Hon. Minister, because he has made the distinction, as I asked in the question, between private hires and the generic taxi licences, does the

Government have in mind a maximum number of private hire licences which it is happy to issue? Because I note that in the last couple of years we have been in the habit of not issuing new taxi licences, but rather issuing this new classification, which is private hires. I think they are limited to just taking traditional taxi services and maybe perhaps even have access to the radios, as opposed to being able to give tours.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, at the moment we are not contemplating any change.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, does the Hon. Minister consider that the number provided, 112 taxi licences and 7 private hire licences, are sufficient enough to meet peak demands here in Gibraltar?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I think that they are. The deployment of them, which is something that is for the taxi service and that we regularly discuss with the taxi service in order to improve, the deployment of them will vary depending on what is happening on the day, like cruise ships in and so on and so forth. So, at the moment I believe that they are sufficient, but this is something that we have to keep under review, particularly with the changes coming following perhaps greater access to Gibraltar, an increase in cruise ships and air travel to Gibraltar, the magnificent work that my good friend the Minister for Tourism is doing. So, this is something that has to be kept under review and will be kept under review in close collaboration with the Taxi Association.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for his answer. He did though in his prepared answer refer to that this is being kept under constant review. So may I ask him what criteria is being used to determine whether or not we need more or less taxis to service the people and the industry? So how is the Government reaching this view and is it based on empirical data or conversations with the Association? I just want to understand how we have got to this conclusion.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Well, there are various ways of looking at it. The demand, the figures that the Taxi Association is able to provide, their own feedback on whether they feel that their resources are stretched, I mean there is a whole range of factors that will be called into play when the time comes.

Madam Speaker: Yes, the Hon. Mr Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Hon. Minister in reply to Question 151 about the transport capacity gave us a figure of 952. There are two parts to my question. I know some vehicles are more of a saloon type that I think can carry four passengers where others are more of a bigger type of vehicle that can carry I think six passengers and so on. Those numbers are tied up to the licence, or someone — a taxi driver at the moment carrying four passengers — can exchange his car and go for, for example, one of the new electric taxis which I think has a capacity of five passengers. Maybe the Minister is a bit more aware of the numbers and how they can fluctuate.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker, I think the London type cabs have a capacity of six. This is a maximum capacity. There are several alternative vehicles per licence. The maximum capacity would be eight. So the 952 would be assuming that there are eight-seaters on the road at any given time. That is why I said it is maximum. If at any one time there is an eight-seater or rarely a four-seater then that would vary. The maximum capacity if there were all eight-seaters on the road is 952.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

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[Q152/2026](#)
[Electric buses –](#)
[Number acquired for the Nature Reserve and for Upper Town route](#)

Clerk: Question 152, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: How many new 22-seater electric buses have been acquired for shuttle use to the Nature Reserve and for potential use for the Upper Town bus route?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, two buses have been purchased for the Nature Reserve shuttle and six new buses have been purchased for the Upper Town bus routes. Let me add that those six are due to arrive in September, they are not here yet.

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, I understand from the information that I have that these taxis which were acquired are electric buses. On that, can the Hon. Minister confirm what company was used to acquire them?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: They are electric buses. They were purchased by the Gibraltar Bus Company Limited. Is that the question that the hon. Member is asking? Or who they were bought from? Well, one of the car providers. As I am not 100% certain, I would rather not say now, but I will confirm that this was as a result of a tender which through a long tender process identified the bus. They are of Turkish build. I want to just double check who the successful local provider was because we have been dealing with one for the buses and one for the taxis, and although I am pretty sure I know which is which, I really want to double check before I give an erroneous answer. I will do so during the course of today.

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, can the Hon. Minister confirm — he did say the buses were acquired by the Gibraltar Bus Company — is he therefore stating that the actual service which is running and taking passengers to the Upper Rock Nature Reserve is run also by the Gibraltar Bus Company or is this done by a different operator?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: The shuttle to the Upper Rock is a combined service provided by the Gibraltar Bus Company Limited and the Gibraltar Taxi Association.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, and speaking on the Gibraltar Taxi Association, I wanted to ask the Hon. Minister whether the Taxi Association was consulted prior to acquiring these buses. Did they express a view on the acquisition of the buses and if so is the Hon. Minister able to share that feedback?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Apologies, Madam Speaker, I was trying to find the information on the company that sold the buses. Yes, of course, this followed a long and very positive discussion with the Taxi Association and they do support it and they run it together with the Bus Company.

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister's confirmation and if I may just put on record also, I am also supportive of these shuttle buses operating in the Upper Rock and

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offering an alternative to tourists in Gibraltar. May I ask more specifically on the buses — can he confirm whether these vehicles are new vehicles? I ask on the basis that my understanding and the information that I have is that in respect of the taxis, the London style black cabs, I believe my information is that these were acquired second hand and therefore I just want to ask whether the same has been adopted with respect to this bus and if that is the case, what kind of guarantees do we have for the longevity and the lifespan of these vehicles?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, the six upper town buses are new and are being built as we speak. The two shuttle buses, because we needed to acquire them quickly in order to be here in time for the peak tourist season, are second hand but they are in very good condition and I do not have the details of the guarantees but I am satisfied and they are proving to be extremely effective and very, very popular. It has been extremely successful.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, whilst I do not doubt that the vehicles are working very well and are providing a great service, I actually followed one the other day which I was driving and I was trying to ascertain the route that it took, but in respect of the guarantees which have been given, would the Hon. Minister be able to provide that information as soon as he has it, as it is very important to understand that these vehicles, although second hand, are costing a considerable amount of money. I want to ensure that we do have at least a minimum lifespan to make the most of these vehicles.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, of course, Madam Speaker. As I say, I am very confident they are performing very well and due to the success of the shuttle service, they actually will be paid for probably in under a year. I do not have the exact figures now but it is a successful operation and as I say, the buses are performing really well. If he would like a trip on one of them, I am sure I can do that. (*Interjection – Laughter.*) Might as well come on board!

Hon. G Origo: Finally, Madam Speaker, if I may ask — I do not believe the question has been posed — does the Hon. Minister have the total costs of the vehicles and I imagine that the two second hand ones and the six new ones would have different values?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker. They are about £200 and something thousand. I can check the exact figures. Clearly, the second hand ones are a little bit less than the others but it is around — I think the second hand ones are just under £250,000 and the new ones are just over £250,000. I can get that information for him and provide it to him if he reminds me.

Madam Speaker: Next question. (*Interjection*) No, I am not disputing how quick the hon. Member was (*laughter*) but we have had six supplementaries on this, two of which were similar, and we are moving on now. (*Interjection*) Well, that is the hon. Member's interpretation. Next question.

Q153/2026
Transport Department –
Qualified examiners to assess drivers with disabilities

Clerk: Question 153, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Can the Government confirm whether the Transport Department has qualified examiners to assess drivers with disabilities, and if so, what disabilities are these examiners qualified to assess?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, DVLD examiners can assess all drivers with disabilities as stated in the Traffic, Licencing and Registration Regulations. The Department will be providing further training in order to
380 improve the service.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, can I ask the Hon. Minister — he just said that the examiners are qualified to examine everything under the Act but the information I have been getting is that there are some people who are experiencing serious delays in the examination assessments due
385 to the fact that the examiner is not particularly competent or qualified to examine them in their very specific disability. So, can I ask the Hon. Minister, is it the case that the qualified examiner we have actually has the competence to examine all of the disabilities in question or is it a case that we sometimes need to refer to external examiners to come here to assess certain people?

390 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the information that I have is that the examiners are qualified to deal with those disabilities dealt with in the regulations. If the hon. Member is aware of any particular case where this has not worked, I would be very, very happy to take this up and to ensure that if there is a misunderstanding that this is cleared up.

395 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q154/2026
MOT certificates –
Fines

400 **Clerk:** Question 154, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: How many fines have been issued for failure to have MOT certificates in 2025?

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

405 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes):** Madam Speaker, 160 Fixed Penalty Notices were issued for this offence.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, firstly, from the number provided, does the Hon. Minister have a distinction between how many were fines and fixed penalty offences issued between the Royal
410 Gibraltar Police versus the Transport Enforcement Team?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: No, Madam Speaker. This is a collation of all the fines. Had the breakdown been requested in the question, I would have provided that answer, but I do not have that
415 information here.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, does the Hon. Minister have the information available to him? Does he know how many enforcement officers we currently have employed to carry out these inspections?

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

425 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I understand that the Hon. Minister does not have that information. The purpose of the asking of that question is because he has given us a figure of 160 offences over the course of 2025 and my recollection from, I believe it was, information which was issued in December was that we have around 10,000 vehicles in Gibraltar without MOT and another 5,000 to 6,000 motorcycles without MOT. The Government since then embarked on a derelict campaign where it was removing vehicles which appear to be derelict or even have no MOT, so I am quite surprised that from the 15,000 available vehicles to target that we are only finding 160 every year. Does the Minister have any plans on how we propose to improve this?

430 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, apart from these, there were some vehicles that were actually removed from the road which do not figure here and the hon. Member must remember that we gave an amnesty and we gave people time to register. There was a huge demand for vehicle examinations when we followed that so that will take account of some of them, but clearly the 160 Fixed Penalty Notices is not the whole picture. There are other things that have happened at the same time and sadly you can never catch everyone.

440 **Hon. G Origo:** I appreciate the Hon. Minister's comment that we cannot be everywhere and anywhere at the same time. However, from his answers he did say that there was an amnesty period which was provided which was giving persons some time before the Government went on their campaign to remove derelict vehicles, so is it, therefore, safe to assume that we could expect this figure next year to go up on the basis that we have traffic enforcers patrolling and checking vehicles for MOT, the RGP on the streets checking if people have their roadworthiness certificate, and this moratorium period would presumably be over, so is the expectation therefore that we would be better positioned to enforce this legislation?

450 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, that really is a hypothetical question. We cannot really tell, certainly at this point in time without more information. I would suggest that the hon. Member wants more information rather than rely on supplementaries if he has in his mind what he is going to ask me in a supplementary. Madam Speaker, if he asks me straight on, he will have the answers here.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q155/2026

Fines –

Traffic contravention of stopping at a demarcated double red line

455 **Clerk:** Question 155, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: How many fines have been issued in 2026 in respect of the traffic contravention of stopping at a demarcated double red line, broken down by month?

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

465 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the number of fixed penalty notices issued by both the RGP and the Car Parks taken together in relation to this offence is as follows. January this year — we are talking about this year: — January 15; February 10; March 12; April 8; and May 9. I do not have the figures for June. The hon. Member will understand that this answer was prepared during the month of June.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, may I ask — the reason I am asking this question is because it was brought to my attention that there is a particular area in Gibraltar which is experiencing issues with respect to contravention of parking on double red lines. I assume the Hon. Minister is also aware. The area in question I am talking about is North Mole Road which currently has a double red line adjacent on the street but it is also an area which has become pretty much what appears to be a very heavily industrial area. We also have the affordable homes being built right next to it.

Is the Hon. Minister aware of the complaints being raised by members of the public with respect to the contravention of parking on double red lines which is happening in this area, because my understanding is that it is a reoccurrence on a daily basis and I just want to ascertain whether we are actively patrolling and enforcing this piece of legislation in this particular area?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member has mentioned an area where we are dedicating a lot of attention. It was an area where we had serious problems with heavy goods vehicles and residents were complaining that the heavy goods vehicles were being parked or were waiting very close to the exit of the residential areas. So they requested changes. My team held discussions with the businesses that take deliveries of heavy goods vehicles in the area and came up with a scheme and there has been a realignment of the scheme. It may be that on introducing new double red lines some people may not have been accustomed to it or some people may have seen that that was an opportunity to park, albeit illegally. I do not have enough intelligence on it but I do know that it is an area where we have put in a lot of work which has been welcomed by residents who feel that they can now exit their properties with greater ease and by the businesses because we have provided alternative parking for them. However, as the hon. Member has raised the issue of double red lines in that specific area I will take it upon myself to obtain more information and if the hon. Member will remind me I will provide that information for him behind the Speaker's Chair, unless I have it during the time of this parliamentary session in which case I will share it with him openly.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Hon. Minister and if I may, just by way of his own clarification and for the record, because he made reference to a realignment of a scheme or some kind of agreement with these delivery drivers or commercial vehicles, can I just for the avoidance of any doubt — is he, therefore, saying that there has been some sort of exemption being applied or exemption to these vehicles for contravening this offence, and if not what does he mean by the words used, realignment of the scheme and understanding with these businesses and operators, because we do not want to have a situation where we have a piece of legislation which creates one offence for the ordinary person but we then have businesses who can contravene the same offence and get away with it? That is not the situation that we want to find ourselves in.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: No, Madam Speaker, the hon. Member has not understood, perhaps I have not explained myself properly. We have looked again at the whole traffic regime in the area and we have been able to change the location available to the heavy goods vehicles by moving away from the main road. We have also had to change where cars can be parked so it is quite complex and it is not easy to do it here across the floor of this House without the ability of showing him on a map, which I am happy to do, but certainly nobody has been exempted from parking on a double red line.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q156/2026

Public multi-storey car park at Eastern Beach –
Top floors in-accessible

Clerk: Question 156, the Hon. G Origo.

525 **Hon. G Origo:** Can the Minister advise why the top floors of the public multi-storey car park at Eastern Beach have been in-accessible for public parking?

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

530 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes):** Madam Speaker, all floors have been available since the 21st of May in time for the start of the official bathing season.

535 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, the Hon. Minister just advised that all floors were available for public parking but the information that we have and that we received and that we actually saw online at the time was that as at the first week of June, the top floors in that public multi-storey car park were unavailable to members of the public. Can the Minister confirm that the information, or at least the complaints that we have seen on the ground, are unfounded on the basis that it is his confirmation that these parking spaces were returned to the general public on the 21st of May, as he said?

540 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** That is my information, Madam Speaker. I was aware of some complaints online but I checked and my information is that they had been taken up during the winter season when there is excessive parking there in order to redeploy some vehicles from Devil's Tower car park while works were ongoing for the development there, but the condition was they had to be moved and they were moved by the 21st of May. I believe that on one occasion there was a vehicle badly parked that was blocking access and that had to be dealt with, but that is a different thing. That is not that the car parking spaces were not available. They were available and they should have been available and I am told that they were available.

550 **Madam Speaker:** Yes, the hon. Mr Reyes had a question.

555 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, I am very conscious, thank you Madam Speaker, I am very conscious that the Minister has the reliable information given to him. Can I beg the Minister please to press upon his public servants to check the details that then he unfortunately has to deliver across the floor of this House? I personally can testify, I was unable to park in the Eastern Beach car park on the top floor. It was in the early days of the month of June. In the same way that until just a few days ago on the ground floor of that car park we have lost, we seem to have lost several parking spaces because there are trailers there that I believe have been used in connection with the cavalcade held in January and I am wondering if the Minister is aware whether those public parking spaces will be returned for public use. Now that school is over, the number of vehicles needing to park in Eastern Beach to transport families has increased.

560 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I am quite surprised to hear that he was unable to park in the top floors. I do not know whether there was a sign saying that he should not park or whether there was a blockage. I would like that information because my information... and I have asked and quizzed repeatedly and been given that answer, therefore, I will take it up yet again very seriously. The trailers are from the cavalcade and they are on part of the ground floor. We are looking at whether, if there is a need to relocate them, we can find an alternative location, but I can say that as of this weekend, which was a busy weekend, the first real summer weekend, there

570 was still parking available on the top floor of Eastern Beach because we have that monitored. So, there was not a shortage; but should there be a shortage, then we can redeploy those trailers.

We know we have to support the cavalcade, we have to allow them somewhere. If they are not there, they are going to be in Devil's Tower car park and then Laguna Estate people will complain. So it is a bit of a jigsaw puzzle but we are aware of those trailers but we are monitoring
575 regularly and there was car parking available on the top floor of Eastern Beach throughout this weekend. On the other thing, I will check again.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

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Q157-8/2026

**Bacterial contamination at La Línea's Levante Beach –
Confirmation that Eastern Beach is safe; Environmental data sharing**

Clerk: Question 157, the Hon. G Origo.

585 **Hon. G Origo:** Given the severe bacterial contamination at La Línea's Levante Beach, just meters away from us, how can the government reassure Gibraltar families that Eastern Beach is truly safe, and what is the emergency plan if the pollution crosses the border?

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

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Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 158.

Clerk: Question 158, the Hon. G Origo.

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Hon. G Origo: Has any environmental data-sharing been established between Gibraltar's Environmental Agency and Spanish environmental authorities in respect of the Levante Beach contamination?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, as a prologue almost to this answer, it appears that the contamination in La Línea is now resolved as far as my information goes, which is wonderful for all the residents there from La Línea, from our neighbouring town. Madam Speaker, no indication of sewage contamination was
605 found in scheduled samples throughout this period. In addition, the Environmental Agency, on my instruction actually, increased sampling frequency at Eastern Beach to ensure that any potential impact would be detected at the earliest opportunity. All results received to date show no indication whatsoever that water quality at Eastern Beach has been affected by sewage discharges
610 across the border, although past instances, not recent, of wipes on Eastern Beach have been attributed to La Línea. They did not come from Gibraltar.

In answer to the second question, there is no formal data sharing mechanism between the Environmental Agency and the Spanish environmental authorities in respect of the recent contamination at Levante Beach. Under both EU law and Gibraltar's bathing water legislation,
615 microbiological results must be made publicly available. This means that all relevant data are already placed in the public domain by the competent authorities on each side of the border, rather than exchanged through a dedicated bilateral channel. There is, however, contact between the Mayor of La Línea and myself whenever necessary.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, I do understand that at the time when asking the question, when it was posed that this was an ongoing issue and the matter has now been resolved, but it did pose several queries on the basis that it appeared or there was public chatter about how, in one respect, one side of the border, which sits on the eastern side, produced certain results and one side on the other side of the border, the Levante Beach, produced another. So can I ask the Hon. Minister, in respect of the sampling that he referred to, he said that there was increased sampling and that no indication whatsoever of contamination was found. Can he confirm how often the sampling was undertaken and can he confirm that there were multiple areas in which sampling was undertaken from? I make that point because if you take a sample from the south side of Eastern Beach, I think it would produce very different results if you took it on the further north side, which is closer to this area. So can you give some details in that respect?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, clearly a lot of it is to do with water dispersal and in which direction currents are going. So there could be effluent here and the current is going that way and even if you are very, very close, you are not going to get it. So, I mean, there are explanations. The regular sampling is normally carried out every two weeks, but on the occasion that we are talking about, it was actually carried on three days a week. On that particular week, which was the week of the 7th of June, samples were carried out in various parts of the beach on the 7th, the 8th and the 10th and they all showed no signs of contamination.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, if I may ask, the Hon. Minister advised that the sampling which was undertaken produced no indication whatsoever of contamination and then he referred to microbiological particles. Can he confirm that the sampling either produced no microbiological particles whatsoever or is he saying that the sampling which was undertaken produced microbiological particles but none which were deemed harmful or over the certain thresholds to which we deem necessary in order to consider this contaminated?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, most water will have some microbiology in it and some bacteria in it. Yes, I can say that, for example, I can give some figures. The acceptable level is 500 per 100 ml of E. coli and Eastern Beach had 6 as opposed to 500. I mean that is an example. Then another day it had 7 and another day it had 6 again. So we are talking about very low levels of contamination. You cannot really call it contamination because you are not going to catch anything from such a low level.

Hon. G Origo: And finally, if I may, Madam Speaker, because at the time of asking this question there was an incident last week, particularly in Eastern Beach, where there was a day in particular, you could even say two days, where the waters looked very murky, very dark, almost contaminated. So can I ask the Hon. Minister, is he able to confirm that in fact?

Madam Speaker: I am not sure that is a question that flows directly from the main question. It is a separate incident and I know what the hon. Member is trying to ascertain but I do not think it flows directly from the incident but it is a matter of public interest, I am going to allow it, but it does not flow from the question of contamination from the bacteria in Levante but I am going to indulge the hon. Member for a little bit.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, we are talking about contamination.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member does not need to argue with me, just ask the supplementary, I am allowing it.

Hon. G Origo: Could the Hon. Minister please confirm whether the events which took place sometime mid last week in Eastern Beach where the waters looked very murky and, as I said

before, almost contaminated, have nothing to do with the Levante Beach contamination on the basis that our understanding is that this has already been resolved and that in fact this is closely associated or related to other projects, possibly even including the Eastside project which is happening between the two beaches.

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I am very happy to just give him a brief response to that. I mean contamination is a word that I would use with caution because there are implications. It sounds dangerous if it gets contaminated. Certainly what the hon. Member is referring to is an aerial photograph circulated by WhatsApp and other means of social media. It was actually probably around the 13th of June which followed a heavy levanter which did affect some of the reclamation and I must say that the works to that reclamation were stopped during that levanter. The Department of the Environment took action. That is not bacteriological contamination whatsoever and there is no danger, nobody is going to catch salmonella or E. coli or anything like that from that. It is purely sediment material and is not bacteriological.

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Madam Speaker: Yes, the Hon. Mr Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Yes, the question when it refers to the Línea's Levante Beach being just metres away actually sort of expresses in I think very graphic terms what most of the population here was discussing when we had a controversial issue on a beach which is right there. It is pretty much the same beach and nothing was found here. People were scratching their heads but can I ask the Minister this? Can he state what the full extent of the testing was? What is it that we in Gibraltar were testing for specifically and may I also ask him which entity was carrying out the testing? Presumably it was the Environmental Agency but as I understand it there is an agent to the Agency potentially that carries out these tests for it.

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I think we have got to have a little bit of a geographical reality check. There is between Eastern Beach and the Levante Beach we have the runway and that is several hundred metres. So it is not *pegao pegao*. So these tests were carried out for the standard intestinal bacteria which are the same that would be tested as required by the EU and by our law in La Línea. They are Escherichia coli and intestinal enterococci. The testing, the samples are collected by the Environmental Agency and the tests are carried out in the laboratory of the Gibraltar Health Authority at St Bernard's Hospital. That is the standard procedure. If they are unable to do it then it is sent to an external agency whose name I forget but the standard tests are carried out at the GHA lab.

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Hon. D J Bossino: But is the Hon. the Minister then saying, because he says at the end that if the GHA is unable to do it then they do rely on the services of a company the name of which he does not recall. Can he state whether that entity was used, the services of that entity was used for the purposes of the testing which is a subject of the supplementary to the questions of my hon. and learned Friend?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: No, I would have to check because the first word of call is the GHA. So I would have thought that it is likely that the GHA did that. I just said that if in any situation they do not, obviously we do not just not test and wait with our arms folded. We actually get another agency to do it but I cannot tell because I do not know whether the samples on those dates that I have given were done at the GHA or not. I can find out but I do not know right now.

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Hon. D J Bossino: I will ask, If I may, Madam Speaker, is the Government's position in fact that the level of testing or what we were testing for is exactly the same, it is uniform to the testing that was carried out in La Línea. Is that the Government's position? Is that the response that he has given?

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725 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** I cannot answer that question because I do not have the detail of the testing in La Línea. We use the standard requirements by the EU which were transposed into our regulations so I can only assume that La Línea does it up to our standards and I will not take the argument that it would be the other way round. It is not us to their standards. I would have assumed they do it to our standards.

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

735 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, and with your indulgence because Madam Speaker has allowed my hon. colleague to probe the issue in the public interest of those photographs that have been flying around on the eastern side. The Hon. Minister said that they have ascertained that this is sediment and it is nothing else and I think he went as far as saying that he is of the view as assurances that no one is going to catch anything he said but given that we are in the middle of the summer, there will be people right now in Catalan Bay enjoying the weather and so on. Can he be a bit more explicit about, is he satisfied, is the Government satisfied that whatever it is that was discharged in that heavy *levante* weather is innocuous, that it was in fact sediment and that it will not have any long term effect not just on people but on the marine biology of the area?

740 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Mr Origo had warned me that he was going to ask those questions and therefore the Hon. Leader of the Opposition did not but I will indulge him. Madam Speaker, in addition to the bacteriological test, the Department of the Environment has carried out chemical tests and all the results, I do not have the details here because it was not asked but all the information that I have, all the tests that have been received show nothing of concern there so I can give him that assurance. I do not want to delve too much but the moment there was any indication whatsoever I can assure the hon. Member that works would stop and remedial action would be taken and I think one of the points that actually the Hon. Mr Origo did not pick up, what would we do, I think he asked if there was an emergency, I mean obviously we would have to close the beach but we are nowhere near having to do that and we will take every step to ensure that that does not have to happen because we are very aware of the importance of the beach to the people of Gibraltar in the summer season.

755 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

[Q159/2026](#)
[Refuse collection –](#)
[Overtime control measures](#)

760 **Clerk:** Question 159, the Hon. G Origo.

765 **Hon. G Origo:** Last year overtime control measures were put in place for the refuse collection department due to overtime overspending. Can the Government confirm whether these controls have worked and provide the difference in overtime expenditure between the last financial year and this financial year in respect of that department?

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

770 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the expenditure in overtime for the financial year 2024/2025 was £1,267,776.96. The expenditure in the financial year 2025/2026 was £626,876.84. Furthermore, the financial year 2026/2027 to the end of May, the overtime expenditure is £100,584.26. By comparison, April to

May last year, that is 2025/2026, had an expenditure of £302,776.19. That is approximately a third of last year's figures and no doubt the hon. Members opposite will congratulate us for achieving this. The Government can therefore confirm that these controls have indeed worked.

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Madam Speaker: Any supplementaries?

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, I can note from the figures provided by the Hon. Minister that appears to be what I roughly calculate is a 50% reduction in overtime spending between last year and this year from the £1.2 million to the £620,000. I understand that these overtime controls were intended by the Government but may I ask have the overtime controls which have been put in place by the Ministry and the Department had any impact on the refuse collection service and reliability?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. Member has tried to correct by mathematics but of course the overall annual figure was half but looking at the second set of figures I gave for the beginning of this financial year compared to last financial year, it is a third but anyway, we can quibble on the maths later. Madam Speaker, we are satisfied that the service continues.

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, the Hon. Minister confirms that he is satisfied that the service continues to work reliably but we receive complaints almost on a daily/ weekly basis of refuse spots being left in untidy conditions and complaints by members of the public about refuse collection. Although the Minister says that in his mind there is no adverse effect to the service reliability, is he able to confirm whether or not there has been any increase in complaints from members of the public because that is the information and the feedback that we are getting that the service reliability is impacted and this stems from the lack of overtime control measures being imposed to cut down the costs of the service.

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, we have not noticed an increase of complaints. There have always been complaints. There were complaints before, there are complaints now. It is a line of work which can lead to issues to do with refuse and so on. In order to imply that these measures have been detrimental we would have had to see an increase in complaints and we certainly have not noticed an increase in complaints despite the drastic drop in the amount of overtime paid.

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, therefore, given the Hon. Minister's view that the service is still working as intended and is reliable and there is no increase in complaints and therefore there are no issues with the overtime control measures imposed by the Government, is he therefore confirming that these overtime control measures are going to remain in place with respect to this particular department given that there has been no adverse effect on the service?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, there is no intention of changing the arrangements. Clearly, when we get complaints we will address them but that is a separate process but we are satisfied.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

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Q160/2026

Schools –

Actions taken to curtail losses in learning time

Clerk: Question 160, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: What actions are being taken in schools in order to curtail losses in learning time due to violent outbursts in classes?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, the management of classroom dynamics, as the hon. Member well knows, is a complex and highly developed aspect of teachers' professional practice. Schools have well-established systems and processes in place to ensure that classrooms remain safe, purposeful and enriching learning environments for children and young people. While any interruption to learning is regrettable, managing and responding to interruptions is a routine aspect of classroom practice. Teachers are skilled in responding to classroom incidents in a manner that minimises disruption, restores a calm and purposeful learning environment as quickly as possible and enables learning to continue. Where interruptions do arise, including those resulting from pupil behaviour, teachers draw upon a large range of well-developed classroom management strategies to maintain pupil engagement and minimise any impact on the learning of others. When standards of pupil behaviour fall below those expected, school staff follow established procedures and protocols in a manner proportionate to the behaviour presented and the circumstances at hand. More significant interruptions may result in a pupil being withdrawn from the classroom for a period of time. Where such behaviour persists, schools may seek alternative arrangements or provision on either a short-term or longer-term basis as appropriate. Staff work closely with parents, families, educational professionals and, where appropriate, colleagues from other agencies to identify and implement strategies and supports that enable the pupil to engage more successfully in learning and school life. The overarching aim is always to minimise disruption to learning, support all pupils to access education successfully and ensure that every child and young person is able to learn in a safe, positive and productive environment.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that the academic year has ended or ended last Friday and a new one will commence from the 1st of September, I am very satisfied, I am very glad to hear that there are sort of established procedures and protocols. Are these procedures well communicated to the teaching and auxiliary staff in the school at the start of the academic year? Because I do not want to over dwell but in the past, when we had, for example, fire alarms going off and so on, maybe some people were not aware of the procedure, so how is this, can the Minister explain to us how is this information disseminated, especially to new incoming members of staff at the beginning of each academic year or each term?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, dealing with children with challenging behaviour is something you learn when you are training to be a teacher. There are two teachers here. One would expect that there would be something in their professional training that would allow them to deal with children of challenging behaviour. Certainly, I know some teachers who have trained in the UK have dealt with schools in areas which have a lot of different challenges, different to the ones perhaps that we have here. It is certainly down to the headteachers to ensure that any policies that may come from the Department of Education or elsewhere will be shared. I have every confidence that the teachers are able to do this. The hon. Member may not be aware that we are now offering more focused training for the SNLSAs as well across the board, so I am satisfied. Certainly, if there is a child who is particularly challenging, and I think the violent

870 outbursts were the words that the hon. Member used, this child will not have a violent outburst
today and never again. One would have assumed it may be a one-off, in which case it can be dealt
with there and then but if it is a child who regularly has this, then he will be known to the pastoral
team, he will be known to the team, so the procedures and the protocols will be set in. So I do not
875 think the hon. Member has to be worried about teachers not being able to deal with these
situations.

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I was going to say, Minister Orfila and I
can both testify that during our teacher training we are given sort of general guidelines and so on.
What I was alluding to in my question, but we can discuss in a moment, is particular protocols that
880 each school may wish to adapt into their own set-up. You know, unfortunately, and my question
is, I want the Minister to confirm that he is aware and action will be taken. Although there are far
and few between, we do have students known or unknown to the staff who have violent outbursts
and there are recent cases reaching my ears of chairs being thrown at a deputy headteacher in
one of our secondary schools. I mean, that is a violent reaction which I hope is not something that
885 will become the norm in Gibraltar as it has in other countries. So, you know, is the Minister at least
able to commit himself that he will make as far as possible certain that all teaching staff and
auxiliary staff and so on are well aware of individual schools' fine-tuning protocols on handling
violent outbursts.

890 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, there are actions which are clearly unacceptable and I
cannot accept that our teachers should be exposed to any kind of danger in their day-to-day. There
have been instances, and I have to be careful how I say this so I do not risk identifying any
particular young person or child, where their education is taken away from the school setting and
it is done on a one-to-one or even a two-to-one basis outside the school setting. So these things
895 will happen and we will deal with this. There is also a sense of provision in the Education Act to
deal with issues of behaviour and absenteeism and so on. So I think that that probably answers
that point. If I may, Madam Speaker, I can now tell the Hon. Mr Origo who has now morphed into
the Hon. Mr Bossino that the successful tenderer for the buses was Bassadone motors.

900 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

[Q161/2026](#)
[Alternative learning spaces –](#)
[Allocation of students](#)

905 **Clerk:** Question 161, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: How many students are currently being educated in alternative learning spaces,
giving a breakdown by schools?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam
Speaker, the number of children by school educated in alternative learning spaces is as follows:

School	Number of Children in alternative learning spaces
Bayside School	2
St Anne's Upper Primary School	3
St Bernard's Upper Primary School	1
Bishop Fitzgerald's Upper Primary School	1
Westside School	3

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Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, I take it that in answer to the people's question, probably what the Minister was, without wishing to notify the students, we are catering for that type of student. Is that correct?

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

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Hon. E J Reyes: I note the two secondary schools and unfortunately three upper primary areas that there are no statistics, so I think, am I correct in saying we can both record good news that in lower primary we do not seem to have come across that problem. Neither is the College a serial return or is the Gibraltar College not included at all in these statistics?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: That is it, there is no return, none from the College.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

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[Q162/2026](#)
[Schools' Calendar –](#)
[Extra curriculum activities](#)

Clerk: Question 162, the hon. E J Reyes.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Will extra curriculum activities, such as school sports day, continue into the future given the reduction of school days in schools' calendar?

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

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Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): We have to change the tense of the question. Yes, ma'am, they have been included because the term finished yesterday, so they have been included.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, sorry, I am talking continuing into the future, I was thinking more ahead of sort of academic year 2026/2027.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, ma'am, that is the answer. They will be, they have been and they will be.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I mean, in connection, I gave an example of school sports days, something that has come a bit late to my notice, late in time to be able to give a specific question like the Minister at times asks. School sports days tend to reach out to the whole family as a family type of event but feedback coming back is that lately, I do not know for whatever

955 reason, schools now seem to be curtailing the number of family members who can attend and
support a child in school sports days. Is the Minister aware of this? Or is this something that we
need to discuss and enquire further into the future?

960 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I do not think it is a logical consequence of my answer,
but schools will have different arrangements. It may depend on the venue where the sports are
held, where they can take more or fewer. I am not aware of any curtailment. I know that, for
example, in a Christmas show that is done within a hall, they may have to restrict to parents only
because of the space. I am not aware of such restrictions on the sports days, but if they are
restricted in that way, it must be to do with the capacity of the venue.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

[Q163/2026](#)
[Schools –](#)
[Outdoor shading](#)

970

Clerk: Question 163, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government confirm it has met its target to provide outdoor shading in all
schools by June 2026?

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

980 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes):** Madam
Speaker, here I have to change the tense of the question, because the term is over. Additional
shading has been provided in most schools, delivery delays have meant that alternative
arrangements will be made, have been made, in other schools as may be necessary. I can add that
we have had no complaints from any schools that shading was not available when shading was
needed.

985 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, Madam Speaker, I know the school term finished yesterday. I realise that
when a construction is taking place in a school, let us take St Joseph's as an example, perhaps the
teaching staff are limited in what resources they can use but that was one particular school where
I very regularly go there to pick up grandchildren. I know there was an attempt to sort of provide
some shade area, but even the children themselves were quite often being made to wait, half of
990 the class being still in the sun, whereas only about half could fit into the shade but I would be
happy if the Minister is able to confirm that he has a commitment that as from September, if some
works have progressed, we will be able to try and improve upon the amount of shading being
provided.

995 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I repeat that no complaints have come our way that the
children have been suffering from over exposure to the sun. Yes, there are, and at least one school
has said they do not need any more shading, they are happy with the way they are but those that
require it and have not been able to be provided will be provided by them during the course of
the summer. The works are already authorised.

1000

Madam Speaker: Next question.

[Q164/2026](#)
[Schools –](#)
[Safe Handling Plan Policy](#)

1005 **Clerk:** Question 164, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: When does Government expect to be in a position to publish its Safe Handling Plan Policy for schools?

1010 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

1015 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the Department of Education is aiming to publish and share with schools its guidance on the Safe Handling of Pupils policy in October this year. The policy is currently under discussion with NASUWT Gibraltar.

1020 **Hon. E J Reyes:** It is good news to hear it is October, Madam Speaker, but given that the new academic year starts on the 1st of September, is there any reason why October cannot become September? I would be curious to know.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker, because of the negotiations with the Union that will recommence in September after their summer break.

1025 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

[Q165/2026](#)
[Learning Centre for school pupils –](#)
[Relocation](#)

[Q166/2026](#)
[Pupil Referral Unit –](#)
[Commitment to set up](#)

1030 **Clerk:** Question 165, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide details in respect of its plans to relocate the Learning Centre for school pupils?

1035 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 166.

1040 **Clerk:** Question 166, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide an update in respect of its commitment to set up a Pupil Referral Unit?

1045 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, the Government recognises the need both to relocate and further develop its Teaching and Learning Centre, TLC provision. As part of this work, an audit of current and anticipated future need is being undertaken to ensure that any new facility is appropriately sized, configured and resourced to support both the existing service and its planned future expansion. This work is a priority for the Government and a number of sites are under consideration.

In answer to Question 166, the Department of Education, the Care Agency and the Royal Gibraltar Police have worked on a proposal not based upon a traditional pupil referral unit approach but rather on a structured, appropriately resourced and trauma-informed setting designed to provide intensive support and intervention. The Department remains committed to ensuring that appropriate provision exists for children and young people with the most complex needs. At present, its immediate focus is on strengthening, expanding and relocating its TLC provision whilst continuing to keep under review the range of alternative educational pathways and specialist interventions required to meet current and future needs.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you Madam Speaker, may I please try to press the Minister. He is saying that they are considering in respect of 165, he said they are considering different sites and so on and I do not think I heard any target dates or whatever. Is he able to share at this stage across the floor of the House potential sites and, above all, target dates of when we hope to have the whole thing running?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: I am not able to share that across the floor. I can say that we have one site which we believe will become available in September in addition to our doing extensive works over the summer to the existing TLC. So I am confident that we will have provision in September and we are looking at one or two other sites in order to ensure that and in order to construct a whole new purpose-built centre.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q167/2026
Queensway Quay area –
Release of effluence

Clerk: Question 167, the Hon. C Sacarello.

Hon. C Sacarello: Could the Hon. Minister please explain the reason behind the release of effluence into the Queensway Quay area in the middle of May 2026?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, the outlet in question is one of five high-volume overflow outlets designed to come into operation during periods of great stress on the network such as times of extreme rainfall and or a disruption of flow in the main trunk sewer. This is an engineering and hydraulic necessity. Upon receiving reports of a potential overflow in the area, the technical services operatives immediately attended and periodically checked the corresponding main trunk sewer overflow chamber. At no point was an active overflow observed with the evidence photographed. Upon further investigation, it was found that a collection of non-biodegradable solids associated with sewage such as hand towels, sanitary items and wet wipes had become lodged along the overflow network. These overflow networks operate under pressure and are subject to tidal activity. As we

met with a period of particularly volatile tidal swings, these tides pushed deeper into the network in question, agitating this material and pulling out at the lower points of the downward swing of the tide. This explains why what was observed was intermittent. Once identified, technical services put mitigating measures in place to control tidal activity within the network and commenced an operation of clearing out the remaining materials, thus resolving the problem.

Hon. C Sacarello: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Minister for the detailed explanation, technical as it was. However, what people, certainly this side of the House and most of the general public are interested in knowing is that if this was not accidental, why is it deemed acceptable in today's age to have the potential for effluents to overflow into an area where there are bathers within 100 metres of the area? Is that not contradictory to all safety standards?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, without wanting to be too technical, and I apologise if I am actually giving any technical information, I thought that was a bonus, but anyway, without wanting to be too technical, Madam Speaker, if there is no overflow and there is a backup because we have got wipes and towels and what have you blocking it, then the backup will go into the toilets of the residents because there is not an overflow. It will back up all the way and come up through the toilets, so there has to be an overflow and the only place the overflow can be is where it is, so there has to be an overflow. So we cannot block all the potential overflows or it will create huge problems in the sewage system all the way to somebody's house. That is the reason.

Hon. C Sacarello: Madam Speaker, I thank the Hon. Minister for his explanation. I know it is not too technical, that is a rather simple, if not graphic, explanation and I appreciate his candidness, but he failed to answer the question, which is, is it acceptable to have that system? Is there nothing that can be done to divert it elsewhere or contain it elsewhere and not release it into an area not only where there are people walking and living nearby but also actually swimming in those waters?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I suppose that one could, I do not know, reclaim the land where the sewage went into and build a huge tank, but I do not think that is practical. I think that the message to put across is please do not put wipes down the toilet. We all know that. I think that the technical difficulties of dealing with it in any other way will be hugely expensive and might not even work, so I would hesitate. I would just think that it is important for us to keep the sewers flowing and therefore we have to make sure that we do not put the wrong thing down the toilet.

Hon. C Sacarello: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member said that they might not work, but then he said that they might work. Would he not prioritise an investigation or at least some research into this area to see if it can be done, what the cost would be and then put that to the public perhaps? Because there are a lot of people who are concerned and do not believe that it is acceptable to have their children and their families exposed to these type of microbiological elements that you mentioned earlier on in one of your answers to my hon. Friend.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, of course it is not acceptable, but the hon. Member must realise that sometimes things happen, and this situation happened because of what I have explained. It is due to a blockage in the system and there has to be an overflow. The hon. Member knows very well the professionalism of the sewage team because he has met with them here in this House and has had it all explained.

So what I am going to do, Madam Speaker, is invite the hon. Member once again to meet with the sewage team so that they will explain to him in a more technical way than I can why this problem can occur and what solutions there might be. I can assure the hon. Member that if there are alternative solutions, I will make sure that they are found and implemented.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

[Q168/2026](#)
[Food Delivery Service –](#)
[Expansion of regulations](#)

1150

Clerk: Question 168, the Hon. E J Reyes.

1155

Hon. C Sacarello: We welcome the expansion of the Food Delivery Service regulations to drive up standards across the board. Could the Hon. Minister please explain what will be done, in terms of assessment and monitoring, in the area of driver competence and good practice?

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

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Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, an online system, a system for delivery drivers which will be used to manage and administer the delivery register. Driver competence will be monitored by requiring drivers to submit the relevant driving licence and evidence of required training. Good practice will be monitored by requiring drivers to submit successful course completion certificates as organised by the Ministry, such as food hygiene and safeguarding.

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Delivery driver cards will only be issued to those who satisfy the requirements set, with the online system being instrumental to ensuring this is done effectively and efficiently. Additionally, our transport inspectors will carry out inspections and patrols across Gibraltar to enforce and ensure adherence.

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Hon. C Sacarello: Madam Speaker, I thank the Hon. Minister for his answer there. Like I said, I would just like to reiterate that I do think it is a step forward and a necessary one. There are, however, almost on a daily basis — I personally see people on their bicycles or electric bikes, such delivery staff, using their phones, receiving orders and, naturally, in their way of working, they might be on the road and receive an order.

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That, however, does pose a danger to themselves, but also to others on the road. It is a common occurrence. Is the Government going to act in a way where the legislation can allow for such monitoring to be, I suppose, more focused on these types of offences, and also ones like driving on and off the pavements where pedestrians can be harmed?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, there are traffic offences, and anybody who is driving one of these vehicles, scooters, bicycles or whatever, would have to adhere to that law but there is also this superimposed on that. We have the transport inspectors who are now able to carry out patrols and inspections.

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I can say that there have already been fines issued to delivery drivers who have not conformed to the requirements. So they are very much on the task.

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Hon. C Sacarello: Madam Speaker, could I just ask the Hon. Minister how many driving inspectors or such traffic inspectors there are, and how often they are out and about on a daily basis?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: The hon. Member can ask me, but I think the hon. Member should ask me in another question so that I have all the information available. I am happy to provide it, but I do not have it here.

1195 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Finally, last supplementary, Madam Speaker. As I mentioned, it is a positive step forward. Would the Minister be able to explain how the possibility of cross-border deliveries being curtailed and being policed?

1200 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, we already have the system. If you are not registered with us, if you do not have our card, if you do not have our uniform clearly shown, and if you do not have your vehicle labelled, then you are going to be stopped. If it appears that you are carrying food, you are going to be stopped by the transport inspector or you will be reported by somebody else so the law existing would apply.

1205 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question — perhaps I will give you a little bit more clarity. How will the policing take place, given that the borders are no longer going to be there and Customs will only be available for the commercial side, so traffic flowing through the other will be able to come in freely.

1210 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, if somebody is within the Gibraltar jurisdiction who is delivering food without the requirements of our law, they are in breach of our law and therefore they will be stopped by the transport inspectors who will be out on patrol and that will deal with the enforcement. Madam Speaker, I think it is clear that there are certain things that no one can do without checking these boxes, whether you come from this side of the border or even more, if
1215 you come from the other side of the border, because additionally you are not allowed to provide those services so there would be an additional condition there that would have been breached.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

1220

[Q169/2026](#)
[St Joseph's school –](#)
[Cost of construction works](#)

Clerk: Question 169, the Hon. D J Bossino.

1225 **Hon. D J Bossino:** What is the full cost of the construction works being carried out at St Joseph's school?

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

1230 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the contract sum for the construction works being carried out at St Joseph's Schools is £19,562,414.68.

1235 **Hon. D J Bossino:** If I can push the Hon. Minister further on that reply. That is in fact the figure which is already publicly available. It is set out in the Government Press Release 262 of 16 April 2026. That one line of press release talks about the construction or the extension of St Joseph's Upper and Lower Primary Schools which, as I understand it, is what is being built in the playground behind the St Joseph's Schools we all know.

1240 But my question went beyond that, and when I referred to the construction works, so as I understand it, part of the project is also to refurbish and carry out works which I think are construction in nature in the current building. Can you give me a price for that element?

1245 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker, we do not have a price because it has to wait for the construction of the extension, because there will have to be some decanting from the old building to the new building so that those classrooms can be refurbished and that will have to be tendered out again and new estimates be considered. That is not yet known.

1250 **Hon. D J Bossino:** So the sum total of what the Minister has provided by way of the answer to my supplementary is that the figure of close to £20 million is not the full cost and that there will be extra costs. Is that understanding correct and can he confirm that that understanding is in fact correct?

1255 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** I gave the answer to the question as asked, the construction works being carried out, so that was correct. The hon. Member is asking a supplementary and that is correct. There will be additional costs when the second phase, which is the refurbishment of the old block, is carried out.

1260 **Hon. D J Bossino:** As I understand it, that element of the works — which I considered to be, the way I asked the question in the Order Paper was global, it included both the new build and the refurbishment elements of the old building — that element is also expected to be completed by academic year 2027, because I think that is the timeline that the Government itself has set itself in terms of the back building, if I can put it in those terms.

1265 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the question read, what is the full cost of the construction works being carried out — that is taken as being carried out currently — and therefore that answer is accurate. The additional works will not be ready for September 2027. Well, let me qualify that. If the current works go as fast as they are going, it is possible that part of that work could start before September, but I am not going to give a guarantee that they will be completed before September 2027, but certainly all the new build and all the new extensions will be completed.

1270 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I am being told, I think by my hon. Friend here, the Hon. Ms Ladislaus, that parents were told that the works included the whole package, which is my understanding — not just the construction elements of the new build but also the construction elements of the refurbishments of the current build but the Hon. Minister has answered as he has answered. Is he able to say — does he have, sorry — is it the Government's position, as I understand it, that he has no idea and no estimates have been provided in respect of the refurbishments elements of the works? Is that the current position? He has absolutely no indication or idea of what those may amount to.

1280 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker, that is not the position, but I cannot give that figure out because it would be the subject of a new tender process.

1285 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I am not sure that the first element was the subject of a proper tender process, if I may say. So, I gather from the answer that a contractor has not yet been identified for the refurbishment elements of the works. Is that the position? I will ask him that and then I will ask him another question following.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: That is the position.

1290 **Hon. D J Bossino:** When will the Hon. Minister be in a position to answer the questions I have asked him in respect of the refurbishments elements of the old school?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I have answered the question that I was asked. He may not be satisfied as to my answers to his supplementary, but I have certainly answered what is the

1295 full cost of construction works being carried out, and by implication carried out currently, at St Joseph's School, and the answer is £19,562,414.68.

Hon. D J Bossino: The hon. Member knows exactly what I am asking him. He has understood it. He has chosen to interpret the question in the Order Paper as he has chosen to interpret it but he has understood, I think, what I am asking him by way of supplementary.

1300 Why is he being so cagey about the answer? All I am asking him to say across the floor of the House is when will he be in a position to answer the question that I have asked in respect of the refurbishments of the current school. If he is then able to answer that question, I may or may not file a question specifically in relation to that for the next meeting.

1305 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Member has to accept that I may not have answered the supplementary yet but I have answered the substantive question. I will give the hon. Member the information. I am not in a position to say when. I hope to be in a position to have that information available during the first term of the next academic year, before the end of this calendar year.

1310 **Madam Speaker:** Last question.

Hon. D J Bossino: In relation to the tender aspects of the answers that the Hon. Minister for Education has provided, is he able to say whether that process has commenced and if it has, where can the tender notice be found? Because we have been doing a search in respect of the current build, as he puts it, and we have not been able to find anything. We have not been able to find absolutely anything in respect of the tender process that he says the current build was subjected to.

1320 He now says that in respect of the refurbishment elements, it is going to be the subject of the tender notice. Could he answer the questions I am posing?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I know for a fact that there were a number of bids presented and one was accepted as the most preferred bid, that was dealt with by the Chief Technical Officer, and there will be a similar process where quotes will be tendered out for the refurbishment of the old block.

Madam Speaker: For the fourth — there have been eight supplementaries. (*Interjection*) Take my word! A quick follow up on this...

1330 **Hon. D J Bossino:** You see, the Hon. Minister has a knack of doing this. He answers the questions but it is a half-baked answer, with all due respect to him. As far as we are concerned, a tender process is a public process, whether it is the subject of a tender notice and all the rest of it. I think he has intimated in a response that it was more private than that. Where is this tender notice in respect of the current build and the future refurbishment costs made public? Where is it?

1335 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I am very open to providing the alternative tender documents that were submitted to the hon. Member behind the Speaker's chair, because obviously there will be commercial confidentiality, to show that there was a competitive process. I must say, Madam Speaker, that I am satisfied that I have answered the substantive question because that is the way it was asked and that is the information I have provided.

1345 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q170/2026
St Joseph's school –
Cost of construction works

Clerk: Question 170, the Hon. D J Bossino.

1350 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Please provide the number of museum visitors by month for 2026 broken down between tourists and local visitors.

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

1355 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes):** Madam Speaker, there have been a total of 5,116 visitors to the museum from January 2026 to May 2026. The breakdown is as follows.

Gibraltar National Museum:

January	584	(164 locals, 420 non locals)
February	767	(114 locals, 653 non locals)
March	998	(250 locals, 748 non locals)
April	776	(190 locals, 586 non locals)
May	1,180	(183 locals, 390 non locals, 607 Museum Day)

Natural History Museum

January	83	(38 locals, 45 non locals)
February	89	(39 locals, 50 non locals)
March	186	(84 locals, 102 non locals)
April	296	(216 locals, 80 non locals)
May	157	(35 locals, 88 non locals, 34 Museum Day)

1360

Hon. D J Bossino: The hon. Member himself must forgive me because I think he has usefully split the visitor from the other one, the locals. But the information was drawn from the information which is set out in the Government statistics, the Government websites where it is set out, all the statistics. There it talks about total number of museum visitors, but then he has split it.

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Can I take it from that — I have not done the maths, but if I were to add the numbers he has provided, the global numbers, one gets to the figures which are set out in table T3. Would that understanding be correct?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I would assume so. I have not done the calculation.

1375

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, it is information which the Government itself provides and the Government has set it out differently to the way that the Minister has chosen to answer the question, by doing the split of the nature of the museum. We can then perhaps have a discussion. Now, in respect, if I may, to the last full year figures that we have for 2025, in the information provided online by hon. Members opposite, the total figure for the year is 12,263. Yet, in answers to a question which my hon. Friend Mr Origo asked by way of written question in December last year, it spoke of a higher figure of 14,486. Can you explain why the discrepancy?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: No, Madam Speaker, I would need to have noticed that the hon. Member wanted me to carry out that analysis. I have answered the question as asked. Once again, it seems to be extending the meaning of that question. I have given him the breakdown because I thought it would be useful to ask.

1385 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I think on this occasion that comment and remark is justified because my question on the Order Paper did refer to 2026 and not 2025. So I do forgive the hon. Member. One is wrong; one needs to have the humility and accept when one is wrong but is he satisfied with the figures presented? I think that in the past he has said that he is but does he continue to be as satisfied and as excited by these figures as he has presented them to us today?

1390 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, that question I predicted. Madam Speaker, I am satisfied with the Gibraltar National Museum being an asset to Gibraltar's attraction for residents, visitors and as a tribute to our heritage. So, it would be great to have more visitors, but I am not dissatisfied.

1395 **Hon. D J Bossino:** If I may just stretch that question slightly further. Does he have any policy ambitions to increase that figure? We all want more visitors to our shores. We all want more visitors to our sites. We are proud of those sites and we want them to come and visit us but does he have a focus and a policy decision to increase those figures and hence why I ask whether he is satisfied? If the Hon. Minister's position is that he is satisfied, then, in my respectful view, from a political perspective, I think that is being totally and utterly unambitious as to what we can do with this particular site. But I am asking him and giving him the opportunity — not just glibly to say, well, I would like more figures — but if that is his ambition, if that is his case, how does he wish to pursue that aim?

1405 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the National Museum, and I have said this here many times, is constantly promoting its work at an international level. We know the work they do with Neanderthals. They are repeatedly coming out in the media with their museum days, with new exhibits.

1410 So they are already doing a lot of work and it is well known internationally. The Calpe Conferences organised by the museum, which is going to be a very significant one in September, raise our profile internationally. So it is not a lack of ambition.

1415 It is satisfaction at the international profile of the museum. I think *el cariño* that people in Gibraltar have for the museum, and local children go and visit it and so on — there is a tradition and the open day is extremely popular.

1420 Could they do more? I mean, it is very difficult to suggest what more they could do. I do not know what the hon. Member is thinking beyond all that they are already doing but now that I have been challenged to perhaps demonstrate more ambition in relation to visitors of the museum, perhaps I will put my mind to it and shock the hon. Member as much as he has shocked me in being so kind to me in one of the comments that he made earlier.

Hon. D J Bossino: He has provoked me now to ask this question. He has provoked me now to ask this question because I was not actually even thinking about it when I asked him about the figures.

1425 But is it then that he is satisfied that the expenditure of £1.4 million, which the taxpayer pays on an annual basis to the company which runs other sites, but this one included, the Gibraltar Museum, is money well spent? Is that his position? Is that the Government's position?

1430 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I have answered this many times here. The funds that he is referring to are not exclusively just for the Gibraltar Museum, but for a whole range of the work that the museum does at a local and international scale.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

1435

Q171/2026
Upper Rock –
Company operating ticketing system

Clerk: Question 171, the Hon. D J Bossino.

1440 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Please state which company is currently operating the ticketing system for the Upper Rock and the terms on which it operates to include the payments it has received since it started operations to date.

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

1445

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, there has been no change in the operating company since my answer to Question 632 of 2025, given on the 24th of June 2025. The terms also remain as stated in my answer to that question.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Hon. Minister humour me and tell me what the name of that company was. I am assuming — I have not checked it myself — but I am assuming that he provided the full details, not just the business name, but the full details of the company which provides this service.

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I provided that information in my answer on the 24th of June last year.

1460 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Now, there is an element to my question which, with the greatest of respect to the Minister, I do not believe that he has answered, which is, I asked him to include in his response the payments which it — i.e. the company, which he says he has provided the details of, I need to check it — has received since it started operations to date. Is he able to provide the House with that particular information?

1465 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** I provided the information on the terms, and I believe I said — and this is in Hansard — that it is 10% of the ticket sales.

Hon. D J Bossino: Yes...

1470 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** ...10%.

1475 **Hon. D J Bossino:** So, the Hon. Minister says he believes — I take it from the way that he has responded to the question — that he does not have the answer that he expects me to record and to have with me himself. But, can I push him further? He talks about the terms, and in that context he says 10% of the ticket sales, which I think the Government itself has referred to a figure in press releases and exchanges that we have of £17 million or thereabouts.

So, it is 10% of £17 million, £15 million, something along those lines. Fair enough. But, I have asked him specifically in global terms, in overall terms, what actual payments it has received.

1480 I have not asked him how those payments are calculated and pursuant to which contractual terms. I have asked him, the Minister, what payments this company has received since it started operations to date. What is the full amount since it started operations?

So, it is a very simple question. On this occasion, I am afraid to say it is very clearly and simply set out in the Order Paper.

1485 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Member has the figure. He has mentioned 10% and he has mentioned the amount. If you divide by 100 and multiply by 10, then you arrive approximately at the figure.

If he wants it down to the last penny, I regret I do not have that information here but, very broadly, he is able to calculate it himself.

1490

Hon. D J Bossino: No. No, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker. I am sorry, that answer is completely, wholly, and utterly unacceptable. The Hon. Minister, if I may say so, is being once again, once again, evasive in his response.

1495 I have asked him very specifically. I am not asking him to do the maths for me. He is evading the very simple and obvious and clear question that I put to him because he wishes to do so. Let us be frank about this. Let us be frank about this across the floor of the House.

Clearly, he is uncomfortable with the response he needs to give. Can I try once again? How much — how much in pounds, shillings, and pence — has this company received since it started operations to date?

1500 It is a very simple question, capable of a simple answer. Let us not continue to try and confuse Members on this side of the House by making references to answers that he has provided. One needs to check this.

1505 Indeed, my Friend, Mr Clinton, has provided me with the answer that he refers to of 2025, 632. All that answer does is refer to another answer he provided, according to him, which is 810 of 2024. I have asked him a simple question. How much has been paid to this company? Very simple. To date.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I refer to previous questions, if there are previous questions. If he keeps on asking the same questions, I am going to refer to them. Madam Speaker, 1510 I am not uncomfortable in the slightest. The hon. Member knows it is 10%. The hon. Member knows, because it is in the public domain, what the global sum is. Divide that by 100, and multiply by 10, the hon. Member has himself come up with a figure.

1515 I am not uncomfortable, because if I give him the actual figures which I will have to seek — and I am very happy to provide them behind the Speaker's chair on another occasion — it is going to vary by very little, and therefore it is not something I am going to be uncomfortable about upon a few tens of pounds. Even a few hundreds of pounds. I am not uncomfortable about it at all.

I have indicated the way in which that can be calculated, and if the hon. Member wants the specifics, then I do not have them here, but I would be happy to provide them.

1520 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Just to be clear, the Hon. Minister is basically saying that he is going to be providing me with the answer behind the Speaker's chair, not because he is in some way sensitive about the commerciality of the deal. What he is saying is that he does not have it now. Have I understood the position? Because he has not done himself a calculation, and come to this House prepared with the answer to the question that I very simply and expressly and very clearly put to him. 1525

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I am not sure what that question was, because there has been a lot of rambling there. Madam Speaker, what I am saying is that he clearly has an order of magnitude, right, and that has been clearly stated as an order of magnitude. That is not something 1530 that makes me uncomfortable, and that is in the public domain, because we have said in the past 10%, and we have said clearly how much the income is, so not uncomfortable.

1535 The actual figures down to the last penny are something that I do not have with me. I do not think they make much of a difference in whatever argument the hon. Member is going to make. So perhaps the hon. Member can make the argument (*interjection*) based on the broad terms that we have been discussing here.

Madam Speaker: We are going to and fro with the same point, but I am not going to go to and fro with the same point. If there is a separate supplementary, I will allow it, but there have already been five largely at the same point. We are not getting anywhere. The questions and answers are on the same issue.

Hon. D J Bossino: I appreciate that we are not getting anywhere, and the position is as it is. Indeed, ably assisted by Mr Clinton, I have been provided with the answer that he keeps on referring us to, which is, in fact, that it is Wright Tech Ltd. which provides a ticketing service.

I am not sure why he could not provide the answer. The element of the 10% talks about the amount paid for ticketing services. It says 10% of sales.

So, can he confirm — can I ask him to confirm — that when he was referring in his answer to sales, i.e. the money that Wright Tech Ltd. makes from sales, it is sales of tickets at Jews' Gate. Is that the position?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: No, Madam Speaker, it is sales of tickets, not necessarily Jews' Gate.

Madam Speaker: Sales of tickets to the Upper Rock, to the nature reserve. Yes?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q172/2026
Sites Management Systems –
Company or companies names

Clerk: Question 172, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Please provide the name of the company or companies, to include any business name(s) under the heading referred to as “Sites Management Systems” in Head 43 2(16) of the Estimates of Revenue & Expenditure 2025/2026.

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, the companies whose operations were encompassed in Head 43 2(16), Sites Management Systems, within the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure 2025/2026 are as follows: Cuevas Ltd; Fortress Attractions (Operations) Ltd; Knightsfield Holdings Ltd trading as Gibraltar National Museum; Treeus Ltd; Wingways Ltd; Wright Tech Ltd; and Visionary Tourism Investments (Gibraltar) Ltd.

Hon. D J Bossino: Is the Hon. Minister able to say — because this was the subject of some questioning by my hon. Friend Mr Origo during the course of the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill about, you know, where this — I cannot remember what the figure was, I think it was £6 million that is paid out under this heading. At the time, I cannot reveal the figure, the new figure that we will be debating at some point in the not-so-distant future, we hope. Is he able to say what payments, terms, these companies have agreed to with the Gibraltar Government?

I think similar to the information that the hon. Member was able to provide in respect of ticket sales in Wright Tech Ltd., where they get 10% of ticket sales, is he able to say what payment terms have been agreed with these companies?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I do not think I can do that. There are different terms for different companies and I think it would not be correct for all that information to be provided publicly.

1590 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Is it then the Hon. Minister's position that he is not willing to provide that information publicly at all, ever? Is that the position because that was not the hon. Member's position when I asked him this question in February 2025 when I talked about whether these entities — I do not know which they were at the time — would receive a proportion of the entrance fees, for example. He said it would not be appropriate to provide details here at this stage, which is kind of similar but not quite the same to the answer that he has given. Then he said, in answer to a supplementary, it is information that I would very happily put into the public domain at the correct time.

1595 He said, and the reason for that is, once the negotiations are completed, we will very happily share that information. So can I ask — can I press him further — as to whether he will ever provide it or he will provide it once the negotiations are completed? They may not be completed, is it not?

1600 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, it is still not the correct time. There are still negotiations ongoing.

1605 **Hon. D J Bossino:** May I ask him this — is he able to say when the negotiations are likely to complete such that we will get the information which I have been seeking, outside of this House — can be either provided outside of this House or better still in this House — at some point in the future?

1610 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I do not have a timeline, but outside this House I am very happy to share the information even now with the hon. Member.

Hon. D J Bossino: So negotiations are complete, but yet the Hon. Minister —

1615 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, negotiations in relation to some of the entities are complete, but those that are complete I have no issue sharing them with the hon. Member outside this House.

1620 **Hon. D J Bossino:** There is a list of companies that the Hon. Minister has provided, yes? He is telling us that of that list — I am assuming — some have got entrenched contractual positions, arrangements such that he has all the information, the terms on which they get paid and for how long and all the rest of it, but there are some which are still the subject of negotiations. Now, is he telling me that he is only in a position to provide replies to all of those which he said before he is happy to provide once all of them are negotiated? Perhaps I can understand the rationale behind this, but is that the position?

1625 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, subject to advice, yes, I mean that is my intention.

Hon. D J Bossino: Is his intention — is the Hon. Minister's intention changing?
1630 I am trying to get to the bottom of that. Surely when he answered in February 2025 he said he would happily provide it, but once the negotiations are complete, is that still the position? He must have, I assume, got advice before he answered my question in February 2025 in those terms. So is my understanding correct or could that be changed as a result of advice that he receives? I do not understand what he is saying.

1635 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, that is currently my position.

1640 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can I just say one question, yes, if I may — and I know it will be a futile exercise in asking any further questions of the Hon. Minister. I know it is very clear to me, politically, what he is trying to do and it is completely intransparent and evasive in his answers. Can he say at least — at least — in respect of at least those contracts which have been fully negotiated, what the term of those contracts are because we are getting information — and I am not going to raise a rumour to this House, because it would be improper — but information that we are getting is that there could be as long as 20 years where these entities will be getting a very significant cut from their lucrative ticket sales. Is he able to at least tell us how long these contracts are for, those which are at least negotiated?

1650 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I have answered the question. If the hon. Member wants to ask any specific details, then I suggest that he ask another question at a future meeting of the House. I have answered the question. Please provide the name of the company or companies, to include any business names under the heading referred to, and I have given a list of those companies. I have entertained these supplementaries in an effort to be helpful, but I think I can take it so far. The hon. Member, I think, is abusing my goodwill and I have said that in a very friendly matter.

1655 **Madam Speaker:** No, there have been six supplementaries on this. We are going to move on. If there are any substantive questions, then they can be tabled at the next session.

1660 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, it would help us to formulate the question. If I get an answer to this question, we will know which question to formulate.

Madam Speaker: I think the hon. Member already knows what questions to formulate. I will allow the hon. Leader of the Opposition briefly.

1665 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Yes, Madam Speaker, a very brief question. The hon. Member, in his original answer, gave a list of entities. With which of those entities have negotiations concluded?

1670 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I do not think I can answer that question, because that would also reveal which entities' negotiations have not concluded, and I think this is a sensitive matter, so I would rather not.

Madam Speaker: Alright next question.

1675

Q173-6/2026
Schools Academic Calendar –
Adjustment; Consultation process in respect of the proposed changes; Assistance to families
impacted by the intended change; Educational case for the intended change

Clerk: Question 173, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

1680 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Why have the Government reached the view that there should be an adjustment to the Schools Academic Calendar this academic year or at all?

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

1685 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 174 to 176.

Clerk: Question 174, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

1690 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Can the Government describe the consultation process it has engaged in with parents and teachers in respect of the proposed changes to the Schools Academic Calendar setting out the questions and specific proposals that went to consultation?

Clerk: Question 175, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

1695 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** How will the Government assist families impacted by the intended change in the Schools Academic Calendar and the elimination of school hours?

Clerk: Question 176, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

1700 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Are the Government satisfied that there is an educational case for the intended change in the Schools Academic Calendar and the elimination of summer hours?

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

1705 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the Government was and is of the opinion that the changes in the school calendar will provide long-term benefits to the school community as a whole, by which I mean staff, pupils and families, and that a delay to next year was not necessary. The period of summer hours, commonly known as half-days, was, particularly in secondary facilities, not considered to be educationally efficient or productive, so that adding approximately 10 afternoons in place of 7 mornings was
1710 considered to be a more efficient and effective use of time. The Government has liaised with the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority, the Care Agency and Possibilities, who will be bringing their support plans forward.

1715 There have been one-to-one contact with a number of families in order to advise and assist any families that may need additional support for those days. Other families will, of course, have welcomed the change. With regard to consultation, a call for responses from the public was made in April 2025, following a Government statement referring to the desire to remove summer hours from the school calendar.

1720 Following a great deal of work on options by the Department of Education, a revised calendar was presented as a proposal to all headteachers on 11 February this year. Soon after that, the draft calendars were presented to Gibraltar, NASUWT, Unite and GGCA. Negotiations followed, including by way of meetings, exchanges of emails and telephone calls, as well as a meeting with the Chief Minister.

1725 At the same time, a questionnaire was circulated by the Department to all teachers, and NASUWT carried out their own consultation by way of a questionnaire to members. On 31 March, NASUWT responded formally to the proposal, supporting the removal of summer hours and adding their own proposals, which, after further deliberations, were broadly accepted by the Government and resulted in the current proposal. Parallel discussions were held with Unite and GGCA.

1730 Unite also carried out a ballot of their members, with acceptance of the proposal by the majority. I have also had the opportunity to talk to a good number of Year 12 and Year 13 students, all of whom were supportive of the proposals. As the Hon. Leader of the Opposition would realise, it would not be appropriate to provide the detail of what was discussed in Union negotiations.

1735 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker so can I take it in relation to 173, that the proposal came from the Government and not from anybody else, is that right? It did not come from NASUWT? There was a NASUWT representative that gave an interview recently to the effect that it did not come from them. So this is a proposal that came from the Government, is that right?

1740 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** I think I have explained how the initiative started. It came from the Government, it was discussed with the Unions, including NASUWT, who came back with counter-proposals, which in the end were more or less reflected in the current new school calendar.

1745 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** If it came from the Government, I am assuming, for the purposes of this question, that when the hon. Member says the Government, he must mean the Education Department, the educationalists within the Department — can he confirm that? And can he tell us why the proposal was put? I am not sure his original answer gave us the detail of that.

1750 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** My original answer says very clearly the Government was and is of the opinion that the changes in the school calendar would provide long-term benefits to the school community as a whole and then I continued, the period of summer hours, commonly known as half-days, was particularly in secondary facilities not considered to be educationally efficient or productive, so that adding 10 afternoons in place of 7 mornings was considered to be a more efficient and effective use of time.

1755 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Yes, the hon. Member does not need to repeat the original answer. The original answer is about consequence — what the Government has concluded, the consequence of the changes. It has not told me what the reason for the changes.

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, in order to arrive at those consequences...

1760 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** ...In order to arrive at those consequences, there must be a rationale behind that. What I am asking here, 173, is why have the Government reached the view? Why?

1765 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, because it considered that it would provide long-term benefits and that the adding of 10 afternoons in place of 7 mornings was a more efficient and effective use of time. That is why and then the Union accepted it, came up with more proposals and they were accepted.

1770 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Can the hon. Member tell me what the specific questions and proposals that were put originally to NASUWT and as part of the consultation process were? What were the proposals? So he says, in his original answer, he said something like they did the consultation process, there was then engagement and it arrived at a different proposal. So what were the original proposals and questions that were put as part of the consultation process?

1775 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** The main difference between the original proposal and the counter-proposal that the Union came up with — and I have to be careful because Union negotiations are confidential matters, but there was — I have to be less than specific I think because I do not want to break any confidentiality because we cannot have a breach of trust when we are negotiating with the Union of course — largely to do with the flexibility of the end of the summer term and with the number of additional breaks that there would be in different midterms. That is about as broadly as I am able to present.

1780

1785 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Well, people listening might forgive me for thinking that they will not have figured that out either. Was it obvious to anyone who was a recipient or participant in the consultation process, the original one, that the school term was going to end early this year?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: It was obvious that the school terms would end early every year. It did not exclude the possibility of it ending early this year.

1790 **Madam Speaker:** I am going to interrupt now. There has been six on 173. I know that there is 174, 175, 176, they all overlap, but I do not want the hon. Member to go to 12 or 10 on 173 and then offer another bunch on the others.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, those questions were all on 174.

1795 **Madam Speaker:** Those were all 174?

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Yes, yes, the previous ones. These questions are all about the questions and specific proposals that were put to the consultation process.

1800 So what I am asking the hon. Member — because the hon. Member has answered questions in this House before and he has intimated, he had intimated at the time certainly, intimated to members on this side of the House, that the impact of any changes would not be felt in this academic year, the one that finished yesterday. So what I am saying is, was it obvious to those who participated that the impact would be felt this academic year? Because does he appreciate, does he appreciate that the change when it came — and of course we were talking about this
1805 publicly — but the change when it came meant that people will have had plans for a 10-day period that suddenly were disrupted. People will have both parents who are working, that suddenly had to make childcare arrangements or their own family arrangements. Some of them would have financial impact because of the changes that were announced, that were announced when they probably thought that they at least had three or four months more to plan those changes. Does
1810 he not accept that?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, now that it has actually happened — and I visit the schools regularly, I have been there several times this week, even though there were only two days — there is general acceptance that this works and it is going to work, and I think people have *lo han*
1815 *asumido*, they have accepted it. There would have been certain inconveniences, absolutely. Some families would have been challenged by the changes, some families would have actually benefited from the changes. I know that people were planning holidays earlier, for example. Some families had concerns in the half days because they have elderly perhaps grandparents waiting at 12.30 in the sun and then having to look after the children in the afternoon, so some have been benefited.
1820 I think in any decision of this nature, any grave decision, there would be some who would benefit immediately and some who we have to assist and perhaps would not have benefited so much. Overall, when it comes to decision making, you have to take a long-term view. Overall, I believe that this is beneficial for education, so I will stand by that.

1825 **Hon. D J Bossino:** The hon. Member still has not really told me who is responsible for the decision. He says, I believe it and so on but can I just probe this point, which is 175, Madam Speaker?

1830 **Madam Speaker:** Before we move on to 175, the hon. Mr Reyes had had a question on 174.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Yes, yes, yes, very good.

1835 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I did signify it. I still want to remain on 174, it was asking for the consultation process engaged with parents and teachers. The Minister said that he did not want to disclose details of what can be classified as confidential exchanges. However, he makes no reference to what consultation, what type of questions or what type of feedback did he get, if he got any, from parents.

1840 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** I am assuming that the hon. Member is asking me what feedback I got. There was — this was a consultation that was public in April and I think I have said this publicly — I think there was an overwhelming majority in favour of the cessation of the summer hours.

1845 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, what has been answered to me in previous questions by the Minister is that without the details of how the consultation with parents was carried out, I am pretty confident that there was not any particular letter given to parents, like schools often do — you know, it was actually a public social media type of invitation, you know, who wishes to comment — and I do not know how confidential it is or not. I know the Minister has disclosed to me figures of the feedback he got, numbers of which I believe are rather low. If the Minister can confirm he can make those public, then we are able to at least make everyone aware of what
1850 feedback he got from parents to enhance specific questions. I think those who gave feedback were just — would you be in favour of a change of hours, without saying anything. You know, if anyone asked me, would you be in favour of borrowing £100? Yes, I would, but is it a 1% interest or 10%?

1855 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Madam Speaker, you cannot go into the fine detail of a decision by a government, by popular poll, in every single detail. You have to consult on the broad principles and then negotiate with the affected parties — in this case the three Unions — the detail of it, which is in fact what happened. There was a press release in April 2025 with an email address where people sent in their representations, and the response was not huge, I think it was several hundred, but it is up to people, it is up to people to respond. If people feel very strongly against
1860 it, one would have hoped that they would have responded, but I think the percentage was about 85% in favour.

Madam Speaker: Alright back to the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

1865 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** That was useful, that was useful, because of course — I mean, hon. Member, yes, that was useful — because I think the hon. Member will know the statistics better than I do, but I think there are around 5,000 children in schools, 10,000 parents, a few hundred participants in this, so it must be maybe even less than 10%, of which 85% — all right, so about 8% of the parent population responded overwhelmingly on this issue. Well, fair enough, I mean,
1870 the hon. Member can correct me. Can I ask him — because what we were getting when this happened was the concern of people who suddenly were being told that this was going to happen earlier than they expected it — he said that there has been one-to-one contact, this is 175, one-to-one contact of people with families who were impacted by the intended change. Can he tell people, parents, how such help can be accessed and what that assistance means, what is the
1875 nature of the assistance that the Government has given a number of families?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: I think that one point that the hon. Member is perhaps forgetting or not realising is that Union members are parents and that teachers are parents and the consultation of teachers both by the Department and by the Union had a broad acceptance and a broad response
1880 and they would be parents as well. I think that we must not forget that fact. Sorry, I got sidelined. Can the hon. Member just repeat the last part of the question?

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: This is the same question, so I am not asking a new supplementary question.
1885

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes, yes I went for another answer and I forgot some of the details!

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am asking, the hon. Member said in relation to 175 that there has been one-to-one contact with certain families in respect of assistance.
1890 *(Interjection)* How and what nature of assistance?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Again, Madam Speaker, I did answer in my question that the Sports and Leisure Authority, the Care Agency and PossAbilities have stepped up in order to advance the support they gave particularly to vulnerable children during the summer period. There has been one-to-one contact with families who have contacted my office or me personally and we have been able to support them in fine details that I do not think I should repeat here — in the sense of providing transport to certain events that they need or certain facilities and so on. So there has been one-to-one support with those families that have contacted us. I think that the hon. Member, if I may say, is a little bit out of date. I think this was quite controversial when it was announced but I do genuinely feel that there has been general acceptance in the community that overall this move is the right move and there are a lot of people who are very pleased with the changes that we have introduced. Clearly, they are going to pick those who are not pleased. That is their job but I can say that there are many people who are very pleased and I can sense it in the community and I can sense it in the schools which I visit very regularly.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Of course, people are practical. The fact that if the Government announces the schools are going to close 10 days early, parents may be inconvenienced. They may be disrupted. They may be put to cost but there is a certain, of course, acceptance of inevitability. At the end of the day, the Government is making those changes. It is affecting people's lives. The fact that we have got here, the schools have closed yesterday, no one is going to take their child to school tomorrow to a closed building. I am not sure where the hon. Member's point takes him.

The hon. Member says, I am just moving on to 176 now, he says he is satisfied that there is an educational case for the closure. Can I ask him, is he also satisfied of the elimination of some hours? Is he also satisfied there is an educational change of the extra mid-term? And why was the decision made to make the changes now and not wait till next academic calendar?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: When you take a decision because you believe it is a good thing, what is the point of delaying it? That answers the second part of his question. There has been a call for the additional mid-term, particularly from the staff representatives in the schools, that it will help to prevent burnout and will refresh both the children and the teachers and that is the reason that that has been introduced.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: And can I ask him, did that part, the extra mid-term — is that part of the Government's proposal or did that come from a different quarter?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: That arose as part of the negotiations with the Unions, plural.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: All right, so do I take it from that answer that the answer to that question is no, it was not part of the Government's proposal. So the Government's proposal was to get rid of summer hours. The Government did not propose the extra mid-term. Is that right?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: I repeat what I said... The proposal for the extra mid-term arose as a result of negotiations.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: So the answer to that must be then no. So when you put the proposal, when the Government put the proposal and went to the consultation exercise, it was not envisaged and nor were parents told — that 8% that responded were not told — that there would be an extra mid-term, were they?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: The details were not — in the early consultation, the details were clearly not presented because the question was do we remove the half days or not. No details were presented at the time.

Hon. D J Bossino: So when parents — the 8% — overwhelmingly responded to support the proposal, they were not told that not only were they being inconvenienced on the cancellation of summer hours, they were also going to be inconvenienced because there would be an extra mid-term. Is that the position?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, that would lead me to accept that a mid-term is an inconvenience for all. I do not accept that. We have introduced an additional mid-term in February, which has been welcomed. Nobody considered it an inconvenience. Nobody questioned it. This is some years ago now. And then suddenly all this becomes an issue. So I do not accept that it is necessarily an inconvenience. Remember that schools are not childcare institutions. They are there to educate and if this is considered to be — in discussion with the Unions of the professionals, the professional unions — that this is considered to be acceptable and even beneficial educationally, then I think that we have to support it.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: But that is the point. That is what my 176 is about. Is the Government satisfied that there is an educational case? And what the Government is saying is, I came up with a proposal to reduce the summer hours. I did not come up with a proposal to introduce a mid-term. NASUWT say publicly, I did not propose that we should reduce summer hours. So, NASUWT do not think it is a wonderful educational idea to do it. They are the body that is tasked with representing the teachers but in the context of the negotiation, given that the Government are proposing it — which we the teachers are not proposing — well, we are now going to negotiate a deal and that is what has happened. So what is the educational case for the removal, or for the extra mid-term, which the Government itself did not propose?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I think we have to remember that NASUWT and Unite, which represents a considerable body of teachers, have both supported these recommendations. And they are professionals. I think we cannot forget that. I have already stated that overall, because of the more effective and efficient use of time, it is beneficial for education and I have also said that we have responded to a request that an additional mid-term will assist in refreshing both students and staff. So there are educational advantages in all of that and Madam Speaker, I think we must remember all the other positive developments that there have been in education in Gibraltar over the last few years. We cannot take it out of context and also remember that just in the recent heat waves, hundreds of schools across Europe have closed because of the heat. So, we have also responded to the reality of climate change and of increasing heat in order to shorten the term, in order to avoid having to close schools unnecessarily and we have ensured that every single classroom is air-conditioned. So we have taken all these steps in order to ensure that education is efficient and effective and I think our education system today, including with the latest changes, is the envy of many others across the world.

Madam Speaker: Alright, that is 6 supplementaries. We are having a debate now on the issue of schools. I am stopping it there.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: It is my last question.

Madam Speaker: No, not with respect. I have allowed 6 supplementaries on this. So we will move on.

Interjection: You do not agree with it, John, do you? *(Laughter)*

Q177-8/2026

Proposed new Little Bay pumping station –
Environmental impact; Infrastructure works

Clerk: Question 177, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

1995 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Are Government satisfied that the proposed new Little Bay pumping station will have minimal environmental impact to the heritage and natural beauty of the coastline of that part of Gibraltar?

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

2000

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 178.

Clerk: Question 178, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

2005

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: When are the works on the proposed Little Bay pumping station and associated pipes and infrastructure works along Keightley Way Tunnel expected to be undertaken?

2010

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, in answer to Question 177, yes, Madam Speaker, satisfied — it will be minimum, if any impact at all.

2015

In answer to Question 178, the works on the proposed Little Bay pumping station and associated pipes and infrastructure along Keighley Way Tunnel are related to the delivery of the new wastewater treatment plant and at this stage it is not possible to confirm when these works will be completed.

2020

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, can I start with 178 first? So, I was not asking when I thought they would be completed, when the Government thinks they would be completed. I was asking, in my original question, when they are expected to be undertaken. So, not completion, but commencement. When is it going to happen?

2025

Hon. Prof J Cortes: I think that the two are intrinsically linked, but I take the point. They will be undertaken during the course of construction of the sewage plant. That is currently under process. As the hon. Member knows, it has outline planning permission. It is shortly going to go to full planning. There are regular meetings taking place. In fact, I chaired one yesterday, but we still do not know the date when that particular section of the project will be carried out.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: So, because he has no information as to when it will be carried out, is that what he is saying?

2035

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, it is a large project. It is going through the planning stages, so we still do not know when they will break ground on that particular section because the works would start at the Brewery Crusher site first and later would start at Little Bay and it is the link between Little Bay and Brewery Crusher that would have to be built, so somewhere in between one and the other.

2040 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** In relation to 177, does the hon. Member agree with me — I am sure he
does — does the hon. Member agree with me that this is a naturally very beautiful part of Gibraltar
and is there no other way of doing what is necessary to be done as part of these works without
2045 having to do a pumping station at Little Bay? Has the Government considered alternatives in
respect of whatever would be required to be done as part of the urban wastewater treatment
works?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, the question refers to the beauty of the coastline and I
take the coastline in the broadest possible sense, not just the shoreline. There would be no impact
at all on the shoreline. The plans for the pumping station in Little Bay are to have it built into the
2050 slope behind the car park, almost like a hobbit hole, covered with natural vegetation, and so built
into the slope there. The only other possible site for this would be Europa Point, and that has been
looked at. That would include digging a huge shaft, which would take an exceedingly long period
of time and might actually require the building of a pumping station at Europa Point, which in my
view would destroy that area as a recreational area. And I think that is a step too far. I think it is
2055 much easier to hide it, build it into the slope at Little Bay where you have a height differential,
than to put it stand-alone at Europa Point, which I think would ruin that area. They are both areas
that I frequent, that I enjoy visiting, and therefore I am very sensitive to what might happen there,
but I do think of the two options — do we want a sewage plant? — clearly, of the two options,
Little Bay is the one that will have the least impact.

2060 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** And can I ask, as part of these works, is this going to then get rid of the
unsightly piping that is on the far end of Little Bay, which seems to be very close to the cliff — I
am sure he knows what I am talking about?

2065 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Sadly not, Madam Speaker, because those pipes are intake to the
desalination plant, and they are not at all connected with the sewage plant. I am very conscious
of the unsightliness, and I am certainly looking at ways of at least concealing them in some way,
and I am hoping to develop some plans there, but I totally agree that they are unsightly.

2070 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Because the plans that I have seen — so where the pumping station will
be, they have kind of, in the plans that I saw, they had erected hoarding with painted birds on it,
and that is all very well at ground level, but as soon as you are going up the hill, you are going to
peer over and see them. So what is it that can be done at least to deal with the aesthetics, if
nothing else, of that area?

2075 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** The plans that the hon. Member has seen, which were presented at outline
planning stage, have been pushed back, and the company is required to submit revised plans,
which would conceal it much better at full planning stage. So those plans that the hon. Member
has seen — and I dislike them too — they have been pushed back.

2080 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q179/2026
Proposed aquarium project –
Compliance with the Animals Act

2085 **Clerk:** Question 179, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Are the Government satisfied that the proposed Aquarium Project is compliant with the Animals Act?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, no relevant details have been submitted to the Government on this particular aspect, I must add, and therefore this has not yet been determined. It will have to be compliant or it will not be able to operate.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Well, so I am asking the question of the Government. Clearly the Government participates in the Planning Commission. I am aware that when this proposal was considered by the Planning Authority, in March there was a debate and some members expressed the view that there was not compliance with the Animals Act and that the proposal was deferred pending further proposals and consideration. So I am asking the Government — not the Planning Commission obviously, because I cannot ask the Planning Commission today — but I am asking the Government, is the Government satisfied, *qua* recipient of perhaps different proposals, that it is now compliant with the Animals Act?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I am glad that the hon. Leader of the Opposition — I would expect nothing less — makes a clear distinction between the Development Planning Commission and the Government. That application was deferred on a number of issues, not just on this, there was also the issue of traffic flow and related matters. The proposers of the Aquarium Project have not yet submitted to Government — this is what I meant in my answer — any details of how they are going to tackle the requirements of the Keeping of Animals Act. Therefore, I cannot answer because we have not received those details. Once those details are received, they will be assessed. If they are compliant, they will be given permission to do so. If they are not compliant, then it will be taken back and they will have to comply but we have not seen any proposal as to how they are going to keep whatever animals they are going to keep there.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I mean, I ask because, of course, it is in the public domain that there has been a discussion of the Planning Authority but I am asking the Government because this is a site which, for it to happen, does not need just planning permission, it needs the permission of the Government as landlord and the Government may have in principle supported the aquarium project, but it may have done so on a particular basis that presumably it is compliant with the Animals Act and because of marine life and so on and so forth. So, I am asking the Government really, in light of what I am sure it read and saw at the Planning Authority, is it taking an active interest in trying to ascertain how precisely it will be compliant, because presumably the Government has not given permission as landlord for this to happen on a basis other than compliance?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, this is similar to a development on a heritage site which could get even landlord permission, could get planning permission, but requires a heritage licence. It is a parallel process. They all have to align in order for the project to go ahead. I am assuming that the people leading on the aquarium project, and they say that they have all sorts of advice from specialists, will provide a plan which will comply with the Animals Act but I have not seen it yet, so I cannot say that it does. I am hoping that it will, but I have not seen it yet.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q180/2026

Commonwealth Park lift –
Frequency of break downs

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Clerk: Question 180, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: How often has the Commonwealth Park lift been broken down in terms of numbers of days in the calendar years 2025 and 2026 to date?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, 22 days in 2025 and 8 days in 2026. This has been largely due to the age of the structures which are over 10 years old. Modifications are being made to add protection to the electronic components and we are told that the life of the lift can be safely extended, when that is carried out, by 15 years.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, does this mean — does the hon. Member's answer mean — that they are going to make a few repairs to the lift or they are going to change the lift? Is that what he is saying?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: There are going to be major repairs to protect the electronics which are, we are told by the experts, the cause of the problems.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I see. The hon. Member will recall that I have asked questions about this previously because I am actually surprised by the numbers he has given because I thought it was more because I pass there every day and the amount of complaints one gets of people who are either elderly or vulnerable or disabled or young mothers who find it very difficult when they come to that point and then cannot get up and so on. And when the lift is working sometimes there are works that prevent you — the hon. Member will recall that there were works on that. *(Interjection)* I thought you had a problem with your mic. No, sorry. The Minister for Sport was just gesticulating from a sedentary position and putting me off. Can the Hon. Minister give us an idea of when these works are going to be carried out?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Let me say, Madam Speaker, that I am not satisfied with the situation and I am putting a lot of pressure on the pertinent entities to resolve this. But we do realise that there did not used to be lifts up the city wall until relatively recently. So I think it is a plus and once we have changed the baseline we do not want to go back. I have requested the repairs to be carried out immediately so I am expecting a solution very, very soon.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Is it that maybe the Government needs to reconsider who it is taking advice from on these issues because maybe there must be specialist companies that deal with external lifts or external escalators? We had notorious questions about the escalator in the Upper Town. Is it that the equipment that has been installed in these places is just simply not suitable for external use?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, as I have said, it appears that what is required is protection to the electronic components. This is the specialist advice that we have and this is the action that we are going to take. I am confident that it will work. If it does not work then obviously we have to take other measures because we are not going to go back to the days when there were not any lifts up the city walls.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

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[Q181/2026](#)
[Government garage –](#)
[Privatisation](#)

Clerk: Question 181, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Are the Government privatising or contractorising the services historically provided by the Government garage and if so to whom, when and on what key terms and/or is it the intention of the Government to close the Government garage and in either scenario can the Government confirm the effect on the current job complement in the Government garage?

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

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes): Madam Speaker, the results of the policy of the GSD agreed in 2011 which was designed to eliminate the numbers employed in the Government garage. The Government garage is currently under review by the Government in consultation with Unite the Union.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: It has taken the Government 15 years to review the Government garage. I mean, surely that is not even a serious answer. So, what I am trying to ask, I mean I have asked quite a number of very specific parts. So, can the Minister at least attempt to give me an answer to the questions that I have asked. I mean, I do not want to repeat the question. People will be bored if I do it. I have asked about privatisation, contractorisation and on what terms and is there intention to close it and what effect it will have on the job complement. Can the Minister not attempt an answer to any of those?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, it is a serious answer. It has to be placed in the historical context because the reason why the number of employees in the garage has decreased is as a result of a policy decision which lingers on to this day even if it is 15 years old. So, we have to place it in context. We have an issue here because of a decision that was taken then and that cannot be ignored. There is no intention of closing the Government garage. We are in consultation and in discussion with Unite the Union. Only yesterday, I held a meeting with Industrial Relations, the very competent people that come under my hon. Friend, Minister Bruzon and we are in discussion as to finding a way forward to ensure that the garage has an appropriate future fulfilling the functions that are necessary to this thing.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Will the Minister — I am glad he said that it will not be closed. Will the Minister confirm that it will not be privatised or contractorised?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I can confirm that there is no intention to privatise the garage. I must point out that there are private contractors working within the garage but that is not the same. It is different.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Perhaps he can explain that to me when he rises. Is there an intention to expand the contractorisation so that the services are provided by an external provider?

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Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, I cannot go into the detail of the negotiations with Unite. I have reassured the staff of the garage about the future of the garage and they know they have my support but I cannot go into any details when we are actually negotiating.

2240 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** But if they know they have his support it should be easy to say what it is that the Government wants to do, surely. The hon. Member is shaking his head from a sedentary position. The people listening might find it difficult to reconcile that. If there are discussions with Unite and the workers have his support, it is not going to close and jobs are not going to be lost. What is it that the Government wants to do?

2245 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** It is clear, Madam Speaker, that the hon. Leader of the Opposition — I was about to call him my hon. Friend because we have a long-standing relationship — has lost contact with the experience of being in Government because he is asking me to do things that he surely would not do. The nuances of a negotiation are such that one has to be very careful what one says in the public domain. We are currently negotiating an issue to resolve a long-standing issue which predates this Government — I said the historical context — and therefore I am not going to reveal any more details because it is the subject of a current ongoing, very, very — I mean down to yesterday — negotiation and I am not going to share that across the floor of this House. I will not do so no matter how many times the hon. Member asks me.

2255 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Okay. Will he at least tell me what it is that they are negotiating about?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, the future of the garage and how it will operate.

2260 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q233/2026
National Theatre –
Commencement of project and funding raised

2265 **Clerk:** Question 233, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Does the Government now have an update as regards when it expects the National Theatre project to commence and how much funding has been raised for the project to date?

2270 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

2275 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J Cortes):** Madam Speaker, as I have said on several occasions in this Chamber, this is a project led by the National Theatre Foundation. However, I am pleased to report that funding discussions are at an advanced stage and an announcement will be made by the Foundation very soon.

2280 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I must be experiencing a bit of *déjà vu* because this question was asked 12 months ago and the answer that was given a year ago was more or less on the same terms. An exchange in Parliament in June last year in respect of this issue was engaged in, to which the Minister said that discussions were at an advanced stage and once the funding had been secured that an announcement would be ready soon. I think that is a direct quote from the answer that was given last year. So, given that last year the discussions for funding were at an advanced stage and that an announcement was going to be made soon, can the Hon. Minister state what

2285 progress has been made in this intervening year? Has funding been secured? Have discussions with this funding partner concluded? When does he think an announcement is going to be made?

2290 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** I added the word "very" in the answer, so the change is probably by one word. I have got to be careful again because I am here in my capacity as Minister. This is a Foundation. I am not here answering for the Foundation so I have got to be cautious. I think the announcement is probably imminent. It is a complex discussion that is being had, but I think the announcement is, I can say, imminent.

2295 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, whilst I appreciate that this is a matter being run by the Foundation, the National Theatre project did feature across five, six, different double pages on the Government's manifestos. It is a commitment made by the Government and a commitment that they will have to see through, irrespective of whether they wanted to pass on that responsibility to a foundation or department or otherwise. May I ask — he says an announcement is going to be made soon. This was a commitment in their 2023 manifesto for this term in office.
2300 Does the Government have an expected timeline of, a, when he thinks this project will start and, b, will it complete by the end of the lifetime of this Parliament?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Madam Speaker, the project should break ground this calendar year certainly, but I am not able to predict exactly, because it does depend on some tweaking of the designs, when it would be completed.
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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, finally, given that the Hon. Minister has confirmed that there is an expectation that the project is going to commence breaking ground this year, is it therefore fair for me to assume that all the necessary funding required to be secured for this project has
2310 been secured if the project is going to start breaking ground this year?

Hon. Prof J Cortes: Yes ma'am.

2315 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi Can I just ask on this, if the project is going to start to break ground this year, has the Government considered where it will host the counting of the next election?

2320 **Hon. Prof J Cortes:** Yes, and where we will be declared winners for a fifth successive time. Madam Speaker, this was already being planned. The hon. Member may not recall that this project was due to commence in 2020 and COVID got in the way of it and there were already steps being taken and it is likely, subject to the Returning Officer being satisfied and so on, but the venue that was considered at the time was the Bayside and Westside school complex which is very large with a sufficient number of rooms and it could be accommodated there. It is not a commitment, but
2325 this is what was being considered those years ago.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

2330

EQUALITY, EMPLOYMENT, CULTURE AND TOURISM

Q234/2026

Blue Badge Scheme –
Proposed changes

Clerk: Questions to the Hon. the Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism.
Question 234, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Could the Government state in detail the changes proposed under the Blue Badge Scheme Review (also referred to as the Blue Badge Revamp), including any changes to eligibility criteria, assessment procedures, enforcement arrangements and badge validity periods?

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

Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): Madam Speaker, we will provide further information on the new Blue Badge system in due course. I can confirm that we have developed a new scheme and meaningful consultation has taken place with the NGO Council and the Lived Experience Council in which their views were considered and changes were made to the revised scheme thanks to their suggestions. This consultation phase has recently been completed. We cannot launch yet as we require changes to the legislation which will take place in the coming months. Although I cannot foresee any changes in the details, I am reluctant to share them at this stage just in case there are any necessary changes before publication.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, I understand that the Hon. Minister might not be able to go into specifics, but would he be able to perhaps give us a little bit more information as to whether the new scheme proposes to expand the eligibility criteria of the Blue Badge to include persons with non-visible disabilities or cognitive disabilities to align itself more with reform that have been introduced in other jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom for example.

Hon. C P Santos: The changes that we are making are in order to ensure that the Blue Badge is used adequately. As we know, currently we get a lot of complaints from the disabled community with regards to the usage of these parking spaces. We want to ensure that these disabled parking spaces do not become private parking spaces. We have a separate badge for non-visible disabilities, for those people who may not need a Blue Badge for accessibility issues, but more for the urgency of using a bathroom. I need to see what the expansion is on the cognitive reasons, but I am willing to share these as soon as I get them. I can send them to the hon. Member as soon as I get more details on this and not on the specifics of how the whole plan is going to work.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, I am aware and I am sure that the Hon. Minister is aware that when this specific issue of Blue Badge schemes has been debated in other jurisdictions, the issue of introducing validity periods for persons with temporary or fluctuating conditions has been an area which has been much discussed. Do you know if this has been discussed in the proposed new scheme?

Hon. C P Santos: Yes, and we currently offer temporary Blue Badges as well and we are also changing the time period for people who have long-standing usage. So I think we have already started making these changes but we are going to enforce it and legislate it so that people who we know are going to need a badge for an extended period of time do not need to be renewing.

Hon. A Sanchez: If I could just press the Hon. Minister in respect of the whole revamp, is the issue of bays and spaces also being looked at and will more be provided as part of the review?

2380 **Hon. C P Santos:** Yes, we have reviewed the different areas and where the parkings are available at the moment. We are also adding a lot of the disability parking spaces upon request a lot of the times. So we do a study and see what the availability is and what the needs are in the area and then we are able to add if this is the case. The way that we are doing it with the new pass — without giving too much away because this is the part we need to check — there is going to be the chance for people to use any parking for a period of time and not exclusively disabled parking spaces but this will come with the whole programme. So this will automatically expand. It is part of eliminating the all-zones parking that people need to apply for separately and it will be a part of the whole Blue Badge system.

2390 **Hon. A Sanchez:** If I could just ask the Hon. Minister one final question in respect of foreign vehicles. Will foreign vehicles displaying a Blue Badge be able to park in disabled bays as part of this new scheme or this revised scheme, and will the Hon. Minister perhaps be able to elaborate in terms of enforcement how this would be enforced and how the enforcement side will be managed as part of this new review?

2395 **Hon. C P Santos:** Madam Speaker, I do not have full details of this. I know we are working and I am currently in contact with the Minister for Disability in the UK so that our Blue Badge is recognised in the EU as the arrangement with the UK Blue Badge pass. So I know we have been discussing how foreign vehicles are able to use the disabled parking spaces here in the same way that we are going to expect to use it with the rest of the EU.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

2405

[Q235/2026](#)
[Disability Act 2017 –](#)
[Commencement of sections 13 and 14](#)

Clerk: Question 235, the Hon. A Sanchez.

2410 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Could the Government state what progress has been made towards the commencement of sections 13 and 14 of the Disability Act 2017, including any work undertaken, consultations held and anticipated commencement date?

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

2415 **Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos):** Madam Speaker, with regards to Section 14, we are currently drafting a Code of Practice and reviewing parts of the legislation which will also be redrafted to ensure the definitions are more precise and easier to understand and process by all involved. As part of this ongoing work, we have held consultations with: Town Planning; Building Control; Land Property Services; Health and Safety Inspectors; Occupational Therapy; Project Managers; Gibraltar Law Offices; Hassans; Daniel Greenberg; the Gibraltar Federation of Small Businesses; the Gibraltar Chamber of Commerce; the Office of Fair Trading; the Tax Office; and further consultation will be held with NGOs, both councils and the general public. The recent Gazette publication has already reinstated the Disabled Access to Property Rules 2020. This subsidiary legislation, made under Section 25 of the Income Tax Act 2010, will allow businesses to apply for a tax reduction if they provide proof of undertaking building works to make access better for persons with disabilities. With regards to Section 13, a public sector strand of the National Disability Strategy was researched, developed and given to each department, authority and agency in 2024. The objectives have been worked on since its

2430 internal roll-out and we are constantly checking progress on these objectives through the SNDO Compliance Officer. We are actively working on the private sector strand.

2435 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, let me take those parts of what the Hon. Minister has said. In respect of the tax deductions that the hon. Member has told us have been gazetted, which we have seen a press release in June, these are best seen as a third iteration of a support mechanism that already existed. They are not a new stand-alone policy. In respect of progress, this is something that already existed. It is not a new development. In respect of training, awareness and training in the public sector and the private sector, this is something that we have been hearing about since 2018. It is also not something new. The language that we have been hearing since 2018/2019 is one of awareness and one of training. Since 2022, Madam Speaker, we have been hearing the language of "about to commence" and "coming soon, ready to be commenced." In respect of an actual timeframe and how soon we actually are to see Sections 13 and 14 enacted or enforced, could the hon. Member actually give us a concrete timeframe in terms of weeks, in terms of months? Because "coming soon" or "ready to be enacted" could be, with this Government, another four years. Could the Hon. Minister please give us a concrete timeframe?

2445 **Hon. C P Santos:** I would like to remind the hon. Member that it was this Government that introduced the Disability Act anyway. Clearly, at least we are the Government who has made these steps forward. I would also like to remind the hon. Member that I did not mention any training, even though we are training people constantly on all different matters of equality. For us, we are making some changes because the wording is open to interpretation. I wanted to make sure that when we enact it, I am making the relevant changes to the legislation in order for this to be clear in its terminology. There are words like "practicable" and "reasonable." What we are making is changes to define what this is. We are devising a Code of Practice so that when we enact it, it is very clear, black upon white, non-open for interpretation. This is what we need to do. We are putting, of course, the support systems in place both for the disabled community and everyone who needs to make these changes. As soon as possible, within the lifetime of this Parliament, is the timeframe that I am giving myself. This is one thing that I stood up there and said. I am going to ensure that this is enacted in my time in Parliament. I stand by this.

2460 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, in 2017, when the Act was brought to this House and was put through, except for Sections 13 and 14, the Minister then said that it would have practical implementation almost immediately through Part R Building Rules. Yet we still see, or the information that we have at least, is that there are still new establishments opening in places such as Main Street that are not accessible to persons with disabilities. Clearly, Madam Speaker, it seems to be that these specific rules do not seem to be working or functioning. Could the Hon. Minister explain why this is still happening, or what is being done to assist persons with disabilities to make sure that the new buildings that are being opened are accessible and, obviously, whilst Sections 13 and 14 are enacted?

2470 **Hon. C P Santos:** Madam Speaker, part of the changes in legislation will also include the Building Regulations Act, which needs to be updated. That is one part. Part R is also looking to make a comparative to Part M from the UK, so this is part of the whole broad spectrum of work that we are doing. In question to the establishments, this goes through a DPC process. There are areas that we are unable to make wheelchair accessible, for example. We need to remember that accessibility is not just wheelchair accessibility. It is also about people who are BSL or people with different accessibility issues, not just wheelchair accessible. There is an area, for example, outside Central Hall that was disputed at the time. The SND office has been part of the process. The angles of the hill where the works were — they could not make it. The angles were not viable for making it wheelchair accessible. For example, that area was impossible to make accessible. There are areas in buildings that the building is unable to be made accessible, yet the establishment can

then add an addition to make it accessible without it going through the works. I understand this is a very important part of why I want Sections 13 and 14 to be enacted, so that we are clear on the whole level and the compliance and who is going to be in charge of compliance for that. There are buildings, as I said, we are unable to — because of the nature of the building — or the contractors or the people in charge of the building are unable to make the building accessible as part of the process, and then the addition of a ramp or something external to the building or the process is when it comes into play. But that is where the issue comes in making some buildings accessible and some not. In the DPC process, we always have the SNDO's advice. We also have other members of the DPC who ensure that as much as possible there is accessibility for disabled persons.

Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, the Hon. Minister made reference to the drafting of the definitions — I believe he said "reasonable" and "practicable" — and the Code of Practice. Is that correct? And he referred to specific drafters. Can he repeat the entities or the names of the individuals who are tasked with the drafting?

Hon. C P Santos: The drafting of this has essentially been worked on by the Gibraltar Law Offices, and then another part has been reviewed by Daniel Greenberg to ensure compliance with how we are going to shift into Part R and Part M.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

[Q236/2026](#)
[Public Sector Strand of the Disability Strategy –](#)
[Publication details](#)

Clerk: Question 236, the Hon. A Sanchez.

Hon. A Sanchez: Could the Government confirm whether it is committed to publishing the Public Sector Strand of the Disability Strategy independently of the Private Sector Strand and provide a timeline for publication?

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

Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): Madam Speaker, it is not Government policy to publish internal documents, although we will publish an abridged version of this. As already mentioned here in Parliament on the 27th of November 2024, this will be published together with the private sector strands towards the end of this calendar year.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

[Q237/2026](#)
[Modernisation of parental leave –](#)
[Draft legislation](#)

Clerk: Question 237, the Hon. A Sanchez.

2525 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Could the Government confirm whether draft legislation in respect of the modernisation of parental leave has now been completed?

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

2530 **Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos):** Madam Speaker, work on the draft legislation in respect of the modernisation of parental leave continues and is at an advanced stage but has not yet been finalised. The Government remains committed to bringing forward these reforms and will provide a further update in due course.

2535 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Grateful for the answer, Madam Speaker. Could the Hon. Minister confirm that work on the draft legislation has commenced? Does this mean that the consultation on parental leave has now ended?

2540 **Hon. C P Santos:** There have been many iterations of what parental leave could look like. I picked something up when I first came into office. I looked at what could happen and what would work for the taxpayer, the parents, the upbringing of the child. Then we had to take into consideration what was happening with the agreement. We have already done a consultation which I thought was completed. I think we are going to have to touch base again with the final draft of this. It is not going to be an extensive consultation because we have already done that. We are going to need to touch base again with different organisations.

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Hon. A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, would the Hon. Minister be able to at least confirm whether a model has been agreed on?

2550 **Hon. C P Santos:** We have 3 different working models and this is where we are at right now. I need to agree on a model that works before I go into the final consultation phase.

2555 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, I am not going to press the Hon. Minister much on this because I can see that he is not able to give me much information at this stage but could I at least press him on whether he expects to bring legislation to this House by the end of this calendar year?

2560 **Hon. C P Santos:** I am hoping to bring it sooner than that. My aim was to try and have something completed by July. July is not going to be it, but hopefully very soon after that. I am aiming for it to be well before the end of this financial year.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

[Q238/2026](#)
[PATHS programme –](#)
[Enrolment](#)

2565

Clerk: Question 238, the Hon. G Origo.

2570 **Hon. G Origo:** How many individual users have enrolled on the Paths program to date, broken down by year?

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

Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): Madam Speaker, the total number of individual users enrolled on the PATHS programme to date is 201, broken down by year of first engagement as follows: 55 new trainees in 2024; 103 new trainees in 2025; and 43 new trainees in 2026 to date. These figures include participation in both our online learning platforms and in-person workshops delivered through the PATHS programme across a range of cohorts, including: HMP Windmill Hill; Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Services; the Supported Employment Programme; Ocean Views; the Economic Development Employment Company apprenticeship programmes; and other community-based participants.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, just for the purpose of clarification, because I noticed that I did use the word "enrolled" in my prepared question, I just want to ask if the Hon. Minister can confirm that when he gave me the figure of 201, that those individuals are individuals who enrolled but also completed this course? Can the Hon. Minister confirm that?

Hon. C P Santos: Yes, 201 have enrolled. PATHS does not really complete. There are a lot of different avenues that you can take and it is essentially a support system for people who want to upskill. We have different areas that you can upskill in. We have 8 different programmes that you can follow. You can finish it as soon or as late as you want. For example, you can go into administrative courses and that is all you are interested in, or you can go into hospitality, or you can do all different types of courses within the field that you want. We are very fortunate that we have been able to be quite successful with over 51% of people who have taken part in the PATHS programme, who have enrolled in the PATHS programme, having gone into employment. Other people are either still in the programme or in some type of supported employment programme or are just no longer seeking employment. That is the good thing about PATHS — it is that we can tailor-make it to the individual.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, if I may, I will state for the record that that was very useful from the Hon. Minister. One of the questions I had was how many persons who had enrolled on PATHS found full-time employment and what that kind of conversion rate was. So may I ask, the Hon. Minister is obviously tracking the conversion of those enrolling on PATHS and securing full-time employment, but does the Government have a certain target percentage or metric which it is trying to aim for? Is it the aim to have everyone who enrolled on PATHS obtain employment, or what sort of criteria are we assessing this against to ensure that this programme is actually working in so far as the design purpose, which was to make those young persons more employable?

Hon. C P Santos: PATHS is for every individual, not necessarily just young people. It is for anyone who would like to upskill. We cater for people of all different backgrounds, of all different academic backgrounds and skills. A lot of people just enrolled to upskill to use this in the future. Some people do it as soon as they get into employment or supported employment and then they want to be able to progress. As I said, it is a programme that is bespoke to the individual and what their needs may be. There is also a part which is about confidence building for those in the Supported Employment Programme. We work with Education, which is a programme that helps them how to communicate, how to understand different things, different contexts. There is a lot of it which takes place in HMP Windmill Hill — so a large percentage will not be in employment yet because they are currently incarcerated but out of that cohort, for example, the cohort of HMP and DARS, 50% of individuals have reintegrated into work from HMP and 42% from DARS. So, not everyone is actively looking for employment either. So, we do not necessarily have a target. For us it is about helping individuals to reach their personal goal and aim.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q239/2026
Flight connections –
New routes

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Clerk: Question 239, the Hon. G Origo.

Hon. G Origo: In terms of expanding flight connections and tourism opportunities for Gibraltar, by when does the Minister expect to announce new routes to destinations outside of the UK?

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

Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): Madam Speaker, the possibility of exploring new routes to destinations outside of the UK was only made available in February after the final agreement on the text of the treaty. Once negotiations with airlines commence, it ordinarily takes another 12 to 18 months for airlines to submit new routes. So I can assure the hon. Member that I will be most pleased to make an announcement the moment there is news to communicate.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, whilst I accept the position from the Minister that we only had some clarity of finality that this exploration of new routes was actually going to materialise, occurring a few months ago in February, we had been negotiating a treaty between the UK and the European Union on behalf of Gibraltar for quite some time now. It has been many years which we were all working towards a common goal of expanding and opening up the breadth of opportunities. So, in that respect, given that these talks were in the works and we knew that this was eventually coming, does the Minister — and has his Ministry — can he at least say, have they identified suitable countries or connections that they want to attract to Gibraltar? He may not be able to share which airlines he is talking to or what specific destinations, because of commercial reasons, and I accept that, but he should have at least some idea of what countries and what connections we would like to tap into which hopefully he can share without breaching any of the commerciality of the discussions being held.

Hon. C P Santos: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member opposite is correct. We have done a study — we commissioned a study — to see what the best markets for Gibraltar would be according to the surrounding areas and the airports in the surrounding areas and what the popular and overspill destinations are. So we are actively talking to many different airlines about different routes, and the current airlines as well that fly to Gibraltar would like to expand their routes to more European destinations. I do not really want to give much away because I am one to give — as we all know, I am much of an oversharer — so I want to make sure that when I share, I will share absolutely every detail as soon as the ink is dry. Before that, I do not want to give too much information because I do not want to be held to something which is not necessarily signed already, but ideally we would like to be able to have airlines coming to Gibraltar summer 2027, which is the 18 months from February. As soon as we have the ink on the paper and the ink is dry, I will be the first one to publicise that.

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Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, if I may, I appreciate that right now is not the time to make any announcements because things have not materialised. I have 2 points to put towards the Hon. Minister. Can he confirm whether any of the destinations which he has approached have confirmed or given some indication where in principle they are committed to exploring Gibraltar as a destination?

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The second limb of that question is, how prepared are we? How many destinations can the infrastructure right now that is in place in the Gibraltar airport really cater for? Are we talking about 2 or 3 different connections? Are we talking about a single one? Because we do see

2675 sometimes that we have faced problems, logistical ones, in the airport as it is now and we are only facing the UK market. So I would like to understand how resilient the airport is in terms of opening itself up to numerous destinations within the European Union.

2680 **Hon. C P Santos:** The flights will not come 50 in one go because that does not happen. It will not happen here, it does not happen in Heathrow, it does not happen. As in new destinations, they will not just flock to any airport and easyJet will not decide to bring 50 different destinations at one time. So we have a lot of interest from a lot of different airlines and the destinations because you do not speak to the destination, you speak to the airline who chooses which destination is going to be profitable for this area. Especially now that Gibraltar is the closest airport within a 35-kilometre radius and then a shared destination in a 60-kilometre radius. So we are talking about millions of people on return flights. So a lot of different airlines find that Gibraltar will be a good commercial destination. Now, we have an airport that works for the amount of flights that we have now. The more flights we have, the more we will need to work to make sure and ensure that the logistics work accordingly. So I cannot imagine that the airport is going to work with the same amount of staff for the same amount of hours now that it will if we double the amount of flights. So it is all about making the airport work. The airport itself is resilient, the team is resilient. I have a great team. If you go on a Sunday morning where we have flights leaving every 10 minutes, that seems to work perfectly well. So a lot of it is about what we can accommodate, a lot of it is about time slots and the time slots that airlines live in and what is commercially viable. So I do feel that we have a resilient team that could make it work.

2695 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

[Q240/2026](#)
[Gibraltar Training Centre –](#)
[Next intake of trainees](#)

2700 **Clerk:** Question 240, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: When is the next intake of trainees expected at the Gibraltar Training Centre, indicating what courses and at what level these are planned to be offered?

2705 **Clerk:** Answer the Hon. Minister for Employment, Equality, Culture and Tourism.

2710 **Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos):** Madam Speaker, courses offered at the Gibraltar Training Centre are subject to changes and review by awarding bodies, but at the moment plans are to offer the following: The City and Guilds Extended Certificate NVQ Level 1 — estimated start date would be March 2027; The City and Guilds NVQ Level 2 Diploma in Building Maintenance Operations — estimated start date July 2027; The EAL Performing Engineering Operations NVQ Level 3 in Electrical is estimated to start October 2026 with the existing intake progression; The Engineering Operations NVQ Level 2 Electrical — estimated to start February to March 2027; The Engineering Operations NVQ Level 2 Mechanical is estimated to start September 2026; Engineering Operations NVQ Level 3 Mechanical estimated start date would be June 2027; and The City and Guilds Plumbing NVQ Level 2 Diploma in Plumbing estimated start date would be July 2027.

2720 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I see that the Minister has made reference to the two different awarding bodies. In respect of City and Guilds, it is offering things at Level 1 and Level 2, which leads us to qualified craftsmen status. There is nothing being offered at Level 3 for

those wishing to pursue into a higher type of qualification. I mean, we are looking, we are thinking of long-term planning. Those are going to be our future foremen and site supervisors and so on. I am sad to note for another year, there is nothing on Level 3 being offered in respect of construction trades offered by City and Guilds.

Hon. C P Santos: Madam Speaker, there is no need to offer a Level 3 for the work that is required. So, as soon as we feel there is a need for anything more advanced than a Level 2, we will offer it in the same way that we are looking at offering all available courses. Madam Speaker, thank you.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you Madam Speaker, I will have to take it up because I think it leads to a debate. The Minister said there is no need. There may be a need today, but I did say in my question we are sort of long-term planning. Let me now refer to the EAL as awarding bodies, Level 2s and Level 3s in respect of mechanical and electrical. No Level 1, which I think is the entry level. Is that because Level 2 or Level 3 are continuations and there is no new intake? Is that the case?

Hon. C P Santos: The courses that I have given are start dates for the next 12 months. Currently, we have Level 1s who will move into the Level 2s, who will concurrently move into the Level 3s. So, if you see that we are unable to take Level 1s in the next 12 months because we need to make sure that we can teach. We have class time and time outside in trade so that we are unable to take a Level 1 in the next 12 months because we are completing the Level 1 now who needs to move into Level 2 and then the Level 3 so there is no teaching span. At the end of 2027 would then be the new Level 1 intake. So, then we will go Level 1, we will go to Level 2, Level 3 and then we will shift out and we will always be a Level behind. We currently have a Level 1 right now. So, we do not have a new intake of Level 1s.

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, it leads me to question, is that a firm commitment by the Minister that there will definitely be a Level 1 intake during 2027 and approximately what time of the year?

Hon. C P Santos: As the hon. Member opposite is aware, the dates are finalised as soon as we see when the cohorts complete their portfolios. They have a certain period of time and apprenticeships do not work in academic years *per se*. That is why the dates vary from October to July until a cohort comes in. They have their class time, then they have a period of time that they need to go into trade and then they have a period of time that they can complete their portfolios. Some complete in a few months, some take a little longer. So, we need to make sure that all that work is complete before we take a new cohort. My plan, for example, was to have Level 1 start in January but it is starting in March instead. It is only a few months after the cohort that is currently doing the Level 2s who will not complete in time for us to start the tuition of the Level 1s. So, it does not work so strictly as in school. So, we need to give some leeway. My plan is to have a cohort of Level 1s at the end of 2027 but it might be the beginning of 2028.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

[Q241/2026](#)
[Gibraltar Training Centre –](#)
[Proposed DIY domestic electrical night classes](#)

Clerk: Question 241, the Hon. C Sacarello.

Hon. C Sacarello: Madam Speaker, I would like to start, first of all, by offering the Hon. Minister, and on behalf of all of my colleagues, our sincere condolences for the tragic loss of his brother, who was a friend, a lovely person, and I shall miss him.

2775 The GTC has announced the launch of DIY Electrical evening classes over a short 6 week course. Other than how to change a plug as he has described, could the Hon. Minister please elaborate on other technical elements of this 6 week course?

2780 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism.

Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): Madam Speaker, thank you to the Member for his very kind condolences and thank you to everyone in Parliament. I saw it last week and thank you very much for your support. It has been a tough few weeks, what do I have to say, but it is what it is, we move on.

2785 Madam Speaker, I would like to clarify the purpose, scope and limitations of the proposed DIY domestic electrical night classes delivered by Gibraltar Training Centre. This course is designed strictly as an introductory DIY awareness course for homeowners, tenants, landlords and members of the public who wish to gain a basic understanding of simple domestic electrical tasks around the home.

2790 The intention of the course is to promote safety awareness, understanding of basic domestic circuits and knowledge of the legal limitations surrounding electrical work. It is important to emphasise that this course does not qualify, certify or authorise any participant to work as an electrician, undertake professional electrical installation work or carry out electrical contracting services. The course is limited to very basic, non-complex domestic DIY activities such as replacing like for like sockets, replacing light fittings or switches, understanding basic isolation procedures, identifying common household electrical components, basic fault awareness and safety checks.

2795 Participants will also be clearly informed of the limits imposed by current regulations and the importance of using a qualified electrician for new circuit installations, consumer unit replacements, alterations to fixed wiring systems, inspection and testing certification, notifiable electrical works, commercial or industrial electrical work, any work requiring formal competency, certification or legal compliance.

2800 We will make it clear to all those undertaking the course that at no stage should attendance on this course be interpreted as electrical competence equivalent to that of a qualified electrician, an NVQ holder, approved contractor or certified electrical installer. This is intended as a leisure course purely for educational and safety awareness purposes with all practical activities carried out under supervision and within controlled training environments.

2805 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Minister on this initiative. I actually think it is a fun initiative. I think people will enjoy it and I genuinely hope there is a good uptake on this. He has managed to answer a lot of the concerns which were expressed to me by some members of the public in that the clear dividing lines between competencies of a qualified electrician and someone who has attended this course will be clearly reiterated during this course. Could I just ask, Madam Speaker, whether or not this course will be funded by the Government or whether it will be self-funded?

2815 **Hon. C P Santos:** Madam Speaker, this is going to be self-funded. This is part of a bigger programme where we want to do evening classes for people who are interested in smaller non-professional level qualifications, more on the DIY spectrum.

2820 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q242-4/2026

Cruise Liner Terminal –

Expression of interest; Agreement details; Operation cost

2825 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Madam Speaker, It is good to see the Minister in the Chamber. Please state which is/are the successful entity/entities following the expression of interest in respect of the development and operation of the Cruise Liner Terminal.

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

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Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 243 and 244.

Clerk: Question 243, the Hon. D J Bossino.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Which entity or entities has/have entered into an agreement with the Government for the design, refurbishment, development, management and operation of a Cruise Liner Terminal and associated facilities, the Expression of Interest of which was announced on 16 January?

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Clerk: Question 244, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Please state what will be the cost of the development and operation of the Cruise Liner Terminal.

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

Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): Madam Speaker, the expression of interest process has been completed, and the Government is currently engaged in discussions with the preferred bidder. As these discussions remain commercially sensitive and no final agreement has yet been concluded, it would not be appropriate to comment further at this stage. A formal announcement will be made once the process has been completed and all necessary agreements have been finalised.

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Hon. D J Bossino: When does the Hon. Minister envisage that he will be in a position to provide the answers to the questions that I posed in the Order Paper?

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Hon. C P Santos: Madam Speaker, we are hoping the agreement will be in place within the next few months, so in the final quarter of this calendar year.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Is he able to say how many expressions of interest were received? I know he said they were alighted on one, but how many were submitted?

Hon. C P Santos: We had an initial interest of 3, with 1 taking themselves out of the process, so 2.

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Hon. D J Bossino: I asked a similar question. The Hon. Minister was not in the Chamber at the time. This was last week. I asked a similar question of the Deputy Chief Minister in relation to another project, I think it was Rosia Bay. Is the Hon. Minister able to say whether the entity which has been alighted on is local or international?

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Hon. C P Santos: I do not think I can give this information. I do not think I should give any information until the process is completed. Not that it is any secret, it is just because I do not think it is the right time.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Given that there were 3 questions bunched together, so 242, one would be flogging a dead horse, I think, it will not pursue this, it is not going to be provided.

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Question 243 makes a reference, in effect, to the nature of the activities which were the subject of the expressions of interest. I have got it here, and I literally took it from the expressions of interest. It talked about design, refurbishment, development, management and operation of a — that is how it was drafted for the purpose of the expressions of interest — a cruise liner terminal and associated facilities at the port of Gibraltar. It talked about a modern cruise terminal. Is it the case that this one entity will be providing all these different services, which are quite disparate, I think, in and of themselves, at least some of them are? One thing is the operation, the other is the design. Is it the one entity that is going to be providing all of these services?

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Hon. C P Santos: Yes, that is correct. These entities — well, the entity that does this one in particular and the other ones that applied — are companies that do this worldwide. So, they are used to running operations and everything in the area.

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Hon. D J Bossino: You think I have let the cat out of the bag.

Hon. C P Santos: Because the entities that apply for this sort of work are entities that — already the 3 entities that applied have run cruise liner terminals all over the world.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Yes, but does he not appreciate that that is suggestive of at least an element, shall we say, an international element in the entity that the Minister is considering? So, in that sense, that is why I remarked that he may have let the cat out of the bag, given that he is talking of an international perspective because I cannot think of a locally based company which provides these services internationally. So, yes, I think the Deputy Chief Minister is about to rise.

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Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia): Madam Speaker, I said to the Vice-Chairman because he asked me to chair the board so, I think the answer to the question is that the hon. Member may very well think that but the Government could not possibly comment.

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Hon. D J Bossino: In true Sir Humphrey style. When the expressions of interest — the Hon. Minister may recall — talked about a timeline agreed by the Government, is the hon. Member able to state what timeline is being envisaged from when this project is announced to when it is completed?

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Hon. C P Santos: If it were up to me, it would have started two weeks ago but contractually, as I said, we are still under contractual discussions so, I do not have any final details on completion or starting dates yet.

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Hon. D J Bossino: The Hon. Minister needs to understand, and as he knows, this was a subject that we touched upon during the course of the debates and the viewpoints quite recently. When I put to him that this indeed was a feature, a prominent feature, in his Party's manifesto for the last General Election, which they won. They had very nice designs and all the rest of it. This is why I am pressing him in relation to a timeline but the answer is what it is. I cannot see, given what we have left of this Parliament, this being completed but I just say that by way of comment, and by way of question I referred to the manifesto it talks about, and I quote from it:

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Sustainability aspects will form a central feature of the new terminal.

It also says that:

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The ground floor will be the main passenger area.

It is very specific.

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The first floor will allow for events and conferences.

Then finally, it says with the possibility — not any higher than that —

With the possibility of shopping units being included in the design.

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Can he confirm or otherwise, or perhaps not comment, whether the contract which will be awarded to this entity will be providing all these amenities and features?

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Hon. C P Santos: Well, in actual fact, I will comment and tell you that it would provide better than what we expected when we put this in the manifesto in 2023.

Hon. D J Bossino: In what way will it be better?

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Hon. C P Santos: In the way that you will find out as soon as we announce it. When we announce who the preferred bidder is, I will put the designs out as soon as we announce this.

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Hon. D J Bossino: I am very grateful to the Speaker and appreciate her patience. Can he say, and I appreciate that I am pressing him, and that this may be something that he may not want to reveal at this stage, but can he say whether the cruise liner terminal will be in the current location or will it be, for example, in an area outside of it or be within the port area? I mean, I cannot envision it being any area other than the port area but is it in the current location or is it going to be somewhere else?

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Hon. C P Santos: Well, considering that the cruise liner terminal needs to be at the easiest, closest access to where the ship stops, so we are kind of limited to it being in the area that it is right now.

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Hon. D J Bossino: I am asking whether it is going to be specifically where it currently is. Is he able to confirm that? I mean, I think I have been quite kind to him in the way I posed the question.

Hon. C P Santos: Yes, it is within that area, yes.

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Madam Speaker: All right, I think that is the end of the questions to the Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism.

Adjournment

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Clerk: The Hon. Deputy Chief Minister.

Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia): Yes, Madam Speaker, I have the honour to move that this House do now adjourn to tomorrow, Thursday 2nd July at 3pm.

2975 **Madam Speaker:** I now propose the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to tomorrow, Thursday at 3pm.

2980 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Is the hon. Deputy Chief Minister able, if I may, Madam Speaker, to give us an indication — because I think we have got two more Ministers, the Chief Minister and perhaps the Minister for Economic Development — the hon. Member may not be in a position at this stage, but if he were, we would certainly appreciate it, to give us an indication whether we will be sitting then on Friday or whether we will go straight to, as the Members opposite have already indicated, the debates on the Appropriation Bill on Monday 6 July.

2985 **Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I think it is too early to say at this stage.

Madam Speaker: I now propose the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to tomorrow, Thursday at 3pm. I now put the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to tomorrow at 3pm. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Passed.

2990 This House will now adjourn to tomorrow at 3pm.

The House adjourned at 6.48 p.m.