



HM Government of Gibraltar

Ministry of Education, Heritage,
Environment, Energy and
Climate Change

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**Minister for Education, Environment, Heritage, Energy & Climate
Change**

Budget Speech 2018/2019

PART II: Public Health, Environment and Utilities

Mr Speaker

PUBLIC HEALTH

I also hold Ministerial responsibility for Public Health. During the last year the Public Health Department was modernised and rebranded as Public Health Gibraltar and conducted or participated in many public events, such as:

Flu and Antibiotic Awareness

A public awareness campaign was organised on Thursday 12th January with a focus on hygiene, how to treat the flu and when to access primary or secondary care.

Mental Health

The Health Promotion Officers coordinated a multi-disciplinary presence for World Health Day 2017 on Friday 7th April in the ICC foyer. Several articles covering concerns of depression across the lifespan were published in the Gibraltar Chronicle.

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The Health Promotion Officers presented a stand at Westside school on 12th May for Mental Health week; the pitch was well received, many students and staff interested in information on stress, anxiety and depression.

The Health Promotion Officers also ran a campaign outside the ICC for World Mental Health day on 10th October with the support of the Gibraltar Welfare Society and Students from the Gibraltar College. The topic this year was mental health in the workplace; community engagement was noticeable this year, and several people requested information regarding GHA counselling services.

Sun Safety

The Skin Cancer Screening Day was held on Saturday 22th April 2017.

The Health Promotion Officers worked with UNITE, the Union during the music festival 'Gibraltar Calling' on 2nd and 3rd September to provide free sunscreen to all attending the concert. This event has been on-going for the last 3 years and is very well-received by the public.

Smoking

A public awareness campaign was organised on Wednesday 8th March, 'No Smoking Day' highlighting the importance of quitting smoking and where to go for support to quit. Resource packs were distributed to several departments / companies prior to the event, including Ocean views, HM Customs, the RGP, Boarders & Coastguards, and several gambling firms.

The Health Promotion Officers also covered World No Tobacco Day 31st May on GBC TV.

Screening

The Health Promotion Officers designed leaflets and provided posters for the Cervical Screening Awareness week launch (12-16th June 2017) at the PCC.

The Health Promotion Officers and Screening Administrator teamed up with several professionals from the GHA, Nursing Students and members from Cancer Relief Gibraltar to raise awareness about bowel health and the importance of participating in the GHA Bowel Screening programme. A new bowel health poster was designed, printed and used for the event.

Men's Health

The Health Promotion Officers assisted the School of health studies with a campaign to launch a new Men's Health Initiative, organising an initial awareness campaign at the Piazza on May 10th. Health Promotion Officers attended and participated in several of the sessions that that ran



through till October covering Screening, Cancer, Mental Health, Cardiac Health and Healthy Lifestyles.

Education

Several posters on healthy eating, exercise, sun safety and hygiene were given to St Joseph's school.

The Health Promotion Officers delivered a presentation covering healthy eating, exercise, hygiene, head lice and dental health talk to students of St Paul's first school.

The Health Promotion Officers delivered several presentations to the year 8 and year 10 students of Bayside that covered aspects of healthy eating, portion sizes, and food swap ideas. The talks have been very well-received and involved active discussion.

Breastfeeding

The Health Promotion Officers supported the Breastfeeding Awareness event on 22nd June at the ICC, alongside the Health Visitors and the Gibraltar breastfeeding Association.

The annual 'Big Latch On' on Saturday August 5th organised by Gibraltar Breastfeeding Association was also supported by the HP team.

Sports

The Health Promotion Officers conducted a series of activities over 3 weeks for the GSLA summer sports programme. Crucial aspects of healthy eating were covered through a power point presentation which was followed by a number of novel activities based on eating a well- balanced heart-healthy diet and keeping active.

Senior Citizens

The Health Promotion department supported the Citizen's Advisory Bureau in their Stay Safe campaign for senior citizens of the South District, covering healthy living considerations for the elderly (Tuesday 30th May).

Diabetes

World Diabetes Day on 14th November was organised and supported by the adult and paediatric diabetic nurses; the focus this year was on Women and diabetes.



and was represented by the Director of Public Health at the Inter-Island Public Health Conference in Jersey.

New Initiatives

The new Health Promotion Website was officially launched last year. New leaflets and posters were designed and printed on subjects such as Water, Hand-Washing, Diabetes, Healthy Bowel). New infomercials produced included Stroke, and Salt.

The hard working Health Promotion Officers organised a campaign on noise-induced hearing loss in conjunction with the Department of Equality and Gibraltar Hearing Impairment and Tinnitus Association (GHITA).

Other campaigns have included one in conjunction with the Gibraltar Cardiac Association and promotion of meat-free diets,

The team contributes regularly to GBC Radio health file and the Gibraltar Chronicle and have many public health aspects over the year.

Health Improvement Strategy

The Public Health department launched its three-year Health Improvement Strategy in January 2015 and some of the achievements described in this and previous Budget reports have been gained within that strategy.

A new three-year Health Improvement Strategy is due to be launched by the end of this year. The content of the new strategy is under development, but it will continue to build on the priority areas identified the previous strategy, including:

- Promoting Healthy Eating
- Reduction of Childhood Obesity (described separately below)
- Reducing the Harm from Tobacco
- Promoting Exercise and Physical Activity
- Preventing, detecting and reducing the burdens from Diabetes
- Improving Sexual Health
- Tackling Alcohol and Substance Misuse
- Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing.
- In addition, the new strategy will aim to make progress on two key Manifesto commitments of the Government:
 - Lifestyle improvement and the 'Health MOT' programme.
 - Self-Care Approach to encourage all citizens to take control of their health and develop self-care awareness.



Mr Speaker, the Public Health team is a small, but extremely hardworking team.

The head of the team is the Director of Public Health, Dr Vijay Kumar, who has functions both within the Gibraltar Health Authority and within my Ministry.

Dr Kumar has for many years provided excellent advice to successive Governments on health matters, and has worked extensively on many boards and committees, has represented Gibraltar in meetings and conferences abroad, but above all has gained the respect and affection of Gibraltar. This year, he was awarded an MBE for his services. Vijay is retiring this year. I worked with Vijay from his arrival in Gibraltar when I was on the Board on the GHA, and want to thank him for his work and support and for his tremendous contribution to our community.

ENVIRONMENT

Mr Speaker,

Seven years are a very short time in politics when you want to achieve so much and have so much ground to make up. Let me start the Environment section of my seventh Budget Speech by saying that there is a huge amount more to do. But as I say this, I take comfort from the fact that many things that we now take those for granted were unheard of just seven years ago. And from the fact also that my voice is no longer a lone voice crying in the wilderness – so many others now care, and are committed, to continuing to improve the quality of our environment.

Seven years later, recognition of the importance of the environment has taken on new dimensions at a Gibraltar and an international level.

The challenge to the environment of the future that EU exit poses cannot be understated. As Brexit looms near, our focus and priorities are realigning to ensure even greater recognition of this importance. As the Chief Minister and I have both stated on more than one occasion, Gibraltar must and will maintain EU environmental standards as a minimum. This is vital, not just for our own quality of life, but for our international reputation and standing.

Mr Speaker, We must guard against those who would suggest that caring for the environment is a challenge to the economy. Those who are short-sighted enough to think this could do well to recall American professor emeritus Guy McPherson saying, “If you really think that the economy is more important than the environment try holding your breath while you count your money”.

An economy based on sound environmental principles is longer lasting and more resilient, and the economic benefits of green businesses have only just started to be tapped in our jurisdiction. I will be working closely with the business community during the coming year to bring these benefits to Gibraltar.

Proof that it is perfectly possible to grow as an economy and progress on the environment is the extraordinary fact that as Gibraltar’s economy continues to grow, as we have seen in this session, carbon emissions and our carbon footprint continue to fall! This is a formidable achievement.



My team, led by Environment CEO and Chief Scientist Dr Liesl Mesilio, and Senior Scientist Stephen Warr, and I are working closely also with Her Majesty's Government and our colleagues in the Overseas Territories, who share many of our challenges and opportunities, to ensure that we adapt to a new, uncompromising form of environmental governance.

To this effect, we will shortly be publishing our 25 year environment plan. This, Mr Speaker, is environmental stewardship and multi-generational responsibility, setting standards not just for ourselves, but for future generations too. We are the first Government to fully embrace long-term environmental management, with all our policies and actions aimed at improvements beyond the short four-year terms of Parliament. Nature doesn't come in four year tranches. Much of what we do on environment takes time, but reaps much longer-lasting benefit.

This strategy will be our blueprint over the next twenty-five years and will demonstrate our ambitious environmental aspirations. This strategy will be Government led, but will depend on civil society to seize the opportunities presented and assume its responsibility to play its role in the delivery of environmental leadership.

The Strategy is divided into three parts; Governance, Management and Implementation. Each topic within these parts has corresponding objectives which will carry Gibraltar's environmental agenda forward to 2040 and beyond.

It will set targets in many areas, such as on reduction and cessation of the use of non-essential single use plastic, like plastic bags, bottles and straws; it will include the time limits for diesel-fueled vehicles and internal combustion engines set by the Chief Minister in this Budget, it will set targets on carbon emissions and other pollutants, identify incentives for energy efficiency, and much more. The community is now fully willing to embrace these initiatives than it was even a few short years ago. I was, for example, very pleased to see support for the principle of limiting the future use of diesel powered vehicles in the Chamber of Commerce's latest annual report. Businesses are already embracing these initiatives. The Hunter Group's work with Aquagib to provide a refill scheme, spearheaded by the Nautilus Project, is an example. This year Aquagib itself is studying locations for water fountains to further reduce the need to buy small plastic bottles of water. More about plastic later.

At an international level, Gibraltar continues to seek inclusion in international Agreements, including the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Bern Convention, the Barcelona Convention, and the Intercontinental Biosphere Reserve of the Mediterranean.

Environment within the wider service

Mr Speaker, the public service has to lead the way. Already, Government Departments, Agencies and Authorities, and many Government contractors, have a policy of not using plastic bottles after current stocks are used up. This Parliament has taken the same step – I believe the first parliament in the Commonwealth to have done so.



To show its commitment to sustainability, the Government has engaged a Commissioner for Sustainable Development who will advise further on how we can drive this agenda, vital to our survival.

Mr. Speaker, the Green Filter is still driving continuous improvement throughout the public sector. Well over 500 building applications have been reviewed during the past financial year and the Environment Department continues to assist the Procurement office in driving the environmental agenda into the new e-procurement platform.

Waste management and recycling

Mr. Speaker, waste management, including recycling remains one of our key responsibilities and priorities. I am extremely pleased to report that recycling figures have seen a further improvement from those reported last year, with an increase of approximately 108% on our recycling rates across the board. The biggest thanks for this achievement must go to the public. It is their contribution that is allowing us to fulfil our commitment to improving recycling practices at home and in the workplace.

We expect that this financial year will see the commissioning of an expanded recycling facility near Europa Advance Road to increase recycling rates even further and improve the way in which we handle our urban waste.

Sewage treatment

I am extremely pleased that work has now begun in earnest on bringing about the new sewage treatment plant and we expect the project to be completed in 2020. An advanced works contract was signed in January and includes the design and survey work required for final planning, environmental assessment and preliminary site works. It is being carefully designed to fit into the stunning landscape of Europa Point. This development is a huge achievement. There were so many obstacles and setbacks, but it was not something that we could leave undone like others have before.

Litter

Mr. Speaker, sadly we still have litter hotspots in our streets, and I once again appeal to the public to refrain from placing rubbish in the wrong places and at the wrong times. The Department's Litter Warden Section is taking a zero-tolerance approach in this regard. Over 50 litter fines have been issued by this section alone in recent months. The Environmental Agency and the Royal Gibraltar Police and well as the Environmental monitors and feedback team led by the Cleansing Superintendent are also taking part in the collaborative effort to deter offenders. As a result, there has been a reduction in the number of instances of fly tipping in some key hotspots. The use of cameras is undoubtedly helping the Department in tackling the problem and additional cameras will be deployed in hotspots this year.



Meetings of the Litter Committee which I specifically setup as a platform to voice concerns and review progress have continued to take place constructively.

The Environmental Safety Group's Clean up the World campaign continues to provide an example of how the citizen can contribute.

The Department is working with the Chamber to identify ways of improving the effectiveness of rubbish collection in many areas. I am very hopeful that the new cleaning contract, which contains a much wider set of requirements than the previous one, will go a long way towards improving the situation further. I would like to repeat once more the Government's commitment to the continuity of the workforce at this time of change.

Working with the Community

Discussion and collaboration with NGOs continues. I meet regularly with the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society, the ESG and the Nautilus Project. I thank them, and all other volunteers, for their invaluable contribution to Gibraltar's heritage and environment.

The Nature Conservancy Council continues to be consulted on all issues associated with the protection of Gibraltar's natural environment in line with my statutory obligations under the Nature Protection Act.

I also continue meetings with the 'Brexit and the Environment' working group and my Brexit advisory group which is comprised of both public and private sector officials. This advisory group attends regular meetings with me in London as we prepare for new working practices following EU exit.

General environmental education and awareness

The Department has once again successfully delivered its school environmental education programme. This year's theme focused on beating plastic pollution and culminated with the hugely successful celebration of World Environment Day on the 5th June at Commonwealth Park.

Other environmental education programmes have also progressed steadily. The ClimACT project continues to take shape as environmental audits are carried out in selected schools. A range of environmental criteria are now being monitored in participating schools with a view to speeding up the transition to low-carbon and plastic-free schools in the coming years.

Plastic

Plastics, Mr Speaker, are now recognised as one of the largest threats to the natural environment, in particular the oceans, and a potential very serious threat to human health. The Government has introduced legislation banning the importation of cosmetics and other products that contain plastic.



We are proud to be one of the first jurisdictions in the world to take such action. As we have seen, this budget introduces significant measures towards furthering this aim. The Department is also working alongside well-known local retailers to reduce the use of single-use plastics bags. The work that is being carried out on this by the Nautilus Project merits special attention and praise. The 25 year plan I mentioned earlier will show that significant steps will be taken in this direction during the coming months.

The public, and businesses, have responded extremely well, to both local efforts and Sky's Ocean Rescue campaign. Citizen involvement is key. And stopping plastic use will have direct benefits in the seas around us, where turtles, whales and other animals are at daily risk of death due to our actions.

The forthcoming Island Games afford real opportunities to promote the environment, and my colleague the Minister for Sport will shortly be announcing some of these.

Energy and climate change

Mr Speaker, Man-induced Climate Change is the biggest threat humanity has ever faced. In Gibraltar specifically, the near-certainty of considerable sea level rise in coming decades, and the increased frequency and severity of storms – already noticeable in recent years – will have a real and direct impact.

Government remains fully committed to tackling the causes of climate change. As part of its obligations under the Compact of Mayors, Gibraltar continues to produce a city-level inventory of greenhouse gas emissions. Gibraltar is one of a handful of cities who have reported a fully complete inventory and has in fact been commended by the Carbon Disclosure Project (to whom we report) for the completeness of its submission. The results so far show that our carbon footprint is reducing by a very small amount. The mere fact that it is not increasing despite a growing economy is a sign of success, but we can do more to force emissions down, and a strategy to achieve this is being prepared.

Mr. Speaker, carbon emissions from power generation in Gibraltar dropped significantly for the third consecutive year in 2017, even before the conversion to gas. The Gibraltar Electricity Authority reports that emissions dropped from 161,358 tonnes in 2016 to 152,287 tonnes in 2017. That is a total of over 9,000 tonnes or nearly 6% less. Emissions in 2017 were over 27,000 tonnes less than in 2014 or a reduction of 15.3% in three years. This phenomenal drop is simply not usual in countries experiencing the kind of growth we have seen in this budget.

Switching off lights and devices, changing to low energy lighting, and increasing the energy efficiency of buildings have been measures that we have been encouraging since 2012 and are clearly showing results. We must therefore continue in earnest, as we can undeniably make a difference.

Investing in renewable energy is another key component of our climate change mitigation strategy. Works on a 3 mega-watt solar photovoltaic project are well underway starting with the installation of solar PV panels in the New Harbours estate. Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to be able to announce



a project that will see the installation of solar PV panels on the roof of the Mid-Town Car Park. I am just as excited to be able to say that we will shortly be publishing a tender for the development of large-scale solar PV panels in key locations around Gibraltar. These green developments will help us meet our target of producing 20% of our energy from renewable sources whilst similarly reducing emissions and improving our air quality. Discussions continue on identifying other renewable energy sources, with the possibility too of expanding the pilot wave power plant which has been extremely useful to EcoWave in identifying technical problems and improving the designs.

The Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme (ESOS) is also taking shape with companies having registered under the scheme and striving to carry out their energy saving obligations.

All this effort, Mr. Speaker, will tie in nicely with an upcoming major legislative piece on which my team is working; the Climate Change Act, as well as our revised Climate Change Programme. These will help Gibraltar meet its international climate change obligations and to harness the economic benefits of green investment.

Air Quality

Mr. Speaker, our air quality monitoring programme has continued to operate during this past year thanks to the efforts of the Environmental Agency and Government appointed UK-based air quality consultants, Ricardo's.

The results for 2017 have just been presented to me and will as usual be published. Concentrations of nitrogen dioxide increased slightly overall in 2017 compared to 2016, but the compliance status remains the same as in 2016, and the values remain below those of previous years.

Despite the small rise in 2017, Witham's Road still shows a strong decline over the previous decade. The rise is likely due to a combination of the effects of shipping activity such as within GibDock, and the nearby construction site.

Rosia Road monitoring site shows annual mean nitrogen dioxide concentrations below the limit value of 40 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ for the second year running. This is a welcome achievement and suggests that the effects at Witham's were indeed local.

The good news is that the preliminary data for 2018 show a steep decline in NO₂ at both sites, and hence a strong improvement in air quality, suggesting that 2018 could have our best ever recorded quality of air at these sites.

Both fractions of particulate matter, namely PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} were also EU-compliant with our limit values.

Despite the positive trend continuing, I am still not happy with air quality in Gibraltar as my aim is to see it compliant with the more stringent WHO guidelines. Air quality will of course improve significantly with the new power station and the permanent closure of all the other aged or temporary diesel plants. But this is not enough. Estimates suggest that in the south district the amount of pollution before 2011 could be apportioned approximately 80% to diesel power



generation and 20% to traffic. So while the main contributor will have gone, we need to work still on traffic, and of course, on shipping.

Therefore, I continue to work with my colleague the Minister for Traffic and Transport, supporting his work in the STTPP to reduce traffic and reduce speed and to encourage the transition from diesel and petrol through hybrids to electric vehicles – and we will see more progress on this in the coming months.

We continue discussions with GibDock in order to achieve total onshore power for ships in dry dock and alongside, and the GEA and the Port Authority are looking at options for the installation of onshore power at the Port. Gibraltar will of course benefit from international measures on reducing the impact of marine fuel which are imminent. The expected increase in the use of LNG for shipping will also have a positive impact.

Mr Speaker, during the course of the coming year an air quality monitor will be placed in the North District and I will be commissioning an Air Quality Plan to chart the actions necessary to continue to improve the quality of the air that those of us who live in Gibraltar breathe.

Beaches

Mr Speaker, last year saw an improvement in the water quality classification of our beaches. I am pleased to report that even Western Beach has seen an improvement during 2017 and the latest classification results show all of our beaches attaining excellent status.

As we are all aware, there have been several high intensity Atlantic storms this year. These caused considerable damage to our beaches and delayed the commencement of preparatory works. Despite the odds, the beaches were officially opened in time for the summer season. Some works are still ongoing at Camp Bay given that the entirety of the revetment had to be redressed, although these works will be completed very shortly indeed.

Catalan Bay has also seen improvements this year with the entire beach facilities building, including toilets and showers, being refurbished ahead of the bathing season. A further sand regeneration programme, has been carried out in Catalan Bay and for the first time in Camp Bay, with approximately 10,000 tonnes of clean sand being deposited. I must thank our beaches and maintenance team for their hard work, which ensured that we were ready for the summer.

Mr. Speaker, storms have not been the only natural phenomenon we have had to contend with this year. We have also witnessed a substantial increase in the number of Portuguese Men of War and mauve stingers drifting into our beaches. Our lifeguards have been vigilant from the outset in order to maintain public safety. All our lifeguards receive an induction course on marine wildlife in addition to first aid and general life guard training. We have also worked very closely with the Ministry for Equality to include disability language and etiquette training as part of their induction.

This year will see the introduction of a beach cameras portal. The service will be operational this month and users will be able to check the state of our beaches online in real time, an excellent addition to our list of improvements.



Marine surveillance and fishing

Mr. Speaker, marine surveillance and research have become some of the Department's routine tasks. Great strides have been made ever since the Marine Protection Regulations were published in 2014 and this last year has been no exception, as we continue to push the barriers of conservation action.

On the research front, recent developments include Department officials working alongside regional experts to gather detailed information on the cetaceans and marine reptiles that use British Gibraltar Territorial Waters. This work adds to the existing monitoring programmes developed in line with the EU's Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea.

Our scientific dive team has also been busy and continues to work hand-in-hand with local diving clubs to collect valuable marine records. Shortly, dedicated anchor buoys will be deployed within the Seven Sisters' marine conservation zone to enable divers to dive without the need to deploy anchors.

Following on from last year's successful implementation of a temporary fishing ban on Common Octopus in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters, this year's initiative extended the prohibition to six weeks and introduced a new conservation measure whereby the maximum catch limit was also restricted to 5 kilograms per person for two subsequent weeks. Other species, including Groupers and Common Sea Bass, will also be subjected to similar conservation measures, in consultation with the Fishing Working Group, as part of the DEHCC's wider Marine Conservation Strategy for our waters. I thank the members of the Group for their work and valuable advice.

Mr. Speaker, I recently announced the creation of a Dolphin Protection Zone in the north of BGTW within the Bay of Gibraltar. Additional measures including a requirement to report any recreational catches of Billfish species, such as the Mediterranean Swordfish, have also been enacted. The Department's Environmental Protection & Research Unit merits special attention here since they are largely responsible for ensuring that the multitude of conservation measures implemented are adhered to at sea. For this I am thankful and welcome the ongoing rapport with the Royal Gibraltar Police, HM Customs and the Royal Navy.

Environmental Health

Mr. Speaker, the Environmental Agency continues to advise me in the areas of nuisance, building control, waste regulation, ship sanitation, COMAH, food inspections, water quality, housing, dust control, inspection of x-ray facilities, pest control and food import controls.

They monitor the quality of our bathing waters, working in partnership with the DEHCC particularly during the bathing season, to ensure the safety of bathers.

They service and calibrate our three air quality monitoring stations and liaise with pollution specialists in this field. Additionally, they continue to participate and are expanding the EU



Vectornet programme. This programme is based on sharing data relative to the distribution of the mosquito, tick, sand fly and other disease vectors.

Their new website has been launched, providing easier access to users for the dissemination of environmental information. All forms within the website are now able to be filled in and submitted online. Their mobile App Gibenviro continues to be improved and provides information to the public on a variety of environmental topics including bathing waters, air quality and recycling.

They also work actively with the Department and the Litter Wardens to complement the Government's anti-dog fouling campaign. It is largely thanks to their efforts in collecting samples that fines are now being issued which will lead to a reduction in dog fouling hotspots.

The Agency has been particularly active this year in its work on dust control and most especially in working with HSE and HSL in UK in strictly ensuring the safety elements of the new LNG plant construction and design.

Cemetery

Mr Speaker, the appointment of a contractor for the maintenance of the planted areas in North Front Cemetery has led to a dramatic improvement. We have now appointed a contractor for the upkeep and maintenance of the Cemetery. This will ensure that the natural areas of vegetation are maintained to an acceptable standard. Works on planting more trees, on maintaining the surrounding walls, paths, public toilets and benches continue. Areas are cleaned daily and the cemetery is kept as a safe, quiet place for visitors. We continue to upgrade the drainage system to avoid flooding during the winter months. I am happy to announce too that the review of Cemetery Act is completed and the Bill is now on the Order Paper of this House.

Mr Speaker I stated last year that the Cemetery is a difficult place in which to work. Not only do the staff manage the burials and exhumations which in themselves are difficult, but they also carry out additional works and repairs. For this, I thank them.

Green and Planted areas, urban wildlife

Mr. Speaker, green spaces have crucial environmental benefits. As urban development progresses, the value of green spaces in Gibraltar increases: contrary to what some say, there has been no decrease in green areas in Gibraltar. Development during this Government's tenure has been on brown or former brown sites. Indeed the amount of green space has increased, notably with Commonwealth Park and Theatre Royal Park, and will now increase further with the new park north of the leisure centre.

The Department constantly monitors developments to ensure green areas are not lost, or that they are re-provided. Furthermore, we are continuously looking to increase the number of trees in Gibraltar and over one hundred trees have been planted over the past year.



In December 2017, the Department launched Planning for Biodiversity; an urban wildlife conservation and planning guide, which promotes the protect and enhancement of our urban wildlife.

Swifts are a feature of Gibraltar, and part of our urban heritage. They also rid us of millions of mosquitos every summer. Bats are equally important at night. Gibraltar was probably the first place in the world to require swift nest and bat roost sites to be provided in all developments. We can however still do more to protect existing sites and enhance the population and we will be leading on an initiative to do just this over the coming months.

Mr Speaker, we are encouraging walking around Gibraltar, and will continue to maintain the paths on the Upper Rock. During the next twelve months we will also be creating two new public paths, one in the Buena Vista area and another new coastal path in the Europa area.

We will link the network of paths with the Commonwealth Walkway initiative, which will highlight both our heritage and the importance of the Commonwealth family.

Botanic Gardens

The development of the Gibraltar Botanic Gardens continues, with new schemes to improve the Alameda aesthetically and work towards sustainability. Significantly, the Gibraltar Botanic Gardens continue to raise their profile as a global centre of excellence for the study and cultivation of cacti.

The children's education programme is now one of the botanic gardens' flagship programmes. The gardens are now developing the Biodome, a new, bespoke education area. The management of the Alameda has decided to do this by seeking crowd funding and not Government funds, and plans are at an advanced stage.

Gibraltar Nature Reserve

Mr Speaker, it has been an exceptional spring this year and our Gibraltar Nature Reserve has been extraordinarily radiant. The diversity of wild flowers on display and abundance of fauna have caught the attention of many. If we add to this the multitude of improvements that have been carried out recently, we are surely progressing well along the path to a continuously improving nature reserve experience.

Against all odds and despite the severe storms that have battered the Upper Rock, our tourist sites have continued operating smoothly. The much anticipated Skywalk was officially inaugurated in March by Mark Hamill and we are now proud to be able to say that we have yet another world class visitor attraction within the Gibraltar Nature Reserve. Since its inauguration, over 57,000 customers have gone to visit the site and many have posted their pictures on social media. News of the attraction has reached far and wide.

Other parts of the Reserve have also seen improvements. A new audio guide system has been installed inside the WWII tunnels. The new system is allowing us to increase the throughput of



people visiting the WWII tunnels whilst not compromising visitor experience and quality. I am also pleased to say that the attraction is now open seven days a week, as is the interpretation centre at O'Hara's Battery.

Mr Speaker, the Department has also taken over the management, regulation and maintenance of lower St Michael's Cave. Improvements to this hidden gem are presently being carried out and include a complete overhaul of all safety equipment and lighting. These improvements will secure the sustainable management of lower St Michael's Cave for years to come.

One of the key strategic changes implemented in the Reserve this year was increasing the entry fees for non-residents on the 1st April. This increase adequately reflects the enhanced quality of our product and the addition of our new attractions and improvements. In April alone, this measure increased revenue by £175,159.

Sometimes it is the smaller things that matter and we have paid attention to these too. New bins, picnic tables and balustrades are being installed in the Reserve and our reintroduction and captive breeding programmes have continued in earnest with both partridges and rabbits being released.

Indeed, the secretive Barbary Partridge appears to be secretive no longer. Such has been the success of the re-introduction programme run jointly by the Department and by GONHS, that they are appearing and nesting in many new locations. I remember being accused by a former GSD Environment spokesman for being responsible for the extinction of this emblematic species from Gibraltar. I think that the GSD should have learnt by now that, when given time, results follow. Commonwealth Park is another example of this – look at it now!

Great work also is being done by the Department and GONHS in the captive breeding and rehabilitation of birds of prey.

Plans are also progressing to create a new area of natural habitat in the area of Devil's Tower Road, which will at the same time afford protection against falling rocks for road users.

Mr Speaker, the Gibraltar Nature Reserve, our flagship product, is set to continue to improve and flourish while enhancing our unique biodiversity. We have more exciting plans for the future, which will this year include the setting up of a new educational centre on the Upper Rock.

Yellow-legged Gulls

As a result of our persistence, the long-term trend in the breeding population of gulls in Gibraltar continues to be one of decline. Despite the limitations in gull control that are imposed when working in an urban environment, surveys show that, although they do still create disturbance, the urban population now appears to be decreasing as well. This often difficult and dangerous work, which includes removing nests from tall rooftops, is one of the most valued services that is performed for the public by the Avian Control Unit, and their efforts and dedication deserve to be recognised.



Macaques

Mr. Speaker, the management of our macaques is a shows how the control of the population is best carried out by means other than extensive culling, and where carefully managed use of contraception, with some selective removal of individuals delivers notable results. There will always be periods of contact, but we have been successful over the past year in reducing the nuisance value considerably.

Surgical contraception by way of laparoscopy continues and our veterinarian Mark Pizarro continues to treat a select number of macaques from most of the groups in close consultation with the macaque team. This seems to have resulted in a drop in the number of births this year, which should serve to stabilise the population in the future.

Environmental Legislation

Mr Speaker, delivering home grown environmental policy and legislation has always been a strong suit of this administration, as it was of the previous GSLP Government. The following pieces of legislation are planned for the coming year:

- Climate Change Act
- Revised Cemetery Act
- Revised Animals Act
- Pet Regulations
- Circus Animals Act
- Balloon Regulations
- Revised Heritage and Antiquities Act
- Amendment to the Electricity Authority Act to allow renewable feed-in agreements

ELECTRICITY

Mr Speaker, By far the most significant development in Gibraltar in the coming financial year will be the commissioning and putting into operation of the new gas-fired power station, whose first engine was very successfully tested for the first time this last weekend. The first consignment of LNG is expected to arrive for commissioning on gas during the summer, made possible thank to the HSE-led safety safeguards have been meticulous and stricter than in any similar plant anywhere in the world.

The new generators, initially manned by Bouygues, will contribute very significantly towards generation cost savings and a much cleaner and quieter environment.

I would like to thank the GEA, its CEO Michael Caetano, and the teams at Bouygues, Shell and Gasnor for getting us here. Most particularly I want to thank the Financial Secretary, Albert Mena, who has very effectively led on the complex discussions on contractual and practical matters and without whom this project would not have come to where it is now.



The last twelve months have seen a huge effort going not only into the new power station project, but also into the associated new high voltage distribution centres, infrastructure and the new high voltage cabling network.

The GMES power station (ex-MOD power station), although on 'stand-by' mode had unfortunately to be called back into service for a short period this last winter as a result of cold weather. It is however now very likely that it will be fully decommissioned within the next few months just as the old OESCO station was some time ago.

Mr Speaker, I think it is also worth mentioning that the only recent power interruption occurred in January, and was as a result of a high voltage interconnector cable fault, due to aging equipment. Gone are the days of regular power outages due to lack of capacity. Something that we promised to do in 2011 and that we have so successfully accomplished. Customers enjoy a power supply reliability in line with other western European countries despite our lack of electrical connection to a European wide grid!

The number of consumers again rose slightly to 20,616, an increase of 189 from the previous year. The total installed generating capacity at the end of the year continued to be 76.98 MWe.

The cost of fuel supplied during the last financial year continued to fluctuate, with £390.98 per tonne in April 2017, increasing to £458.48 at the end of January 2018 before dropping slightly to £433.40 per tonne in March 2018.

The impact of these varying oil prices has not been great, at least for half the financial year, given that the Authority had entered into a fuel hedging contract which had been in place for the last six years when the cost of fuel was considerably higher. The fuel hedge contract terminated in Sept 2017.

The Authority continues to upgrade and expand the Network and SCADA system (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) used to monitor the generation and main distribution system thus providing a better and faster response when dealing with power outage scenarios.

Improvements to the public lighting network continue by replacing existing street lights with LED and /or low energy lanterns thus further reducing overall consumption.

Training and development of technical and non-technical staff continues this year with an emphasis on safety and on the new power station project and its state of the art technology. Employees have already started attending training courses organised both locally and abroad.

WATER

Mr Speaker,

Continuing on Utilities, I am pleased to report that AquaGib Ltd has maintained and improved on its levels of service and performance indicators in respect to the provision of potable and seawater supply, and sewerage services in Gibraltar. In order to achieve this level of service AquaGib has undertaken an expenditure of £11,556,000.



AquaGib has continued to invest in capital projects as part of its asset replacement plan aimed at maintaining and improving water infrastructure assets in Gibraltar. The current approved investment plan is set at £3.2m over the 5-year period to 31 March 2020. During this last year, a total of £573,668 were spent on capital projects, which included:

- The replacement of potable and seawater mains.
- Replacement of customers' water meters, meter cupboards and meter manifolds.
- Replacement and installation of new membranes for Governor's Cottage RO Plants A & B, increasing their efficiency.

In addition to the above, AquaGib has invested approximately £650,000 this period in replacing the High-Pressure Pump, VFD (Variable Frequency Drive), Energy Recovery System and Booster Pump on each of the 4 RO Plants at Governor's Cottage. This investment has a payback period of around 2 years and will result in a huge energy saving of approximately 30% per annum.

During the period AquaGib has commenced on a long-term project with HMGoG to further increase the PW/SW delivery from the Waterworks reservoirs to the Westside area. This HMGoG financed project is expected to take approximately 12-18 months to complete and commenced in this financial year.

HERITAGE

Mr Speaker, I now move on to my responsibilities for Heritage. Having been at the helm for a year and a half, Most people do not realise the extent of the fortifications, city walls, monuments, listed buildings and natural heritage sites which Gibraltar is privileged to have and has a duty to protect.

Most of these heritage assets are by their very nature, "old". So their state of preservation varies. The Heritage Division of the Department, led by Marcello Sanguinetti has commenced a refurbishment programme for these sites, most notably, the making safe and re-pointing of the Almond Tower at the Moorish Castle. This was in danger of collapse, so we are extremely pleased that a combination of teams from Technical Services, the Museum and their conservator, together with a specialist contractor are in the process of restoring this magnificent structure.

Other areas have included Southport Gates, the Garrison Library balustrade, the Military Heritage Centre and Princess Caroline's Battery.

Mr Speaker, a new archaeologist is now in post and will be assisting the Department in its duties and one of the fundamental aspects of this is the issuing of advice to contractors and the Town Planning Department. Over the past 18 months, we have been extremely successful in de-conflicting heritage and development.

The scale of development in Gibraltar also means that there is a great emphasis on archaeological watching briefs. Such a brief led to the discovery of a whole network of bunkers and passageways at the Lathbury Barrack site which as a result was properly surveyed and photographed.

Mr Speaker, we have carried out beautification works in the area of Europa Point using the magazine previously known as the Du Farol or "the last shop in Europe". Visitors there will no



longer experience “much cheapness”, rather interpretation informing on the World Heritage site, history and natural history of the area and the use of the Strait of Gibraltar through the ages. This information will now be seen by the many visitors and will also complement the new sports complex.

Improvements to the area will now continue to the north, with the embellishment of the Nun’s Well site already commencing. Both these projects will ensure that the eastern part of the Europa Point plateau remain open and accessible to public use.

Gorham’s Cave

The opening of the viewing platform overlooking the Gorham’s Cave Complex World Heritage Site Caves at Europa Advance Road now gives the opportunity to view the caves where Neanderthals once lived and to receive detailed information on their story. A programme of visits to the site itself is now in progress and these are proving a great success.

Major works were also carried out at Vanguard Cave to protect the sediment slope from erosion by the sea. Gabions have been placed on the lower section and this protects it from the elements, especially in the light of what seem to be ever more powerful. Works were also carried out at Mediterranean Steps to stabilise a section that was creating minor rock-falls and impacting on the entry point to the Gorham’s Cave complex. These remedial works also helped to make the area safe for the many users of Med Steps.

The caves continue to provide incredible items such as the discovery last August of a Neanderthal child’s canine milk tooth and as a result, excavations for this year have been extended by one month. There has also been an expansion of the volunteer participation scheme and this year the Museum will have an unprecedented number of Gibraltarian students in the excavations.

The importance of the exposure that Gibraltar gets through TV Channels like the BBC, CBS News, Japan’s NHK TV, or publications such as the New York Times and the Lost World book as part of the development of the World Heritage site can not be underestimated. The Gibraltar Museum team continues at the forefront of research into the Neanderthals worldwide as is demonstrated time and again.

Heritage Trust

Mr Speaker, We have developed an extremely honest and fruitful working relationship with the Gibraltar Heritage Trust, which continues to uphold the highest standards in defence of our Heritage. Their work could not be done without the tireless efforts of the Chair, the Chief Executive Officer, the Board members and the countless volunteers who give of their time. These include those continuing the embellishment and research work at Witham’s Cemetery and the Fortress of Gibraltar Group who recently discovered the location of an SOE Transmitter room that had been forgotten. As keen military enthusiasts, they have also helped in mapping out World War II sites for recording and future decisions on their use.



One particular group that we support is the Re-enactment Society those tireless exponents of our Military history who give so much enjoyment every weekend in Main Street and Casemates and who very recently performed very successfully within the great Siege Tunnels.

Heritage and Antiquities Act

Mr Speaker, the order paper also includes a Bill for the new Heritage and Antiquities Act. This is the result of cooperation between the many stakeholders, including of course the Trust and the Museum. I would like to especially thank the Deputy Chief Minister for working with me on this Act. His expertise as a historian has been particularly helpful in this journey, and of course, my predecessor the Hon Steven Linares, who led on all the original drafting of what is a very complex piece of legislation. Work on this commenced nearly 18 years ago. I am very pleased to have been able to bring this to Parliament just over a year after I was entrusted with responsibility for Gibraltar's Heritage. I must also acknowledge with thanks both the Hon Roy Clinton and the Hon Trevor Hammond with whom I have held constructive discussions on the Bill.

The Bill has been well received by all stakeholders and will create a firm foundation for the protection, maintenance and promotion of our heritage assets. One great innovation is that all the listed structures will now be mapped out on GIS. Instead of just a grid reference, the full extent of the property will be shown together with a description and photographs. A special thank you must go to my GIS officer Karl Netto for delivering this so efficiently and professionally.

Urban Renewal

Mr Speaker, urban renewal is moving apace, with landscaping initiatives carried out in conjunction with the planted areas division of the Department. Developments that have heeded heritage advice are regenerating the old town area. A case in point is The Arches Complex at the old police barracks. This is a testament to what can be achieved. I urge developers to come and engage with us to continue this trend.

Many projects are in the pipeline, such as the development of Orange Bastion and the new schools. All will add to the improved visual and living environment for all our citizens.

We can also benefit from volunteers in this respect, as was shown with the repainting of "Referendum Steps" by the Youth Service or the Street Art initiative that is about to commence. Gibraltarians take great pride in their homeland and tenants' associations also go a long way in improving their surroundings for the betterment of all. This is something we applaud and encourage.

Mr Speaker, as proof of the success of positive collaboration, I use the example of the ex MOD Gatehouse at the entrance to the old Naval Dockyard. There were those who doubted that it would be done at all. It clearly demonstrates this Government's commitment to Heritage, and I thank all those who made this happen, particularly the Chief Minister and His Excellency the Governor for their personal support in achieving this.



Gibraltar Garrison Library

The Garrison Library has now moved into a period of sustainability, conservation and outreach, providing open access to the Library collections as against its institutional history as a members' only subscription library with limited access to the general public.

The Library is now used on a daily basis by local researchers and students alike who make excellent use of its collections. Additionally, the Library has become a hub for research gatherings for Gibraltar University's PhD students, and also supports many niche cultural events.

Mr Speaker, I am very excited to continue to develop my working relationship with the Library team with a view to ensuring we protect its rich historical and cultural treasure for future generations.

Conclusions on Environment

Mr Speaker, the world remains an uncertain place on many fronts but Gibraltar and its Government remain certain in our goals and aspirations. This is evident in all fields, including in this context the environment. Our aim now is to ensure that the Environment is safe for the future, well beyond the life of this Government. We have the obligation. It must be our legacy.

And finally Mr Speaker, a few thank yous.

To you, the Clerk and the staff of Parliament, to all the members of the teams in all my departments, agencies, authorities, and contractors, to all the members of the many boards and committees for which I am responsible and where they invariably serve voluntarily.

A special mention to the Attorney General and the Gibraltar Law Offices, for providing advice and drafting legislation, overburdened as they are with Brexit, and to officials at 6 Convent Place, including the Press Office, Chief Secretary Darren Grech, Chief Technical Officer Hector Montado, and Financial Secretary Albert Mena for their often unrecognised work and support. To Dominique Searle and the staff at Gibraltar House for their steadfast support and hospitality.

To the volunteers in the NGOs with whom I work, to the three Unions who have members in my areas, and very especially to my Ministry and personal staff for their support. I must of course make a special mention of Derek Alman who in my Ministry is leading on the new schools' project.

I also want to thank, and send my best wishes to four former Directors of Education who have left their posts in the space of about six months. Anyone hearing this out of context could be forgiven for thinking we had experienced a night of the Educational long knives.

Former Director Ernesto Gomez retired as Chief Secretary, former Director Joey Britto retired as Senior Administrator. I thank them and wish them both well.



Darren Grech, former Director on temporary promotion, to paraphrase Shakespeare in the Scottish play, was from my team 'untimely ripped'. Darren was Director of Education for the first year of my tenure as Education Minister, and I thank him for his dedication, his counsel and his commitment. I wish him every success in his new role of as Chief Secretary.

And the fourth farewell is to someone who stepped in as Director, also on temporary promotion, with no time to think about it and who has stepped into the role with great effectiveness and wisdom – that greatest attribute of all. To Lilli Gomez, Lilli the Wise. An educationalist of the finest kind, who is retiring in a week's time with so much still to offer. Thank you. Few people who I have worked with have contributed so much to a role in such a short space of time, a role you fully deserved.

And finally, to congratulate and welcome the new additions to the Education team, Director of Education Jacqueline Mason and Senior Education Advisor Keri Scott. To quote the well-known ancient Chinese proverb, you arrive in interesting times; but this isn't ancient China, so it isn't a curse, it's a blessing – you'll see!

Mr Speaker, Thank you.