



**HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR**  
**Ministry for Health & Environment**  
**Joshua Hassan House**  
**Secretary's Lane**  
**Gibraltar**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

No. 446 /2013

Date: 24<sup>th</sup> June 2013

### **BUDGET SPEECH 2013**

**BY THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH & THE ENVIRONMENT,  
THE HON J CORTES**

#### **PART ONE**

#### **ENVIRONMENT**

Mr. Speaker,

#### **Introduction**

The importance that this Government gives to the environment is immense, which makes my job as Environment Minister particularly easy and satisfying, and totally supported by my colleagues.

Mr Speaker this is important in many ways. The environment is not a passing fad any more than the economy is, and a sound environment is as important as a sound economy. Gibraltar is privileged in that it is making big strides in both. Environmental Governance is a requirement now of international law, and as we increasingly take our place in the family of nations, we have to be increasingly conscious of our duties and responsibilities in this context. Failure to do so will seriously tarnish Gibraltar's name, and moreover, bring substantial fines.

Mr Speaker, the reputation of Gibraltar is something of which every Gibraltarian is justifiably proud. We all take great satisfaction when we do well internationally, be it the UEFA acceptance or the success of a Gibraltar team at an international dance championship. Every Gibraltarian, I say, Mr Speaker, with the exception, it seems, of the members opposite. They have characterized their first eighteen months in opposition by attacking Government

initiatives even when they have known them to be good for Gibraltar, and even when they have known that their statements could be bad for Gibraltar. And if they've done so without realizing, Mr Speaker, then even, and very worryingly, worse.

Their spinning of issues to do with fishing, their obfuscation following the Thinking Green Conference, even though they attended and enjoyed it at the time, their unjustified insinuation in respect of a highly significant visit to Washington, their failure to grasp the international significance of the visits of Vice President Al Gore and Juan Verde to Gibraltar, have all worried me greatly and have made me question the political acuity of the members opposite, whose performance in these respects has been much more rookiesque than that of this converted gardener.

Mr Speaker, this past year has demonstrated an unprecedented level of commitment and work in all areas of environmental management in Gibraltar. The Department is working with more entities both inside and outside of the service than ever before. Not only are we leaving our mark locally, but internationally as well, as Government officials are increasingly networking and demonstrating our vision and working practices in Europe and within the UK OTs.

I am proud to say that Department of the Environment officials are finally part of a network with all other Environment Departments in the OTs. I mention this Mr Speaker, because for many years, I would attend these meetings as an NGO representative and feel embarrassed that the only Environment Department missing was Gibraltar's. The benefits to the Department from this network are tremendous as we work and collaborate on projects with the wider international community, and indeed we will provide leadership in many areas.

The Department is also taking a more prominent role within EU conferences and working groups with active participation in a number of marine and maritime conferences, the habitats biogeographic process, energy and climate change projects as well as in the field of air quality.

I have myself already held meetings with officials and ministers in the UK Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department of Energy and Climate Change, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the Joint Nature Conservancy Council, the Environment Agency and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; and in Strasbourg I have met with the Fisheries Commissioner and most of our MEPs and members of various EU Commissions.

It truly is an exciting time to be working in the Environment in Gibraltar as we strive to lead by example in all things environmental.

### **Leading from within the service**

Mr Speaker, environmental civil servants and advisers continue to be involved in discussion and decision-making at all levels of Government, they not only work for me but for all other Ministers in this Government and are called upon by my colleagues for input and advice on a regular basis. They continue to be appointed to important committees, including those dealing with legislative change. Home grown environmental legislation has been neglected for too many years and it is this Government's commitment to ensure that gaps in local environmental management are filled. New policies are being implemented and where necessary, will be included in legislation. This is the case, for example, with the green procurement practices and the newly revised **Environmental Action and Management Plan** which was launched last week to meet yet another manifesto commitment. This document exemplifies this Government's commitment to environmental change in Gibraltar.

Environmental workshops within the public service are now an annual event in order to provide support to the whole service as we lead by example. The measures introduced to date are working well, and new measures are being discussed continually.

### **Green Filter**

Mr Speaker, they say that the proof of the pudding is in the eating and this is indeed the case in the area of green procurement. Not only do members of the Department attend all tender boards but the Department has found that environmental alternatives are now more readily available as evident by their inclusion by prospective tenderers in all tenders regardless of the field or subject.

Building Applications continue to be filtered by the Department of the environment and they now attend all meetings of the DPC.

Environment representatives are also present in any cross departmental committee which may arise as well as in the Government's projects committee. This includes the Traffic and Transport Commission where a Departmental Officer is now a full member.

## **Waste management and recycling**

Mr Speaker, the recycling of paper, small items of waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) and batteries is finally occurring from all Government Agencies, Authorities and Departments. Furthermore, WEEE bins, similar to the existing blue, green and yellow bins have been purchased and a trial will commence shortly placing them in strategic points thereby making it easier for the general public to dispose of these items in the proper manner. We are asking the public to use these bins as we aim to increase the number of these pink bins in the not too distant future. Waste is an area where we are dedicating a lot of time and effort as we need to ensure we minimise the impact our waste has on our local and surrounding environment.

Promoting awareness of the need for careful disposal of waste has been and will continue to be one of the subjects covered in the Environment Department's promotional material. The massive success of the recycling campaign featuring 'El Teren' will be enhanced to capture the recycling of other waste streams.

It is hard to believe that just six months ago there were no recycling facilities in Gibraltar for cardboard, paper and plastics, once again well behind the rest of the world, the result of a "couldn't care less" attitude to the environment on the part of the members opposite, the latter day self-styled saviours of spider crabs and limpets.

The increase in recycling rates as a result of the introduction of paper, plastic and tetrabrick has been greater than what we hoped for Mr Speaker. So much so, that we are having to increase resources to cope with the services of the bins. It is a great problem to have!

Mr Speaker, in 2012, the yellow bin used for cans only at the time collected a total of 14,620 kilos. In 2013, specifically from January to May, the yellow bin (now collecting cans, plastic and tetra brick) has collected a total of 29,490 kilos, about twice the weight for the whole of last year, in just five months.

The Green bin, where we deposit glass, collected a total of 126,400 kilos in 2012. In 2013, the figure is already 57,938 kilos, showing a percentage increase in recycling rates of 10%.

I must congratulate the Gibraltarian public for this great response. Further measures are planned to facilitate the disposal of this waste stream from bars and restaurants, which are still lagging behind. We have to continue our efforts if we are to meet EU targets of recycling 50% of household waste by 2020.

The Blue bin, used for paper and cardboard, was introduced this year so we do not have as yet a figure to compare it to. This said, I am happy to report that in 2013, they have already collected 33,430 kilos. This figure will be further supplemented by the recycling of paper and cardboard from within the public service.

Another waste stream which we intend to include into our recycling scheme is that of domestic cooking oil. It is our intention to start placing orange bins for the collection of waste cooking oil in strategic places around Gibraltar. This Mr Speaker, we aim to deliver within the next twelve months.

I am happy to report that works continue in building refuse holding facilities, with approximately 4 to 5 refuse shelters expected to be done this year.

Further to the report commissioned last year and details of which have been presented in this house, the Government has now entered into the tender process for a waste treatment plant that will include the collection, segregation and treatment of waste streams without incineration. The plant will have to comply with the Best Available Technology and ensure that Gibraltar is as self-sufficient as possible in our waste management. As a result of this, our Waste Management Plan will be updated to reflect this Government's change in waste policy and resubmitted to the European Commission.

The Litter Committee, which I set up last year, continues to meet regularly and improvements have already been made in many areas of Gibraltar as a result of the resurrection of this group. Indeed work in progressing on many fronts in the area of waste and litter management, the fruits of which will become evident in the coming months.

Already, through the Litter committee we have achieved opening of the large items compound at Europa Advance Road seven days a week, increased cleaning of areas, including areas on the Upper Rock, Northern Defences and the tower block lift shafts, increase in level of litter fines and litter patrols by the environmental agency and the RGP, and the issuing of a leaflet on waste distributed with water and electricity bills. As from 1 July and thanks to discussions in this Committee, we will be providing facilities for disposal of cooking oil and ink cartridges. We will also be appointing more officers who will be able to issue litter tickets.

Mr Speaker, it is very difficult to pin offenders down, but the issuing of such tickets has increased. 10 litter tickets were issued in 2012, and 10 already in the first five months of 2013. In 2011 only 4 tickets were issued in the whole year.

## **Working with the Community**

Mr Speaker, work with **NGOs** is increasing and regular meetings take place with Government officials and with me as Minister.

Government's commitment to involve the wider Gibraltar in its work continues. Government this year more than ever was involved in supporting In Town Without My Car. I have referred also to the involvement of the ESG, with whom we also work in supporting their Clean up the World Campaigns. Similarly, Government is maintaining close contact with the Ornithological and Natural History Society through regular meetings and discussions on matters relating in particular to the natural environment.

Resources to the avian control unit will be increased and localised and the Government will continue to assist them in their work in the rehabilitation and captive breeding of birds of prey, both for release into the wild and for use in gull control. Significantly I can report that the raptor rehabilitation unit, under the expert eye and dedication of Vincent Robba, last year released seven endangered Lesser Kestrels, bred in captivity, into the wild, some of which returned this spring after spending the winter in tropical Africa.

Regular meetings have been held with the Scientific Authority and the Nature Conservancy Council, which now perform their true roles as statutory scientific advisors on any matter within their competence, including matters which they wish to raise.

Another example of Community involvement is in our meetings with the GFSB and Chamber of Commerce on a number of issues. These include waste and energy. We have found, Mr Speaker, that commerce in Gibraltar is now more amenable than ever to environmental initiatives. The Chamber of Commerce and the Gibraltar Federation of Small Businesses continue to be engaged and are aware that their members have to work towards introducing greener products and services within the local market as Government is now procuring on that basis whenever possible. A Green Seminar is being planned for early next year where officers from the Department will address members of the Chamber and GFSB in order to further promote Green Business.

## **Advances in environmental governance**

Mr Speaker, this year has seen the preparation and launch of **tenders** which will leave a lasting improvement in Gibraltar's environmental scene. These include the power station tender, the waste treatment facility tender and solar thermal project tenders for certain Government buildings. More tenders will soon be

published, including one for providing solar heating to St Bernard's Hospital. This will result in considerable savings in energy and money. Additionally, progress is being made in discussions to bring about more production of electricity from renewable energy. Never before have so many environmentally innovative projects occurred at the same time. This is, Mr Speaker, our commitment to delivering a sustainable Gibraltar.

The actions taken by this Government in the last eighteen months through initiatives such as the Thinking Green Conference and trade fair, have enabled a range of possibilities and products to become available to Gibraltar and, more importantly, have increased awareness and commitment.

### **Environmental education and awareness**

And there is nothing more important than awareness and commitment in the young.

**Environmental education** continues to be at the top of our agenda as will be seen in coming months. Education creates awareness and awareness leads to action, action as individuals and action as a Community. I am delighted to say that we are looking into innovative ways to bring the environment to the forefront and making it more readily accessible to children. As part of our work on *E* Government, the Department has recently launched the Thinking Green website and will be producing a **kids zone** on this site as well as apps and E games. All of these will portray local environmental resources which children not only from Gibraltar but from all over the world can download and learn about as they play.

Mr Speaker, this year Government celebrated the ninth anniversary of **World Environment Day (WED)** on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> June. The purpose of this United Nations Environment Programme Day is to spread awareness of centre stage environmental issues. This year's theme is the food waste with the slogan "Think, Eat, Save." I must say this is one of the environmental highlight of the year for me, the ever-popular performances by our school children are not only inspiring but demonstrate that together we can make a difference. The work done by children, teachers and parents has to be praised. It is very encouraging to see how environmental issues have now become an integral part of the classroom and for this we have to thank the teachers and the officers at the Department. The involvement this year too of world renowned explorer Mike Horn in Gibraltar served to inspire many of our young people.

As a result of this, the message continues to come through loud and clear, each year with more energy, enthusiasm and determination. They are the future, and the future, if there is to be one, must be one where we think green, live green and love green!

In this coming year, the Department of the Environment will continue its public awareness campaigns, with a continuation on the one on recycling and a new one on reduction of energy consumption.

### **Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and INSPIRE**

Mr Speaker, this year will finally, after nine years of inconclusive work, see the delivery of Geographical Information System, or GIS mapping to the public service. In using GIS to collect data, store, manage, analyse and produce useful information Government Departments can monitor and map areas under their competence. In the case of Environment, these include many of Gibraltar's natural assets e.g. planted areas, protected species, and the protected habitats i.e. Gibraltar's Nature Reserve and the Southern Waters of Gibraltar.

As part of our obligations under the INSPIRE directive, the Department of the Environment has been working with consultants, Technical Services and the IT department to deliver a digital map of Gibraltar. The map will be viewable by the public through a geoportal which will be launched in the coming weeks. The GIS database will consist of a series of layers that can be overlaid to provide information concerning spatial patterns. A GIS allows a great degree of flexibility to the categorisation and display of data.

As the Government of Gibraltar competent authority for INSPIRE compliance the Department of the Environment in conjunction with the IT Department have combined efforts and resources to ensure Gibraltar complies with its European Union responsibilities. Together with existing work by the GIS Committee, which also includes representation from Town Planning and Land Property Services, the GIS project will enable all Departments to digitize all spatially relevant information to enable better decision making and update of Government information repositories.

Another exciting development Mr Speaker, arising from the new departmental interaction with its counterparts in the UK OT's is that Gibraltar will be hosting a GIS conference for the Overseas Territories. We are currently leading in this field and the conference aims to illustrate our progress and offer advice to other OTs on GIS development and deployment, its applications to *E* Government initiatives as well as applications to a wide array of environmental matters. Additionally, in order to maximize the number of delegates participating, one of the workshops will be conducted through teleconferencing facilities.



## Energy

Mr Speaker, last year I announced that Government is promoting the reduction of energy consumption through a number of initiatives. This is a vital element of Government policy. The less we consume the less we spend, as individuals and as Government, and the less we pollute. It will also reduce the amount of carbon credits that we are now obliged to purchase. Moreover, we have to meet an EU target of producing 20% of our energy from renewable sources by 2020.

Government has commenced and will continue with a programme to replace public lighting with solar powered devices and/or LEDs, and encourages all citizens to do the same. As part of this initiative, we have for the first time set to quantify our energy profile and have conducted an assessment of our carbon footprint which will shortly be published.

This consumption based analysis, which uses as a basis the 2011 Family Expenditure Survey, which was based on 2008 data, indicates a carbon footprint for Gibraltar of 15.67 tonnes per capita per year. This is significantly higher than the world average of 5 t per capita, but well within the range of 1t per capita for some African countries to 30 t per capita for Luxembourg. We have, in fact, a carbon footprint higher than Spain (14.44 t/capita) but lower than the UK (16.99 t/capita), which is not unexpected. Mr Speaker, I can neither understand nor believe that in all their years in office, through the period in the Earth's history that this global crisis became apparent and this type of analysis became necessary and crucial, the Government of Gibraltar of the late 1990s and the whole of the first decade of the 2000s, the Government of Gibraltar that had the privilege of seeing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, did not have a clue as to what their carbon footprint was. It was a Government that had loitered without vision and been left stranded in the past. This Government, I am proud to say, has confidently jumped one decade in one leap.

Mr Speaker, what this study has shown is that the main contributions to our carbon footprint are transport, food and electricity, and so indicates where we have to make progress – in rationalising transport, as far as possible promoting fresh food and reducing food waste, and reducing consumption of electricity generated by burning of fossil fuels.

Mr Speaker, *this* Government's trademark is evidence-based action, Our carbon footprint analysis – and there is another under way based on analysis of production as opposed to consumption - assists us in taking decisions that will help Gibraltar meet and we hope, exceed the European Union's targets. Targets that are punished with heavy fines of millions if not met. Not only will

these actions reduce our carbon footprint, but they will also lead to a significant improvement in our air quality.

And we are certainly moving in the right direction. The total removal of the three existing power generating stations continue a top priority for this Government, as we have seen. The commissioning of the temporary turbines located at the North Mole, just six months ago, especially when the fitting of silencers and scrubbers is complete, will mean not just resilience in power supply, but much less overall noise and pollution. As a result of these turbines, Mr Speaker, the South District power stations are now turned off at night, and up to the present, this has meant they have been switched off, since mid-January, for 1100 hours. That's 1100hours – about a third of the total time – less pollution for residents of the South District. Already the reading of nitrogen oxides in the South District monitoring stations have shown significant reductions in the levels detected. Mr Speaker, we are serious when we say we will revolutionise the environment for our people. The worst thing, Mr Speaker, is that it's been so easy to do. Where was the Government before December 2011? Was anyone thinking, anyone planning, anyone caring?

Mr Speaker, as is well known the tender for the new, much more environmentally friendly power station is out, and this will be a quantum leap into the latest technology which will give us resilience in power and a much cleaner and quieter environment, once and for all putting the residents both of the South District and the Waterport area out of the misery they have had to endure for so long, as we banish another negative legacy into the past.

Mr Speaker, our efforts to mitigate and contribute towards the global fight against climate change led to the honour of Gibraltar being chosen as one of only 21 European cities to be part of the EU Cities adapt Project, together with major cities such as Birmingham, Barcelona and Rotterdam. Moreover, it was the city chosen to host the second peer review visit for the Project. The conference was a success and Gibraltar showcased our continuing efforts on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Mr Speaker, this work, and other relevant initiatives, is all reviewed by the Climate Change Forum which has not only been reconvened but whose technical advisors have been increased and now meets every two months. As a result of the work and projects I have just mentioned, the Forum will deliver a revised and informed climate change programme for Gibraltar during this financial year.

Mr Speaker, our aim is that our climate change strategy will make Gibraltar a *Top 5* city in environmental governance.

## **Water quality**

The water quality monitoring programmes carried out by the Department of the Environment and the Environmental Agency continue to be in operation. New requirements under the Water Framework and Marine Strategy Framework Directives are being incorporated into the latter programme. Further developments in relation to the marine strategy framework directive are expected to take place in the very near future and the Government is committed to meeting and if possible expanding upon the requirements.

Additionally, adhoc sampling will be conducted by the Department of the Environment as and when necessary as part of a new pollution monitoring and enforcement campaign.

The Department has also expanded its groundwater monitoring network to include sampling of groundwater pools within the Rock itself. This work is now being conducted in house and has thereby reduced the need for consultancy fees.

In line with HM Government of Gibraltar's commitment to improve access to environmental information at our beaches, new beach signs are currently being designed by the Department of the Environment together with the Environmental Agency. These signs will provide the public with easily accessible information on the characteristics of each beach in Gibraltar along with further information on the results of the bathing water monitoring programme which at present are only available online.

## **Cemetery**

Mr Speaker, I am happy to report that works to improve the North Front Cemetery have been progressing. This has included provision of benches and planting of trees. More work is envisaged for the coming year.

Mr Speaker, I have reconvened and expanded the Cemeteries Board, which has now met for the first time in over a decade, and will continue to do so under the chairmanship of Reverend David Hoare. I am also having the legislation

governing the Cemetery reviewed and updated. The current Cemetery Act dates from 1889.

### **Green and Planted areas**

Mr Speaker, over the last year we have planted over 100 trees. Trees have been planted at Edinburgh Estate, Alameda Estate, Watergardens Promenade & Camp Bay amongst other areas. Plans continue to be developed to create new green areas. Protection of trees is another of our manifesto commitments, and we plan to introduce legislation in order to do so more effectively. We have also increased the monitoring in planted areas with a view to delivering more and improving existing green spaces within our urban fabric.

Works on Commonwealth Park, are advancing very well indeed. While Opposition-inspired givations (saves me using the word “spin” too often) suggest that nothing is happening, a close look will reveal the truth. Services diversions are progressing, designs of the various areas are complete or near completion, foundations for hard paved areas are progressing, as is the procurement of plants. Even the lawn has been ordered, and the green grass destined for our lawns is already growing in a plant nursery in the UK. In keeping with environmental good practice, water for irrigation will be recycled after collection in underground tanks, and much of the soil will be manufactured locally. Mr Speaker, we are working on this project with Mark Gregory, a renowned landscape designer, multiple gold medal winner in the Chelsea Flower Show, and we expect to complete on schedule next Spring.

Mr Speaker, last year we took the overdue step of designating the Rock of Gibraltar terrestrial site as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the EU. This year will be the year of an expanded and rebranded Gibraltar Nature Reserve which will see the launch of the Upper Rock Management Plan. Projects are being developed; the Department of the Environment is working closely with the Tourism Department and the Department of Education to deliver big improvements in this largely neglected area. The Upper Rock management Team continue with their habitat creation and maintenance of footpaths. Refurbishment work to the Upper Rock sites has already begun as is evident in the Devil’s Gap footpath to Town project, now complete, and clearance and enhancement works to other areas such as Devil’s Gap Battery and Tovey Battery continue as we carry on from the progress achieved last year and move into the next phase in developing the Upper Rock towards its full potential as an area of beauty, wildlife, and recreation.

The Gibraltar Botanic Gardens at the Alameda continues to develop as a major player in research and conservation in the region, and to promote Gibraltar

internationally in these fields. I am pleased to see that now that I have severed my links with the Gardens, they continue to go from strength to strength under the new management. This year has seen the completion of works to the Alameda Wildlife Conservation Park, funded by Government and the Bonita Trust, and, after many years of personal struggle, and of hard work and commitments by many involved in trying to complete this project since it started in 1996, I had the pleasure just a few weeks ago of inaugurating the new world-class facilities. The improvements to the site have been tremendous and long overdue. New exhibits have been added to the Park adding to its value as another local resource to be used in education and to be enjoyed by our community as a whole and visitors alike.

### **Habitat Management**

Moving onto the area of Habitat management Mr Speaker, I am delighted to report that great strides have been and continue to be taken in the fields of terrestrial and marine habitat management. The existing surveillance monitoring programme will continue to be enhanced this year to ensure greater data capture for species of flora and fauna of local and community interest. The Department of the Environment is now better resourced than ever, both in terms of personnel and equipment and as a result, is more proactive than ever before, working steadily on increasing surveillance and on various reintroduction programmes for flora and fauna including habitat creation. The results of this proactive approach will not only assist Government in meeting the requirements of the relevant Directives, which include ensuring that the favorable status of our European protected habitats and species is attained or maintained locally but also in enhancing local ecosystems and making Gibraltar an example in the field of ecological management.

Interpretation signs showcasing particular species of flora and fauna will shortly be going up around certain areas of Gibraltar. These include the cemetery, the Upper Rock, Europa foreshore and Windmill Hill.

The Government has published the updated Southern Waters of Gibraltar Management Scheme. The management regime which is being put in place following on from the recommendations of the Report into the Management of Marine Resources in the Waters around Gibraltar will include the regulation of all types of activities in Gibraltar waters which impact on the marine environment, including rod fishing, diving, spear fishing and diving and dolphin trip operators, as well as other issues affecting Gibraltar's marine and coastal resources. All the relevant stakeholders have been fully consulted in developing these initiatives. One example of increased monitoring is the fish tagging programme where the Department works closely with the Gibraltar Federation of Sea Anglers.

Mr Speaker, the illegal Fishing Agreement of 1999 was torn up, not by two lines on Facebook, but by the people of Gibraltar when they voted on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2011. That Agreement, and the inability of the Government of the time to detect the Spanish designation of the Estrecho Oriental European protected area which enveloped all of our territorial waters, were possibly the two greatest blunders of the former administration, and have led directly to all the problems that arose since in relation to waters and incursions.

Mr Speaker, Facebook, twitter and cameras on everyone's phone give the impression that there are now more fishing incursions than ever before. But, Mr Speaker, that is simply not true. Where mobile phones survey our waters now, I used to, daily, survey our waters through my binoculars following the Agreement in 1999. It was much worse then. Just the Agreement, by allowing four boats a day, allowed a minimum of 120 fishing incursions a month, and believe me, the limit of four was not usually adhered to. THAT was a fishing crisis.

Our strategy now, following the very necessary fishing report, is to increase monitoring, to provide more resources for environmental protection, to deliver a programme of unprecedented marine habitat creation and growth of populations of marine life, which will be hugely beneficial to our recreational fishermen, divers and spear-fishermen, to well regulated diving tourism, and by logical consequence, to artisanal fishermen in neighbouring towns.

Mr Speaker, a protected area, in particular a marine protected area, as our waters are, is a dynamic natural system. Its management has to be robust but has to track the very dynamism that defines it. The new regulations, Mr Speaker, will allow me as Minister for the Environment, to respond to such changes, by delimiting protected areas and protection regimes, by declaring closed seasons and closed areas, or temporary protection of particular species at particular times, allowing sustainable exploitation when possible and strict protection when necessary.

At all times all Gibraltar stakeholders will be involved in arriving at such measures, and in time, all users of the sea, in Gibraltar waters and beyond, will benefit, as will marine species themselves.

This Mr Speaker is the type of regime that will gain us respect and make the European union realise that those who can best govern what happens in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters, in fact the only ones able to do so, are the Gibraltarians themselves.

In the meantime, Mr Speaker, we continue to fulfill our responsibilities for our waters. An initial assessment of BGTW as required under marine strategy framework directive has been conducted and will this week be submitted to the EU. A bathymetric survey of BGTW has also been conducted, the first full survey of this nature ever carried out in our waters, and an essential tool in good environmental management. This will allow us to better manage the marine environment and the resources therein.

## **Macaques**

The macaque management plan, already announced, will be launched within the next few weeks. Measures have already started to control the movement of macaques in built up areas. An example is the enclosure of refuse facilities in key areas, and the use of noise, and other means of dissuasion when they are in Town. At the same time habitat is being opened up on the Upper Rock, and an increased programme of contraception has been introduced. There has already been some considerable success. However, monkeys are intelligent and persistent and so work has to be continuous and the increased resources to the macaque management team will greatly assist here. I must here thank the team, which includes the Natural History Society and the Gibraltar Veterinary Clinic and the, for their work so far, and must highlight also the members of the Department of the Environment who have also deployed in fair weather and foul to assist in management.

I will also be appointing a panel of experts to advise me and the management team on scientific and conservation matters in relation to the macaques. This will include all the local experts who have worked on our macaques as well as international scientists foremost in the field. The membership will be announced at the time of the launch of the Plan.

The wisdom of having such close relationships with internationally acclaimed scientists is evidenced by the success of the high-tech monitoring programme currently being carried out in conjunction with Indiana and Washington universities and National Geographic. This is actually the biggest tracking programme on macaques to date anywhere in the world. Only yesterday I received news of some fascinating movement patterns emerging that will greatly assist cull-free management.

## **Environmental Noise**

In the area of environmental noise, we have met our EU obligations and updated our noise maps. Environmental noise in Gibraltar focuses on noise from traffic and despite the previous administration's belief that the legislation did not apply leading to the halting of work in this field for many years, I am happy to report that we are now up to date with our EU obligations in this field. The Noise Core Steering Group has been reconvened and will work on updating the Noise Action Plan. The revised noise maps are up on the Department of the Environment and Environmental Agency websites and the process is now at the public consultation stage.

We are also in the process of reviewing noise control legislation.

## **Air Quality**

The services provided by the existing Gibraltar **Air Quality** Monitoring Programme continue to inform the Government on local air quality and how we can address the issues arising. The appointed consultants have been coming to Gibraltar to address Government officials and on occasion Ministers for eight years now, but never before have had they addressed as many members of cabinet as they have since 2011.

Improvements to air quality monitoring – also a manifesto commitment – have included:

- The existing website providing air quality monitoring data to the public has been upgraded and provides a more user friendly platform for the public.
- Tools have been provided to allow the officers within the Department of the Environment and the Environmental Agency earlier detection of potential air pollution incidents
- Weather stations are in the process of being set up in key areas around Gibraltar. This will not only assist in the area of dispersion modeling but will also provide invaluable information on microclimatic conditions leading into the field of climate change adaptation and mitigation
- The measurement of black carbon is now taking place in Gibraltar and we are amongst the first EU countries to start monitoring this pollutant. The first dataset on this will be presented to Government officials and Ministers.
- Data on radon levels have already been collected and are currently being analyzed by the Environmental Agency in conjunction with the



Department of the Environment. Results of the study will be published shortly.

### **Urban Renewal**

Mr Speaker, among my various current responsibilities, I am Minister for Urban Renewal. I am therefore very pleased that we will this year be investing in the fabric and appearance of parts of the Upper Town. I also applaud and support the efforts of my colleagues in other Ministries whose work in renewing the Estates and in the superbly designed conversion of my old workplace, the old St Bernard's hospital into two new schools show the depth and breadth of vision that exists throughout this Government.

### **Conclusions**

Mr Speaker, I have mentioned areas of work which the Department is either spearheading or working on in collaboration with other departments and agencies. Indeed, as everyone now knows, work across the boundaries of Agencies and Departments is the hallmark of this Government. A lot more work is going on behind the scenes which I simply do not have time to go into, all of which contributes to improved environmental management in Gibraltar. I will however, mention a few examples of inter departmental collaboration. The first example, Mr Speaker, I must mention is the dedication and efficiency with which the Department of the Environment, the Environmental Agency and the Port Department deliver on areas including marine, waste, habitats and industrial processes. These entities now meet regularly and work proactively as well as reactively to ensure the highest levels of environmental protection. Similarly, the work and close collaboration between the Department of the Environment and the Technical Services Department on a wide range of issues including the Sustainable Traffic and Transport Study which will be used to inform decision making in areas such as traffic and transport, air quality and environmental noise, beaches and coastal protection.

In order to help us in achieving this Government's environmental aspirations, the Environment Department continues to progress. A programme of Continual Profession Development is also taking place ensuring the officers are up to date with the latest advances in all fields of environmental management. This will allow for a greater level of environmental management and polluter enforcement.

Mr Speaker, I must pay tribute to the tremendous work done by the staff of the Ministry and Department of the Environment, including administrative, technical and monitoring staff. They work continuously and enthusiastically in taking the very full and very challenging environmental agenda forward. They go well beyond the call of duty to deliver for Gibraltar.

I must also thank the contractors who work for the Department, be it in cleansing, running depots, or providing horticultural, veterinary or scientific services. They too are working hard to improve the service.

And of course, the Environmental Agency who themselves carry a large number of responsibilities. I would like at this point to thank and pay tribute to Francis Martin who is soon to retire after excellent work for many years in the Agency including most recently, as Chief Environmental Health Officer.

You will have seen Mr Speaker that, in the same way as I stated last year, it continues to be true this year: the amount of work being carried out in relation to the Environment, not just by the Ministry and the Department and the Environmental Agency, but also by NGOs, professional bodies, contractors and other Government departments is greater and of a higher quality than ever before, and I must add, being done and delivered with ever increasing enthusiasm and excitement.

Mr Speaker, the Department of the Environment has a mandate to achieve a high quality environment by providing effective environmental protection; addressing the threat of climate change; protecting and enhancing our natural environment; developing sustainable waste management practices; promoting energy efficiency and sustainable energy generation as well as ensuring that Gibraltar's development respects the delicate balance between environment, economy and society.

Securing the integration of environmental considerations into all Government policies is one of the Department's key objectives. This means that as well as providing and maintaining policies, programmes, legislation and information for the protection of the environment, we also promote the integration of environmental considerations into the wider decision making process.

All of this is possible, because of the environmental governance which we are promoting.