



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
MINISTRY FOR SPORTS, CULTURE, HERITAGE & YOUTH
310 Main Street
Gibraltar

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BUDGET SPEECH 2013

**BY THE MINISTER FOR SPORTS, CULTURE, HERITAGE & YOUTH,
THE HON S LINARES**

Mr Speaker,

I cover a number of Ministries that are more high-profile like culture and sport as well as others that generally receive less publicity. I will therefore start with the ones not usually mentioned but which are also very important to our community and in respect of the function that they perform. In fact I feel honoured that these have been entrusted to me as Minister for Utilities, I cover both Water and Electricity, as the Chairman of AquaGib and the Gibraltar Electricity Authority.

In relation to Water, we are seeking to continue a good relationship with our partners in AquaGib. As we all know this is a private company that has for years delivered water to our homes in a very efficient manner. They pride themselves on customer service that is second to none.

The Company is currently looking at how we will include into the system all the ex MOD properties that have been handed over under the 2011 Lands Deal. The aim is to reduce cost without affecting the work force and the quality of the service that is delivered. This is coupled with the fact that we have a Manifesto Commitment of not increasing water tariffs during this term of office. The company is investigating how to produce water cheaper than we are doing currently. RO plants are very expensive to run since they run on electricity and producing electricity is itself also very expensive.

The Government is also looking at how we will deal with our waste and we are actively examining at how we can use our waste in order to produce energy. As a member of the inter-ministerial group which is looking at energy sources I am interested in seeing all kinds of systems that can produce energy cut down on our carbon footprint and at the same time save on costs.

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I will later on explain how we have been able to do this at the swimming pool.

In relation to electricity, it's already public knowledge that our government is going through the tender process to procure a new power station. When one thinks of the plans that the Previous Administration had for the future generation of power, people would be right to question where the logic in such a project lay with Diesel-powered engines that would have trapped us for 30 years costing £140m and also involved an increase in tariffs for 20 years at 5% per annum. We did not find out about this proposed increase until after the last general election.

We are now looking at different options with environmental considerations uppermost in our decision-making. Our aim, obviously, is also that the cost of producing electricity is reduced. We have had to contract Energy International to provide Gibraltar with enough capacity of supply of electricity until we have the new power station. There are now no power cuts caused by lack of supply. Any problems are generally caused by the ageing infrastructure which we have inherited which should have been tackled in the last ten to fifteen years.

Be that as it may I am happy that the power station which will be in place sooner rather than later will be of a type that our community deserves.

Mr Speaker,

I now move on to Postal Services.

We had a situation in our Postal Service where at least 3 Signal Operative Grade Basic staff had been on "supply" for at least 4 years. These officers have now been employed on a full time basis.

A long-standing claim that the postmen and women have had was that of 'Finish and Go'. We can say that last summer they went on the Finish and Go and that this continues. In turn, they have agreed to maintain an efficient service to the public.

Further the Government have reviewed the contract with Change Management limited and we have contracted the services of three of the four employees of Change Management Ltd on an individual basis.

Refuse Collection is another Ministry area that I cover.

I can say that when we came into office, the men's depot was in a shameful state. I can now say that we have developed a good working relationship with the men, the union and my office. Issues that arise are quickly dealt with to the satisfaction of all. Sometimes it only takes to listen to their concerns. This is a listening Government, Mr Speaker.

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Fire Service

I move on to the Fire Brigade. A review has now been conducted, completed and a copy has been made available to interested parties. The Government, through the Chief Minister as the Minister responsible for Industrial Relations and myself as Minister for the Fire Brigade, intend to engage on the report with interested parties.

It is important to note that some minor issues that the men have had for years have now been resolved.

We are currently engaged with the unions to implement reforms to the Dispatch System and this will be one that we will prioritise and implement within the next few months.

I am confident that we can achieve this with goodwill on all sides.

Civil Contingency

As Civil Contingency Minister it is my role to see that all the essential services are well coordinated to deal with any eventuality.

There is still on-going coordination to establish what equipment are held by different services. This shows that not much had been done previously because people who are experts and professionals in the field were not allowed to function as they should.

The new Government found that the bunker (ie the board room at No6 cellar) which had been projected as being state of the art, and in which the Chief Minister and the then Civil Contingency Minister could liaise centrally with all heads in the C3 committee, was simply not fit for purpose. To give an example, there are no independent generators placed there or nearby so a simple power act would cut communications with the outside world. All this is being looked at.

The Government are now looking at having a mobile control vehicle that can be easily be deployed anywhere and where the command centre will be situated. Furthermore we have employed a civil contingency press officer who can now deal with communicating to the general public, through the media, in order to be able to inform people on the impact of any possible disaster. People panicking and not knowing what to do in these circumstances has to be prevented at all costs.

I will now move on to the other Ministries for which I am responsible.

Mr Speaker, on the 1st June 2006 the previous administration decided that the GASA swimming pool should be part of the GSLA and that the pool would be opened for the public to enjoy. All very well but no consideration was given to

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the increased number of users that the pool would have. The consequence was that the pool deteriorated and hardly any maintenance was carried out. In fact there was also total neglect. This was reflected in the incident of February 2012 where all the ducts from the air treatment system collapsed.

I am pleased to announce that a major refurbishment programme is well under way which will transform the pool for all users to enjoy. The most exciting part of this project is that the pool water, the hot water in changing rooms and the air treatment of the whole pool will be powered by the Sun. Solar panels will be placed on the roof to achieve this. In fact the most important aspect of this reform is that the system will pay itself within four to five years with the saving on electricity bills which we all know are heavily subsidized by Government. After this period the investment will have been paid for and the saving will be considerable.

This is a win-win for all - the taxpayer, the users of the pool and most importantly for the environment.

We have also taken over the employees who were employed by GASA and the management of the pool is now under the GSLA as it should have been from the beginning.

Bayside Complex

The Bayside Complex will also be going through minor and major refurbishment works.

The Honourable Member Mr Reyes has asked a number of questions which relate to whether the stadium is up to standard for International Competitions. The fact is that many parts of the Stadium and the complex in general have been neglected over many years. Take for instance the East Stand of the Stadium where the toilets and changing rooms were. These have been left to rot to such an extent that they have been closed for years.

With a small budget and using the small companies of local workers I am pleased to say that the whole of the east stand will be refurbished. All toilets and amenities will be improved for the use of spectators.

Continuing with the east side it was shameful to see the state that the changing rooms on what is commonly known as the CESPAs area had degenerated to. It was, Mr Speaker, a Health and Safety hazard in the extreme.

So we took advantage of the fact that contractors were on site placing the magnificent turf on pitch Number 2. We knocked it down and for the time being, as a temporary measure, we have placed porta cabins for use as toilets and changing rooms.

Further works in the area will include a cover on the stands where parents sit to watch their children play and there will be cafeteria facilities in the same area.

With some of the turf which was removed from the main pitch, which was deemed to be in a good state, we have improved the area West of pitch Number 2. Now these areas can be allocated for training purposes.

Mr Speaker, the Government will continue with the refurbishment all the facilities that have deteriorated due to years of lack of maintenance. This includes the changing rooms which serve the Old Sports Hall. A total refurbishment programme is also underway and will result in, not only the day to day users being able to enjoy the facilities, but the change will also give a good image to the many traveling teams who come to Gibraltar to compete in many competitions and have to use these facilities.

Slipway

Another innovation in the Bayside Complex has been to facilitate the use of what was waste ground in the western most part of the Bayside complex where the slipway was constructed. Now not only can Canoeists enjoy this area but also those with Jet skis. The area concerned was resurfaced, water meters placed, and parking areas marked with a separate entrance provided. Another fraternity who were largely ignored are now very happy.

Within the Bayside Complex the GFA have been housed on a temporary basis until the New Stadium is built.

Mr Speaker,

Lights Hockey

One last but important improvement which will be in place at the Bayside Complex by the beginning of the new season, and which the hockey Fraternity have been asking for many years, is that of having floodlights at the Hockey Pitch.

One cannot understand how we can have stands, top class turf for the playing of Hockey and no floodlights. This has meant that having tournaments or visiting teams competing with our hockey players and training for hockey during the winter period could only extend until sunset which is at around 6.30pm. Now the hockey teams will be able to enjoy the playing of Hockey until at least 11pm which is the time at which the whole of the complex usually closes.

More Allocations

As the demand for more sporting allocations increase we have had to look at other facilities.

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Regarding the community use of schools, which was introduced by the GSLP in the 90's, we will now aim to extend to include the use at weekends, in discussions with my Hon Friend the Minister for Education. We are also trying to find ways in which these facilities can be used during the summer period.

All playgrounds around Gibraltar such as Hargreaves, the Laguna, Dolphin Youth Clubs playgrounds, the Edinburgh Estate playground will be going through a refurbishment programme which will not only improve facilities for the youngsters at the estates but will also allow them to be allocated to sports in general.

We have also spoken to GABBA, who manage the Garrison Gymnasium, to see how we can maximise the use of this venue and I am pleased to say that we aim to have this place used throughout the week and weekends not only for Basketball but also for other sports and maybe even as a cultural facility.

Premises

Though the Retrenchment Block at Lathbury had been refurbished the allocation process was regrettably a shambles.

The system of allocating premises was not done via LPS who had associations and groups on a list waiting for their turn. These allocations were often made simply at the whim of No 6. Some were coincidently on the list but the majority were not. This created a totally unfair situation in which Groups and associations, which had been waiting for years for premises, were left in the lurch.

In coming into office we realised that there were some areas that were abandoned and could easily be used for sporting clubs and associations. This was the case with Town Range Rooms where many premises have now been refurbished and have been allocated using the system of applying via LPS.

Heritage

I move on now to Heritage matters

(a) Hardings Battery

Hardings Battery which is situated at Europa Point and was part of the refurbishment of the whole area had been closed since it was inaugurated by the previous Government in 2011. As soon as the entire fanfare was over, the place was shut. A few months after I

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became Minister it was brought to my attention that the Battery which had been discovered underneath the mound where tourist viewed the straits, an Interpretation Centre had been constructed and fitted out with glass panels and models of soldiers of the period.

We set about trying to find the keys and I was astonished at the fact that the contractor still had possession of the site since no one had bothered to take responsibility for this place.

When we looked at the Battery my office immediately organised for the centre to be opened to the public.

Mr Speaker,

One cannot understand how more than £300,000 had been spent on this project, a whole media fanfare had taken place months before the general election, yet only for the place to be shut hours later.

Now during the last month or so and with the help of the contractor, Mr Richard Labrador and my office, a carriage was constructed and the 45 ton gun placed in its original position. The cost was shared between the contractor and the Ministry for Heritage.

b) Relationship with GHT

Continuing on Heritage I am pleased to say that the relationship with the Gibraltar Heritage Trust and other groups is very healthy. The fact that the DPC is now an open, public forum has been welcomed by the Heritage Trust. Further we have introduced a heritage Filter similar to the environmental filter, across the Government.

For people to understand what is meant by a filter I would like to use the example of the New St Bernard's School. When plans were originally put to the Ministry for Education the proposal included knocking down what was the old Sisters' quarters. The documents then went through the filter which meant that it was assessed by the Ministry for the Environment and in turn by the Ministry for Heritage. Concerns were expressed by the Heritage Trust and after a number of site visits by all parties, instructions were given to the architects as to what was permissible. The magnificent plans now protect many of the heritage aspects of what was the old colonial hospital.

At This stage I would like to quote from the media last week where it was stated:

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'Heritage Trust welcomes ex-Colonial Hospital Redevelopment and Urban regeneration Scheme.

The Trust has welcomed the recent announcements by the Government of the Redevelopment of the Old St Bernard's Hospital into a school and the new impetus given to the Urban regeneration of Gibraltar's Old town.

In a statement the Trust says that these developments are very significant in terms of the conservation of the old town. I quote "The hospital buildings at the site have a significant heritage value both historically and visually and the project as proposed we felt will preserve and enhance many features of this beautiful Building in the heart of our old town" says the statement.

Mr Speaker: The next part is where the filter has worked.

The Trust is also pleased that it has been able to work with Government towards avoiding the demolition of the Sisters Quarters at the southern end of the site as originally proposed in the initial draft scheme for the school, and that the building will now survive and be made use of for future generations to enjoy. And it looks forward to continuing its work with Government on the detail of this project.

Mr Speaker: It is very satisfying for me to see this magnificent project go ahead as Minister for Heritage which includes the preservation of this place and the protection of its heritage significance.

c) Main Guard

The refurbishment of the Main Guard is another project that we are working on with the Gibraltar Heritage Trust. It came to me as a great surprise to hear the Hon former leader of the opposition and now backbencher to say that he would like to see the Main Guard as offices for members of Parliament. He was the one that in previous budget Speeches had announced that monies had been allocated for the refurbishment of the Main Guard as the Headquarters for the Trust. I wonder why he has suddenly changed his mind.

d) Wellington Front

Wellington Front is currently going through an extensive programme of infrastructure works that will eliminate the historical flooding problems that it has always encountered.

We will also refurbish the vaults and will be allocating them to clubs and associations that have been on the list and we will honour those that were allocated months before the election to entities who were not even on the said

list. Some of the buildings that were constructed after the period of the original building will be demolished.

We will be working together with all interested Parties to see how we can improve the whole of the Northern defences and including the whole of what is known as the Jungle area. This will be coordinated together with the Gibraltar Heritage Trust, The Heritage Division of the Ministry, the youth services and all other groups interested in Heritage.

This is a project that will be driven by the Heritage Action Committee.

e) Southport Gates

Southport Gates suffered deterioration to the extent that we have had to employ experts who are working with locals to restore part of the wall. And in order to save on costs we have extended the works to restore the St Jago's Arch which has been a project which has been on the cards for many years and which was not tackled.

f) Ragged Staff Magazine

We have also plans to use the Ragged Staff Magazine as a venue for events and also to be able to exhibit vintage cars during the year in order to attract tourist to the area.

g) World Heritage Status

One of the areas that we are working hard on is the application of Gorham's Cave and Vanguard's cave to be a World Heritage Site.

As we all know this has been a longstanding project that has been lead by the Museum Team. As we speak I know that Prof Clive Finlayson, Dr Fa, Dr Gerry Finlayson and their team of archeologists are carrying out considerable work at these caves. The Ministry for Heritage will continue to support the bid for World Heritage Status of the caves that will bring benefits to Gibraltar.

h) Another of our Manifesto commitments is to digitise all archive documents. Together with the Kusuma Trust and the Garrison Library staff, all newspapers and Archive documents will be digitised. This exercise will give some of the staff at the Garrison Library the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skill of using the equipment for the future. This is a long term project that will soon be starting.

King's Bastion Leisure Centre.

As is already publicly known the King's Bastion Leisure Centre has a huge deficit that could have been avoided had it been organised and managed in a different way. Contracts were awarded that did not encourage the operators to run the place in a purely commercial manner.

My task is to try to lower this deficit and for it to continue to serve the community and make it a place which people of all ages can enjoy. I am pleased to say that Boyd's is now becoming a place which many corporations are using for their functions. We are trying to see how we can cut cost without affecting the service. We are looking at ways in which the huge electricity bill can be lowered by having alternatives other than being linked to the main grid.

It is incredible that the current air conditioning is not fit for purpose despite it having cost £750,000. One wonders why? The initial explanation is that the system was not one for the size of the centre but for offices or a smaller commercial area. Further, the entrance did not have double doors in order to prevent the outside temperature from impacting on the interior. All in all useless - yet £750,000 was paid towards it by the Members opposite.

One other major issue is the fact that the ice rink is currently costing an average of £7,500 in electricity per month. Again we are looking at alternatives in order to lower the cost. I am sad to say that at present the only part of the centre that is self-sufficient is the Gymnasium.

Youth

Another of my ministerial responsibilities is that of Youth. I am happy to announce that the Gibraltar Youth Service will be reformed. We aim to increase the complement by 100%. This will not happen at additional cost. What we intend to do is to take on the administration role elsewhere and allow the professionals, with volunteers and part-time workers, to be in a position to open the youth Clubs during the weekends.

This is one of our manifesto commitments which will be fulfilled well before our four year tenure expires.

Youth need to play an important part in our society. It is not just good enough to have youth Clubs open during the weekend but they also need to be properly resourced, with programmes that will empower the young to be fully part of our society.

A formal youth policy is being reviewed in consultation with the youth workers themselves. The proposal is for the new structure to have a Principal Youth and Community Officer who will replace the Youth Leader, Two Senior Youth and Community Workers, and 5 Youth and Community Workers. All will be working as a team in order to be in the front line of Youth and Community work primarily at the Youth Clubs. They will also act in close liaison with the schools and with the Voluntary sector such as the scouts, guides, St John Ambulance, the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme and indeed also with Social Services itself.

We are glad to say that the Youth Clubs have already seen an improvement in

resources by way of refurbishment and more will be done during the next financial year.

We have plans, in close consultation with all parties, to improve the premises in the upper rock for the guides and to make this camp disabled-friendly. This has been well overdue and we will also continue to see how we can do the same with other premises also used by voluntary partners. It is important to realize that some youth work is being done on a voluntary basis by many people.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for the hard work that they do.

Though Sports is associated with Leisure it is true to say that Culture also teams up with Leisure.

Mr Speaker,

When we came into government we found the mess that was left by the previous administration in relation to the Gibraltar Culture and Heritage Agency.

I am glad to say that although it has taken time to sort things out we are now closer to correcting the situation that we inherited.

Without delving too much into the problems I can say that the staff who were in that situation have responded in an exemplary way.

We have seen how the John Mackintosh Hall has had a major facelift. The library is now a place which many people choose to visit and the membership has increased immensely. It is now opening on Saturdays and has increased the service to the public. These facilities and others are now being maintained on a regular basis. This includes the Central Hall, the Retreat Centre and the Town Range facilities for clubs among others.

The staff employed in Culture have worked hard in order to deliver events such as the celebrations when the GFA having obtained full membership of UEFA, as well as helping the SDDG to organize national day and other events.

This includes the New Year's Celebrations, the visit by the Earl and Countess of Wessex, providing assistance during Vice President Al Gore's visit, and the Miss Gibraltar Show. This last event was a great success despite the critics saying that the Mackintosh Hall Theatre was not a good venue.

I can say that together with my colleague the Minister for Tourism Mr Costa and his staff we will also assist with the Literary Festival which is taking place in Gibraltar. This will hopefully be an annual event that will attract many literary lovers to Gibraltar on a regular basis.

The Strongman competition that was held in October last year will, this time,

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come to our shores at the end of September. After the success of last year in which we saw our very own Daniel Gracia competing and matching the best in the competition, we are actively looking for a bigger venue or to see how we can maximize the current one in order to be able to fit in more people.

The Strongman Competition was beamed via Eurosport challenge in which we saw a one hour programme on this event. This not only showed the competition but also captured Gibraltar as an attractive tourist destination. The Strongman contest this year will do the same. We are also marketing it so that people who like this sport spend two or three days here in our hotels and go to spend money in our bars and restaurants.

Another Competition, which we have managed to bring to Gibraltar is that of the Darts European Trophy. This is a three day event in which we will see the best in the world. That is Phil The power Taylor, Michael Van Gerring, James Wade, Adrian Lewis and many others.

We anticipate a very good turnout for the six sessions especially on the final day. A one-hour programme on this competition will be shown on Sky Sports soon afterwards. This will again prove invaluable to Gibraltar.

The Drama Festival this year has shown an increase in participation and has included groups that have competed and others who have just participated for the fun of it. We will be working together with all concerned, including GADA, in order to see how we can improve the Drama Festival even further in years to come.

Other innovations on the cultural scene are that of Gibraltar's participation in the Little Constellation project. We are currently working at hosting the Contemporary Art Exhibition in Gibraltar next year.

This will give us all an opportunity see and value what is going on out there in the art world. It will also give us an opportunity to export our art and see how we feature in relation to the rest of Europe within the Little Constellation countries.

Last weekend saw the Calentita Event. It was a huge success so much so that Casemates is fast becoming too small. This year we extended the venue to the Bus Stops at the market place and even that was packed with people. For next year we will be looking at making it bigger and better.

Another two of our Manifesto Commitments - those of promoting an Annual Jazz Festival and having a Mega Concert are well on the way.

Now in its 2nd year, the Gibraltar Jazz Festival in October we will see none other than JOOLS HOLLANDS and his Blues Orchestra featuring GILSON LAVIS with special guest star MELANIE C and guest vocalists RUBY TURNER & LOUISE MARSHALL.

Further we will have again Kirsty Almeida with her band, Elie Massias, George Pozzo with friends, the London Jump band and from the States Dan Moretti. We

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will be using different venues this year. This is already an annual feature on the cultural calendar that I hope will continue for years to come.

As to the Mega Concert, last year's huge success now needs to be matched and I am confident that this year people will enjoy the festival even more than they did then. The Mega Concert has already developed into The Gibraltar Music Festival. It will go on for longer and the festival feel we created last year will be experienced again this year.

Unfortunately until we sign up contracts with artist we are not in a position to say who will the artists will be. This will happen soon.

Mr Speaker,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my staff and all the men and women that work in the ministries and departments for which I am responsible.

I know that with their collaboration and assistance, everything has worked much more smoothly.

Thank you.

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