



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

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **BUDGET SPEECH 2014**

**BY THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH & THE ENVIRONMENT,**

**THE HON DR J CORTES**

#### **PART ONE**

#### **ENVIRONMENT**

Mr Speaker

Introduction

This past year has seen the consolidation of environmental thinking in Government policy and action, cascading and percolating well into the private sector. On looking back and taking stock, Mr Speaker, I am at the same time embarrassed at the huge environmental deficit Gibraltar held to the rest of the world in 2011, as I am proud of the way that it has advanced since.

I am delighted therefore to report, Mr Speaker, that this year has been yet another testimony to the unparalleled level of commitment and work in all areas of national and international environmental management which began when I took office as Minister for the Environment two and a half short years ago.

*Tempus fugit*, Mr Speaker, or to quote Vergil to the full, *Fugit irreparabilis tempus*, (it escapes, irretrievable time) which makes it even more important for us to dedicate ourselves fully to the task of bringing Gibraltar up to international standards in environmental governance, and make up for all the lost time of the past.

Gibraltar has now firmly established itself as a leader in environmental governance within the UK Overseas Territories, a role it has long deserved and that I long worked for before entering politics, but that was blocked by the isolationist policies of the former administration. The success of the Government's outreach was highlighted last year in a much acclaimed report on environmental governance in the Overseas Territories produced by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, by far the largest UK environmental NGO, published last year, where Gibraltar ranked first in all aspects.

Not only are we leaving our mark with the Territories, but within Europe as well, as Government officials increasingly network and demonstrate our vision and working practices. Only last month, Environment officials attended a seminar in Greece, where Gibraltar showcased its marine management and contributed towards enhancing the management of Mediterranean protected areas at a European level. From a position where Gibraltar was simply not represented in these events at all, we have moved to helping to mould European environmental policy.

The benefits to Gibraltar from these networks are tremendous as we collaborate on exciting projects with the wider international community, we get increasingly known, recognized and accepted. Gibraltar is now working at different levels with most EU countries, either directly or as part of group forums on a wide variety of issues, including Habitats Directive sites, air quality, climate change, renewables, waste, and habitat management.

The Department of the Environment leading within the service

The scientists and officials in the Department regularly attend courses on a whole array of issues, ranging from oil spill response, to environmental law. As a scientist myself, I am all too aware of the need for continuing professional development in this field of work and the benefits of providing public servants with these opportunities; the Department is now more self-sufficient than ever before and in turn proactive in its approach, delivering change at an unprecedented level. We have completely transformed it in scope and competence and it continues to go from strength to strength. As one official commented to me recently, more than a wave of change, it feels like environmental policy in Gibraltar is being driven with the strength of a veritable tsunami.

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 for but for all other Ministers in the Government and are called upon by my colleagues for input and advice on a regular basis. The Department continues to work closely with law drafters at EUID, (the European Union and

International Department) to review existing environmental legislation and deliver improvements where possible, always with the view of providing for sounder and greater environmental management and protection, which are in the interests of all.

As I've just said, Mr Speaker, Environment is now more proactive than ever before, and its staff better prepared through resources and training to deal with a whole array of environmental issues. By way of example, the Department now has its own diving section and is performing marine surveys and relocations in-house. Officers are also on call to allow for faster deployment when dealing with a wide array of environmental problems, including oil spills and pollution incidents. This complements the excellent work already being done by the Environmental Agency. We have also enhanced the number of staff in the Environmental feedback section to allow for an improved service to the public and will shortly be releasing a new app called "fix my street", an online reporting facility which provides direct contact with Government Departments and Agencies for the reporting and resolution of municipal service requests.

Citizens will be able to submit service requests relating to a variety of issues including:

- Abandoned vehicles
- Air and noise pollution
- Domestic refuse
- Graffiti, litter and dumping

- Planted areas
- Pot holes, sign damage, traffic lights and other road related issues
- Stormwater drains
- Street cleaning
- Damaged recreation facilities and playgrounds
- Street lights, etc.

In order to ensure that environmental governance is public service-wide, a seminar with all Government Departments to ensure the successful adoption of the newly revised **Environmental Action and Management Plan** is planned for September/October. This document exemplifies this Government's commitment to environmental change in Gibraltar and the Department is tasked with ensuring its successful implementation throughout the public service.

#### Green Filter

The Green filter continues to drive through Government activity. One of the biggest success stories in this respect Mr Speaker, continues to be the Government's green procurement policy. By applying and directing the public sector's purchasing power within the local market towards green alternatives we are now finding that these are not only more widespread and easily accessible to the consumer, but that increasingly, they are available at a lower price than the non-environmental alternative. And more and more local businesses are moving into the environmental sector with the products and services they offer. It just goes to show what can be achieved when Government leads by example,

and is one of several clearly-emerging successes that resulted from the inspirational Thinking Green Conference addressed by Vice President Al Gore in October 2012.

Representatives of the Environment Department are present in any cross departmental committee which may be set up as well as in the Government's projects committee. The Department leads in committees such as the environmental noise steering group, the energy efficiency committee, the litter committee, and the climate change forum, all of which I chair. We have recently created a climate change task force, chaired by the Deputy Chief Minister, which meets on a monthly basis and significantly includes key stakeholders from the private sector and the Financial Services Commission. The aim Mr Speaker, is to deliver tangible changes within Gibraltar on energy efficiency, climate change and decarbonisation, in essence to deliver Gibraltar's 2020 climate strategy and overarching climate goals.

Environment has also been key in the creation of a coordination committee across technical departments in order to increase cooperation and efficiency in delivering Government projects.

#### Waste management and recycling

Mr Speaker, the extremely successful recycling initiative continues, and further bins have been purchased and will be deployed in coming months. The numbers of blue, green and yellow bins will be increased in the town area, as well as in MOD estates and other locations in Gibraltar. Further expansion to

the recycling initiative include more pink bins which cater for the recycling of waste electrical and electronic equipment and for the first time, the deployment of orange bins to cater for the recycling of waste cooking oil. The recycling of paper, small items of waste electrical and electronic equipment (**WEEE**) and batteries from all Government Agencies, Authorities and Departments, which commenced that year, continues, with 52,061 kilos collected from the public sector alone in the financial year 2013/2014.

Promoting awareness is vital for the successful implementation of any environmental initiative. With this in mind, the recycling campaign has been enhanced to capture the recycling of further waste streams, namely paper, and WEEE.

Mr Speaker, in 2013, the yellow bins used for cans, plastic and tetra brick collected a total of 70,720 kilos, a 383.7% increase from the previous year.

The Green bins, where we deposit glass, collected a total of 153,248 kilos in 2013. A percentage increase of 21%.

The Blue bin, used for paper and cardboard, collected 132,495 kilos, with a massive percentage increase of 3,617%.

The Pink bin programme commenced in 2013 and collected a total of 1413 kilos with only 6 bins around Gibraltar. Mr Speaker, if these figures do not illustrate a success story I simply do not know what will. A success story, which would not

have happened without the political will and foresight of this administration, and without the support of the General Public, who deserve to be praised for assisting Gibraltar as it moves towards achieving the EU recycling targets. Mr Speaker, two years ago all you could recycle in Gibraltar was tins and glass.

The refurbishment of all refuse holding facilities has continued, with 6 refuse cubicles being completed last year, and 15 in the pipeline.

The Gibraltar Waste Management Plan was updated this last year to reflect this Government's policy on waste management and was submitted to the EU. The waste tender is going through its technical assessment. In respect of waste, respect Gibraltar is set to receive technology that will transform the way we deal with our rubbish.

The Litter Committee continues to meet on a regular basis and the improvements as a result of the work of this Committee are evident throughout Gibraltar, with the enclosure of the refuse quarry being but one example. With the litter committee, we are studying ways in which to make our streets cleaner, especially those areas where historically there have been accumulations of rubbish, especially at weekends.

Mr. Speaker, there is still more to be done and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the committee, especially those from outside the public sector who give of their time, for all their hard work and dedication. It really is a pleasure working with them, even though we spend most of our time talking rubbish.



Other waste and litter related initiatives include the addition of signs to litter bins on dog fouling, the incorporation of ash trays to litter bins and an extensive CCTV programme in hotspots areas of dog fouling and waste dumping.

#### Working with the Community

Work with **NGOs** continues and regular meetings take place with both Government officials and with me. We have now expanded the process of involvement and transparency, and not only meet with the established environmental NGOs but also with other groups and individuals who work and contribute towards improving Gibraltar visually through cleanliness and who focus on waste and litter.

Mr Speaker, Government remains committed to involving the wider Gibraltar in its work. My Ministry now engages with more local groups than ever before and liaises with the public on a whole array of issues, directly and indirectly related to the Environment. My doors are never closed to any such group.

Regular meetings continue to be held with the Scientific Authority and the Nature Conservancy Council who are working closely with the Ministry and Department on a variety of issues relating to nature conservation and habitat management.

I mentioned last year the work of the Department with the GFSB and Chamber of Commerce on varying issues of environmental concern. As a result of this, a

Green Seminar was held by the Department on sustainable construction. It was extremely well attended and more seminars are being planned in order to tackle other issues such as sustainable tourism. Their involvement in the Climate Change Task Force is particularly valuable.

#### Advances in environmental governance

Mr Speaker, we have made history this year. Not only has the Government signed a Power Purchase Agreement for wave power which has already seen Gibraltar thrust firmly into the renewable energy scene but, I am delighted to announce that last month, for the first time in the history of energy generation in Gibraltar, *90 kilowatt hours* of solar energy were fed into the local network. Additionally, data on energy savings are being collated as a result of the solar panels on the GSLA swimming pool and tercentenary sports hall. To put matters into perspective, based on the data and savings thus far, the projected annual savings to Government from the swimming pool alone is £103,789.

Further projects on solar power are currently underway at St Bernard's hospital and Tangier Views. Work is continuing in the Department to identify further sites for the development and deployment of renewable technology, and we are in discussion with several providers. We look forward during the course of this year to announce further solar power projects. We will also be continuing our work to assess the viability of marine current energy as a supplier of electricity. This is, Mr Speaker, clear evidence of our commitment to delivering a sustainable Gibraltar. May I remind the House, Mr Speaker, that before this Government came into administration there had been absolutely no progress

made, nor even any interest shown in such matters, with Gibraltar trailing badly behind the rest of Europe.

The actions and initiatives being delivered by this administration have enabled a wide range of possibilities to become available in Gibraltar, with Environment working horizontally across the full breadth of the public service, to deliver economic prosperity with environmental protection and social justice. To place this into context, departmental and Agency officials work closely with the Port, Gibraltar Maritime Administration, Gibraltar Electricity Authority, Technical Services, Tourism, Procurement, Employment, 6 Convent Place, Office of the Financial Secretary and Education to name a few.

#### Environmental education and awareness

This past year has seen a concerted effort in raising awareness of a whole array of environmental issues through the media. Some of you may have watched some of the episodes showing on GBC on the work carried out by the Department in respect of World Environment Day. More programmes will follow focusing on other aspects of the environment. But this is not all; we have moved into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and have taken the raising of awareness to a new dimension, using technology and current trends to facilitate active learner involvement in the local environment. What is hugely significant about this strategy is that through the use of android and iOS, we are also spreading awareness to the world at large. We have seen the launch of the Gibraltar wildlife jigsaw. Today, as I speak, we are launching a recycling game, and soon

we will see a macaque augmented reality application, the Upper Rock multifunctional app and the Gibraltar interactive wildlife encyclopaedia.

The Thinking Green website now has a *kids zone* which will be developed further and expanded upon in coming months. All of these portray local environmental resources, which children not only from Gibraltar but now from all over the world can download and learn about as they play.

Mr Speaker, this year Government celebrated the tenth anniversary of **World Environment Day (WED)** on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> June. The purpose of this United Nations Environment Program Day is to spread awareness of centre stage environmental issues. This year's theme is particularly well suited to Gibraltar, being climate change in small island states, with the slogan "raise your voices not the sea" and I must say the children did exactly that, their message showed through louder and better than ever before. As Minister for the Environment and someone who I think has always tried to keep in touch with the youth, it is the most inspiring part of my work. To see that the message really does get across and that we are succeeding in ensuring that tomorrow's generation, tomorrow's political leaders, public servants and business entrepreneurs, are growing up with this environmental awareness. Which means, Mr Speaker, that finding solutions and assuming their environmental duty of care, will form a natural part of their lives. The work done by children, teachers and parents has to be praised. I must also praise my Department whose unwavering efforts with schools and other youth groups in recent years has really brought the message home, adding to the work that was done by NGOs in the past, when the Government of the time didn't really care. I am proud to have been personally

associated with this movement from the outset, before and since becoming a Minister in Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar.

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

Mr Speaker, this year finally saw the launch of the Government's Geoportal, an interactive map of Gibraltar produced by the Technical Services Department together with the IT Department and Environment. The GIS database consists of a series of layers that can be overlaid to provide information on spatial patterns. The IT department has been monitoring usage. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> March, the map has been viewed and utilised from right across the globe, as far East as China, as far south as Mozambique and New Zealand, the northern extreme including Finland and Canada, and to the west reaching Los Angeles. It is being used on mobile devices and a whole array of operating systems and web browsers. The average usage is 14,825 server requests per day. So not only are we providing an interactive map with valuable information online, ranging from streets and buildings to natural areas and geology, it is clear that people all over the world are interested in what Gibraltar is all about. This service will continue to be updated and further information is being added regularly.

Mr Speaker, the GIS project had been stumbling without political leadership, or indeed interest, for years, and since this administration took over, it has progressed unrecognisably – and the work continues.

This tool is an integral part of our e-Government ethos and perhaps its true value lies in the sharing of spatial information across Government Departments, allowing Government Departments and policy makers to take informed

decisions. Representatives from many Government departments have already received training on GIS and more will follow as we deliver new and innovative forms of data management across Government.

Another exciting development last year was the UK OT's GIS conference. It was a resounding success, and Gibraltar once again led by example and is taking a very active role in the development and deployment of GIS across the Territories.

#### Energy and climate change

Moving on to Energy and climate change Mr Speaker, I ask that you forgive me if I appear overly enthusiastic, but again, progress, determination and success are very much the name of the game. The Government continues with the programme to replace public lighting and street lights with solar powered devices and/or LEDs. Data on energy and as a result cost savings are being collated by the Gibraltar Electricity Authority and are very encouraging. Going green certainly pays off.

Furthermore, as part of our efforts to mitigate and contribute towards the global fight against climate change, the Department is working hard to ensure that we fulfill our obligations under the various energy related EU directives. To this end, we are working closely with AquaGib and the GEA to start the roll out of smart meters. These will allow people to see their energy usage differently and make changes to save on consumption and money. Bills will also take on a new format, again allowing the householder to compare usage in one month with

previous years and take informed decisions on energy reduction possibilities in the home. Energy efficiency and reduction, decarbonisation of the economy, energy audit and the launch of renewables are the order of the day. We are spearheading Gibraltar into the international arena as we seek to form part of initiatives such as the Covenant of mayors, green cities and the local governments for sustainability initiative.

Mr Speaker, since I spoke last year, the evidence for the global and local risks of climate change has deepened and strengthened. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC's) Fifth Assessment Report was released in September. Its conclusions were starker and more certain than in any previous report. In its Summary for policymakers, it states: *"Warming of the climate system is unequivocal....The atmosphere and ocean have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished, sea level has risen, and the concentrations of greenhouse gases have increased"*. We cannot afford to ignore this issue, which is storing huge risks and threats for established order on our planet, for our children and grandchildren.

Along with the rest of the global community we need to de-carbonise our economy. Failure to do so will leave future generations to pick up the costs and the insecurity which climate change will bring. We must play our part in both mitigation – avoiding the unmanageable consequences of accelerating global warming – and adaptation - managing the unavoidable impacts of an already changing climate.

It is for these reasons, Mr Speaker, that last year I reported our ambition - for Gibraltar's climate change strategy to make us a 'Top 5' city in environmental governance. I am pleased to report that huge progress has been made on many fronts - moving our manifesto commitment to make Gibraltar carbon neutral from ambition into action.

In October of last year, an internal review of our climate change strategy and commitments endorsed a recommendation to deliver carbon neutrality by 2020 at the latest – ahead of any other city in Europe.

To reiterate a few of the actions we have already taken to reduce carbon dioxide emissions:

- Our plans are well advanced to build new gas powered power station which will simultaneously deliver energy security and much lower emissions – as well as improving air quality
- Renewable energy projects
- A range of energy efficiency measures
- The invaluable and ground breaking work of the climate change task force

The Climate Change Forum, which continues to meet, will this year deliver a revised climate change programme as a result of the work being carried out by the Climate Change task force. The work and remit of the task force include assessing and finding the most effective ways of implementing Gibraltar climate change strategy of 2020 and beyond. By incorporating private and public sector



stakeholders, the task force is well placed to find ways of implementing the findings of the research being conducted in providing:

- 1) An economic assessment of the decarbonisation options for Gibraltar,
- 2) A renewable energy strategy
- 3) Supporting the delivery of an energy efficiency action plan and building renovation strategy
- 4) A city level inventory of greenhouse gas emissions
- 5) A climate change strategy for the transport sector

The focus of this administration Mr Speaker, is to work hand in hand with the community and all facets of the private sector to deliver this very inspiring change and ensure Gibraltar truly becomes a top green city.

One of the major conclusions from our strategy review is that climate change is as much an economic issue as an environmental one. Avoiding compliance costs is another powerful argument for actively reducing our emissions.

A second conclusion is that we can make progressive climate change actions a long-term economic opportunity rather than a cost. The example of the GSLA swimming pool is a classic example which in addition to the £103,789 of cost savings I have already highlighted, is eliminating nearly 18,000 tonnes of carbon emissions from our atmosphere a year.

To give more figures, Mr Speaker, despite the fact that there are more areas of public lighting, the change of some areas to lower energy systems has meant that for the first time energy consumption in street lighting fell from 1.81m KWh in 2012-13 to 1.74 KWh in 2013-14, resulting in a small but significant saving of

about £12,000. This is just the beginning. Other changes in light fittings in public buildings and public areas are resulting in energy savings of up to 90%.

We have also concluded that in the lifespan of this Parliament we will introduce a range of incentives for all parts of our community to adopt lower carbon lifestyles and business practices. The Chief Minister in his address has announced some of these incentives.

It is obvious that making massive reductions to our carbon emissions will take many years. And even when we have made all the viable technical, social and economic investments to reduce emissions there will still be residual emissions which we cannot eliminate – for example, in transport fuels. We are reviewing how these emissions can be ‘offset’ and are looking toward working with other countries to this effect. The most important point to make here Mr Speaker, is our collective drive and determination to ensure success and I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all members of the task force for their time and dedication to delivering this vision for Gibraltar.

### Energy Performance of Buildings

In terms of energy performance of buildings, the Government is currently completing a building renovation strategy which will set new cost-optimal levels of energy performance for new and existing buildings as well as defining nearly zero energy building standards as we move towards 2020. Government is also considering ways in which renovation of existing buildings can be encouraged to

ensure that the current building stock is not left behind. To this end, Government is having its own buildings assessed for their energy performance.

#### Water quality

Both coastal water quality and bathing water monitoring programmes continue to be in operation and these are spearheaded by the Department of the Environment and the Environmental Agency respectively. New initiatives that have been incorporated into the former programme include carrying out a comprehensive chemical monitoring investigation of marine biota in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters targeting both fish and bivalve mollusc species. This initiative will serve as an excellent medium to long-term indicator of pollutant levels in Gibraltar's marine environment. It is now possible to say that the Department of the Environment is monitoring most, if not all, marine environmental components namely coastal water, sediment and marine biota. In addition, the Department has also commenced the development of a marine litter campaign, which includes monitoring the incidence and composition of marine litter. Groundwater quality monitoring also continues to be carried out by the Department in the Northern Isthmus aquifer and also within the bedrock aquifer underlying the Rock of Gibraltar.

The results generated from the coastal and groundwater programmes will shortly be used to inform Gibraltar's 2nd River Basin Management Plan in line with the requirements of the European Union's Water Framework Directive. Results will also be used to inform reporting requirements under other Directives such as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. In order to improve coastal

water quality within the harbour, the Department of the Environment, together with the Technical Services Department, is currently pursuing the development of one-way flow culverts which could help improve coastal water quality in specific areas within the harbour.

New EU compliant beach signs have now been developed by the Department of the Environment together with the Environmental Agency and these will be installed this year. The 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.

#### The Environmental Agency

I must also pay tribute to the hard work of the staff of the Environmental Agency, who have also been working tirelessly to deliver change and environmental improvements within their areas of competence. Examples of their efforts include the following:

- Introduction of the Environmental Agency app (GibEnviro) catering for news, location of recycling points, reporting of complaints, etc)
- A presence on Twitter (EnviroAgency@GibEnviro) and facebook
- The upgrading of their website
- The Introduction of a Ship Sanitation Certificates service as from July.
- Increased monitoring and enforcement on waste storage and disposal sites
- Increased inspections of transfrontier shipments of wastes at loading points and at export points

- The provision of specialised waste management training to EA staff and to waste industry representatives
- An expansion of the portfolio of courses run by EA (e.g. Health & Safety; Food Safety; Asbestos Awareness; Ladder Safety; Control of Substances Hazardous to Health; Environmental Principles and Best Practice, etc); all of which are available to individuals in the public and private sectors.
- Agency staff are for the first time trained to audit dental clinics, vet clinics and other premises using X-ray under the Ionising Radiations Regulations 2004. Up to now these were not monitored and so presented a risk to the public.
- Inspections for first time of hotels, guesthouses and holiday lets for general hygiene and cleanliness, health and safety, swimming pool quality, etc
- The encouragement of small business initiatives by the issuing of Hawkers' and Pedlars' Licences, which this Government has reactivated.
- The Expansion of anti dog fouling campaigns to include talks at schools; poster competitions and the introduction of CCTV cameras

## Cemetery

Mr Speaker, works on the improvement of the Cemetery continue and a tender for the landscaping and general maintenance of the North Front Cemetery has been published and is in progress. Furthermore, the Cemeteries Board now meets on a monthly basis and I will be meeting them in the very near future to discuss improvements to their role, advice, areas of concern and general management of all of the Gibraltar Cemeteries.

## Urban Renewal

Urban renewal is one of the responsibilities that falls within my portfolio, Mr Speaker, and it is proceeding apace. In this, it is often the work of other Ministries and Departments, notably Housing, Technical Services and Education, that through their own activities form the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that come together to reveal the final picture. And so, the works in the Estates like Laguna, Glacis, Moorish Castle, Red Sands, and the new upper town schools form part of this unprecedented boost to renewing our fair city. And so do other works that you will have seen around the Town, including for example Joshua Hassan and Duke of Kent House as well as 6 Convent Place. The Upper Town street projects tender has been awarded and will see work commencing soon. These have all generated great interest from the private sector and more and more upper town properties are being refurbished, with plans that include a small hotel. Movement in this sphere is absolutely unprecedented in Gibraltar.

In addition, I have formed a committee which involves the Gibraltar Heritage Trust with the aim of identifying sites within our urban areas that require work and investment, with a view to encouraging refurbishment before demolition becomes inevitable through dereliction.

## Green and Planted areas

Mr Speaker, between February 2013 and April 2014, we planted 212 trees and worked extensively on the maintenance and improvement of existing green areas.

## Commonwealth Park

What better showcase, Mr Speaker, of the value of green areas and the benefit they bring both environmentally and socially to the Community can we have than the recently inaugurated Commonwealth Park. The Park, yet another success story, is being enjoyed by the community as a whole, both young and old and it has probably been the most drastic and beneficial change to its urban fabric that Gibraltar has ever seen.

Commonwealth Park, Mr Speaker, has added a new dimension to Gibraltar. A dimension that those without vision seem not to even have realised existed.

Mr Speaker, the hounding by the Opposition during the construction of the park was epic: when will it be ready? *will* it be ready? why did the trees come from there? How many lorries did you use? how much will it cost? Cynicism at its worst, which reminds me Mr Speaker of Oscar Wilde when he defined a cynic as being a man “who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing”.

Mr Speaker, Commonwealth Park was an example of collaboration with other entities, in this case the public-spiritedness of the Kusuma Trust, of effective utilization of European Union Funds, of the use of local resources, with the soil being manufactured in Gibraltar, recycling, and of the use of environmentally-friendly technology.

The benefits to health and wellbeing will be felt by the community in a way that simple statistics will not reveal for many years, but which everyone already realizes.

Already we have announced a new, albeit smaller and 'town square' type park in Governor's Parade, an extension to the landscaping soon to be completed in the area. Gibraltar needs to be green in colour as well as in philosophy.

And, Mr Speaker, I can confirm that work on setting up two dog parks in Gibraltar, one in the north and one in the southern districts is about to commence.

### **Natural Habitats**

I will now move onto the subject of the Gibraltar Nature Reserve Mr Speaker, The Department is working tirelessly with the Gibraltar Tourist Board, the Department of Education and others on a whole array of projects which will improve the Upper Rock for tourists, the tour and transport operators who make a living from the areas, and residents alike. In doing so we are conscious of the millions of pounds that the Upper Rock has through the years contributed to the Gibraltar economy, the fact that it is a major tourist destination, and the fact that many residents are now choosing to stay in Gibraltar rather than crossing into Spain, and are looking for more things to do here.

Already this spring we re-opened the Princess Caroline's Battery area to the community, after many years, and we provided picnic tables and seating. That is nothing at all compared to what we have planned. It will be nothing short of a complete transformation and revitalization of this too long forgotten national gem and tourist product. Visitors to the Upper Rock will feel almost as if they were walking in the sky.



- we are re-opening and improving existing trails, improving way finding and delivering thematic routes.
- We are enhancing recreation areas and facilities, improving safety and accessibility thereby catering for different interests
- We are restoring and preserving historic structures, delivering improved interpretation and re-opening areas to the general public
- We are protecting the flora and fauna, improving the habitat for macaques, reintroducing or enhancing the populations of key species, ensuring better definition of public paths and educating visitors and residents on our natural heritage
- We are delivering interpretation centres which will benefit not only local education but the eco-tourism experience as well, better signage, enhanced maps and guides and of course interactive apps on the upper rock
- And the Upper Rock Management Plan will ensure continuous maintenance, preventing vandalism and litter and promoting continuous improvement.

### Habitat Management

Moving onto the area of Habitat management Mr Speaker, I am delighted to report that great strides continue to be taken in the fields of terrestrial and marine habitat management. The Department is working closely with local interest groups, pulling on local expertise and experience, in projects such as:

- Gib bats

- Fish tagging
- Removal of invasive species
- Preservation of existing species through the provision of swift boxes and bat boxes
- Sea grass restoration
- Species relocations
- Reef surveillance and enhancement
- The development of an exciting reintroduction programme which will commence with the Barbary partridge and will see other species of flora and fauna in coming months.
- Habitat improvements

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 European interest.

Interpretation signs showcasing particular species of flora and fauna have gone up around Gibraltar and more will follow. These have included the cemetery, the Upper Rock, Europa foreshore and Windmill Hill amongst others. These will serve to educate the public on important species found in Gibraltar.

### Macaques

We have been working very hard indeed to reverse the historical effects of lack of proper management of the Barbary macaques of Gibraltar, which has resulted in our monkeys becoming regarded more as a nuisance than as an asset. Part of the management strategy is to help the public regain their traditional affection for these unique mammals with which we share the Rock,

and once again to be proud of their presence and their legendary significance to the status, and even sovereignty of our country. The recently launched video clip explaining some aspects of their behaviour and how we can help is one example of how we intend to do this. The Department, and the Tourist Board, is bringing in local expertise in developing a full-blown education campaign, something which I greatly welcome.

The creation of additional foraging areas on the Upper Rock by clearing dense scrub continues to great effect. Work continues too on the Upper Rock on building new ponds and enlarged feeding sites. These works are all aimed at providing as much potential for activity as possible on the Upper Rock, where up until now dense scrub greatly reduced the areas they could use. The busier they are on the Rock, the less likely that they will move down into urban areas.

The ground breaking research carried out last year together with the University of Notre Dame has shown how the macaques move widely, with successive sightings of macaques in different areas in fact being of the same individuals who are moving around. This was most useful in confirming for example, that the group that was frequenting Laguna was in fact made up of the same individuals that would visit Catalan Bay. This helped inform the decision that it is this group that will be the main component of the animals that will be exported. Preparations are progressing well on this initiative, both in Gibraltar and at the receiving location, and details will be released in the coming months. The enclosure of refuse facilities in macaque hotspot areas continues. Deployment of additional, keen and resourceful personnel to patrol built up areas has also helped in improving the situation, as has the deterrent of the

introduction of fixed penalty fines. There is much still to do, as Nature takes its time in responding, but I am confident of huge improvements in the situation in this coming year.

### Fishing

Mr Speaker, the politically mischievous, or politically ignorant, or simply those who mean us harm, tried very hard to blame the current Spanish Government's abuse of power at the frontier on the legitimate creation of an artificial reef in our territorial waters. The huffing and puffing over, Mr Speaker, the northwest artificial reef remains an example of habitat creation and encouragement of the improvement of marine life in our waters. Already there is evidence of its success, and plans to further enhance the area by the introduction of the sea grasses that once formed an underwater meadow there but that were raked away, are advancing. Other environmental improvements include the new groynes and breakwaters at Sandy Bay, already teeming with new life.

In this context, and following a wide range of discussion with stakeholders, Regulations to govern marine activities in Gibraltar waters, while enhancing our fish stocks by investing in sensible regulation, will be published very soon.

### Environmental enforcement

Mr Speaker, much needed improvements to the enforcement of environmental laws are progressing well. There are currently two officers filling a new role of Environmental Enforcement Officer. They have received the necessary training from the RGP and the AGs chambers to allow them to fulfill their role. Their areas of competence now include the enforcement of the Nature

Protection Act, the Public Health Act, the Litter Act, Animals and Birds Act, and the Seashore Rules, and include the ability to issue litter tickets and fixed penalty tickets for feeding macaques. The section coordinates a programme of CCTV cameras in hotspot areas of fly tipping and dog fouling. They patrol all areas of Gibraltar as they educate and enforce.

### Environmental Noise

In the area of environmental noise, we have met and will continue to meet our EU obligations under this legislative regime and in January 2014 Gibraltar submitted its updated Noise Action Management Plan after a period of public consultation. The Department of the Environment and Environmental Agency are now reviewing the Plan through the reconvened Noise Core Steering Group, a group that had ceased to function under the previous administration, and have a period of five years for the implementation of the plan. A large part of the requirements of the Noise Action Management Plan have already been implemented.

### Air Quality

The Gibraltar Air Quality Monitoring Programme continues and informs the Government on local air quality and management. Gibraltar achieves compliance with virtually every pollutant measured under the requirements of the air quality directive and work continues to ensure compliance with all pollutants in the coming years. Government will this year be investing in new equipment monitoring stations to ensure that the quality of data collection is

maintained.

As a result of an increased need for source apportionment and a better understanding of the fate of pollutants from different sources within the local environment, we propose to extend the measurement of metals to include the monitoring station at Bleak House. This will allow a better understanding of where pollutants are coming from and give us a background reading to be able to better distinguish between local and transboundary sources.

Weather stations have now been set up around Gibraltar; these will provide the Government with detailed meteorological data to support its air quality programme and to assist with plans to develop climate change mitigation and adaptation programmes. Government has also commissioned a road traffic air modelling study to support the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan. This will allow us to model the current situation, to forecast the improvements that will be achieved as a result of the plan, and to monitor the effectiveness of the measures implemented.

## Conclusion

Mr Speaker, the transition from a Gibraltar where it was a struggle to convince the Government of the importance of the environment to one where Government leads, is hugely evident and hugely significant. And it can only be good for the Community and for Gibraltar's international standing. And it is attracting attention both within Europe and, as is increasingly evident, in the USA.

This best thing about this, Mr Speaker, is that the new way of doing things is finding its way into all levels of our society, schools, workplaces, businesses

large and small, and the public service. Mr Speaker, this is lasting change of which we can be proud.

And proud I am of my hugely committed staff in the Department, under our new and dynamic CEO, Dr Liesl Mesilio-Torres, and in the Ministry, of our contractors in the Agency and other entities, including Government Departments and Authorities, for responding so well to the call of the Environment. I honestly, deeply and truly am appreciative of all you do and I greatly enjoy working with you.