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BUDGET SPEECH 2014

By the Minister for Traffic, Housing and Technical Services

The Hon P Balban

Ministry for Housing

Mr Speaker,

It gives me great pleasure to stand here today to deliver my 3rd Budget address. Time and tide wait for no man – and this is becoming so evidently clear now. How time flies. One would be forgiven to think that on this side of the House one should be getting increasingly nervous, as our end of tenure looms ever closer. Surely, our political shadows should already be rubbing their hands together in view of this waning time, before what, they feel, should be a feeding frenzy on a banquet of unfulfilled manifesto commitments, but alas for them, there should be no left-overs, not even a morsel to be devoured.

We are doing well, Mr Speaker, this Government, true to its word is doing extremely well. I will only speak for the Ministries that I am responsible for but everywhere we turn, change is now, most definitely in the air. Gibraltar is being transformed and it is there. Change, Mr Speaker, is now glaring in our faces.

Mr Speaker,

A year on from my last Budget Speech where I announced the construction of low cost affordable housing, as being one of our major flagship, manifesto commitments. Well I am now happy to report that this has now become a reality. Ground was broken only months ago and the Aerial Farm Site soon to become Beach View Terraces is already there - looming right in front of our very eyes, growing day by day. I do not think that people prior to this summer were so aware that we had progressed so far in such a short amount of time, but now as we follow our daily exodus to the beaches, its there, Beach View Terraces. Truly affordable homes! – Something, which was born during our last tenure in Government, a concept that was sadly never equalled successfully by our predecessors.

Mons Calpe Mews is also on track and running on schedule, as announced. In no time at all we will also see this starting to take shape. Both of these new estates are truly low-cost and affordable. Where else would someone be able to buy a one-bedroom flat for £27,600 or a 4 bedroom flat for £73,360. Surely, the only complaint would be, and has been, that people want more of these types of flats, the demand has been that great! There were over 3000 applications for these 895 flats. The demand has been so great simply because of the dismal record of our predecessors

when in Government. People who have been given the chance to purchase are truly ecstatic, and are now eagerly awaiting their new homes.

Mr Speaker, as a result of the success of these new projects, it is clear that we cannot stop here, in fact, we will NOT stop here, we will carry on building low-cost homes as there is clearly a need and demand for this type of Housing initiative, not only for those who are on the waiting lists but for the many upgraders who have also shown a clear interest in purchasing as they have outgrown their homes and now require larger accommodation. These families have shown an interest in releasing their properties to Government for subsequent sale.

Mr Speaker,

This Government, does not give priority to those who wish to purchase 100%, there is already a housing market out there for speculators, BUT not THIS market. We work strictly by the criteria that we announced and hold firm by this. Priority has been given to those applicants who were on the housing waiting list on or before the 9th December 2011. After this, those who were on the pre-list on these dates, followed by those who were on the Housing List after 9th December. Then those who are currently tenants of Government flats will be allowed to purchase and then upgraders will also have an opportunity as long as flats are still available.

Our counterparts may criticise, as they would have done things differently. They did in fact do things differently, very differently. They sold to the highest bidder, they sold

to those who chose to buy 100% over and above those who could only purchase 50%. That was their policy. Nevertheless, they were very successful in one other thing, and I think that no one could deny them of this – and that was allowing the waiting list to rise and rise to around 1500, the level that we inherited on the 9th December 2011, when it was this Government who had brought the Housing Waiting down to an all time low of 459 back in 1996.

Construction of Flats for the Elderly

Mr Speaker,

Also, in keeping with our manifesto commitment on the construction of flats for the elderly in the style of Albert Risso and Bishop Canilla House, we have already announced two more blocks, which will be purpose built for these specific needs. The professional opinion of Occupational Therapists and others relevant professionals have been consulted so that these flats will suit these exacting needs. The flats will be spacious and completely wheelchair accessible. As already announced, one block will be within the Mon's Calpe Mews Development, and will be known as Sea Master Lodge. The other will be Charles Bruzon House constructed at Europort Avenue. A total of 143 flats will be available within these blocks. [We are also working on new Albert Risso style accommodation on the site of the old Queen's Hotel.](#)

Meeting with the Tenants Associations

Mr Speaker,

Our policy of holding regular meetings with the Tenants Association continues. Either I, or senior members of my Ministry continue meeting with the established Tenants Associations on a regular basis. These meetings reinforce our contact with the tenants and many issues are highlighted and sorted out during these meetings. This keeps my Ministry in touch with the real issues that concern our tenants and affords 'early warning' of existing and impending problems for immediate remedial action.

Tenants Associations express their appreciation for this 'platform' from which they can communicate their problems directly to Senior Housing Ministry officials who are truly empowered to assess such matters and take swift corrective action. In this way, tenants may have more regular contact with the Ministry by way of its ground staff who are the ones who deal with all the important day-to-day issues and this greatly speeds up the progress of getting work done.

Reporting Office

Mr Speaker,

A complete restructuring exercise of the Reporting office was carried out last year in order to maximise this Office's efficiency and effectiveness in dealing with the numerous day-to-day reports and counter enquiries from members of the public. The Reporting Office has established a close relationship with the Housing Works Agency's Customer Services Support Office resulting in an efficient exchange of information that truly benefits Government tenants.

All customer enquiries received at the Reporting Office are dealt with within the same working day, where possible, and the success of this endeavour is evident in the significantly reduced incidence of customer calls direct to the Agency.

Mr Speaker, I am happy to say that since we addressed this matter we have not received one single complaint relating to the non-reply of phone calls. On the contrary we have now received praises for the way that the calls are being handled. We keep monthly phone statistics to ensure a good and efficient service to the public. We now also have an email address where persons can make reports directly to the Reporting Office without having to make a phone call or coming to the counter in person. We will not stop here. We are now investing in a call centre to enhance the service that we are providing in this area.

El Turno

El Turno has now been in operation for over a year and tenants are happy with this new service being provided. Government is now considering the possibility of extending this to other estates in the near future. A team constantly oversees that the service runs smoothly and are quick to tackle any emerging queries so as to ensure a seamless operation. This is yet another commitment which this Government has fulfilled making the lives of residents more comfortable.

Anti Social Behaviour

Mr Speaker,

As I announced last year, HMGOG is committed to targeting practices of anti-social behaviour within Government Estates that affect many law-abiding residents. One key issue of major concern resulting in anti-social behaviour was directly related to tobacco concealment especially within Glacis and Laguna Estates. In this respect, the Government has embarked on a program of placing CCTV cameras in strategic locations within these estates. This scheme is in its initial stages but will develop as the refurbishment works of the estates progress.

The Government has also introduced a number of measures to eradicate the sale of tobacco from within these Estates. The collector of Customs has exercised his discretion in keeping with the Government's declared policy and views on the Public Interest. This has being applauded by tenants and their respective associations alike. It was very disconcerting, evoking strong feeling of fear and insecurity witnessing individuals stripping to their undergarments or dismantling their vehicles in order to conceal tobacco. Tenants feared for their safety and that of their children, and rightfully so. These persons on many occasions would challenge anyone who tried to detract them from their activity, at times showing violent or threatening behaviour to those who complained or even challenged them. These estates are now a better place. Furthermore, tobacco can now only be sold at reduced quantities between 8am to 8pm and there is an increased presence of both RGP and Customs personnel in what are known as hot spots around Gibraltar and other Government Estates.

At Mid-Harbour's Estate, CCTV Cameras have already been installed both in the garage and podium levels in order to curb anti-social behaviour at these locations too.

Refurbishment of Estates

Mr Speaker,

In last year's Budget Speech I announced the erection of scaffolding to signify the commencement of a massive investment in the external refurbishment of our existing housing stock. Housing stock, which had been forgotten and neglected for many years.

Today, I can proudly announce that the rewards of this investment are becoming increasingly apparent as projects gather momentum. Indeed my staff and I receive encouraging feedback from tenants of the estates undergoing refurbishment. No one could possibly deny, irrespective of which side one sits, that this will totally transform Gibraltar. The Estates being tackled at the moment will be visible from afar and are the first buildings one sees shortly after crossing the frontier into Gibraltar. The first block to have been unveiled at Laguna Estate, Rodney House, shows the impressive and remarkable change that Gibraltar was crying out for. It was most definitely time for change. The change within these estates will also see the installation of lifts in the vast majority of blocks, which will make life to the many residents so much easier.

These works are not simply aesthetic but they will tackle the serious issues, that rip right into the fabric of these aging blocks, water penetration, dampness, lack of ventilation and other symptoms of neglect.

Alameda Estate:

Mr Speaker,

The rolling programme to refurbish and embellish Government's historically neglected housing estates has also now seen the complete refurbishment of Kingsway House in Alameda Estate including an upgrade of its lift facilities as commenced by the GSD Government. True to our word, we have respected and continued with these works.

The refurbishment of Red Sands House is now well underway and is estimated for completion in October, this year.

Picton House, Victoria House and Alameda House will successively undergo the same treatment in due course.

Laguna Estate:

Mr Speaker,

At Laguna Estate, the refurbishment of Rodney House, as just mentioned is only awaiting its lift, which will be fully operational in a few weeks. Smith Dorrien House is at an advanced stage of refurbishment and Mallard House, Forbes House, Landport House, Orillon House and Bayside House are well underway.

A further 4 blocks, these being Maidstone House, Blackwatch House, Nelson House and Causeway House, are currently in the initial phases. We are on target and we will deliver as promised.

Moorish Castle Estate:

At Moorish Castle Estate, Castle House, Ince House and Wall House are in the intermediate phases of refurbishment and the construction of the first monopitch roof is soon to commence at Castle House.

Works on Tarik House are also scheduled to commence shortly.

Glacis Estate:

Mr Speaker

At Glacis Estate, George Jeger House is already in its intermediate stages.

The refurbishment of Referendum House and Constitution House, which includes the provision of individual lockable storage compartments along each communal corridor, is currently in the initial to mid-phase and progressing well.

Varyl Begg Estate:

Work has also been carried out at Varyl Begg Estate as part of the continuous embellishment programme. The Ministry for Housing has carried out the refurbishment of the internal courtyards of Alert House, Repulse House, Valiant House and Royal Sovereign House. These consisted of the repairs of spalling concrete to the corridors and staircase slabs, the repainting of all balustrades and letterboxes and the cleaning and re-fixing of the existing gutters.

The demolition of the existing access ramps and the construction of new ramps, which complies with all current regulations and disability requirements, are also being undertaken.

All existing bin stores have been extensively refurbished and upgraded throughout the estate and are now completely waterproof, tiled, painted and have self-closing and lockable doors.

The pending refurbishment of Varyl Begg Estate includes an upgrade of its surface water drainage systems, road resurfacing and re-paving. Also included is the demolition of inadequate access ramps to be replaced by new disability access ramps constructed to approved specifications. The area will also see the re-painting of its parking bays, which have now worn away.

Other Refurbishments:

Mr Speaker, Not only has this Government concentrated on the projects and commitments announced within its Manifesto and in the run-up to the 2011 General Elections, but we have also tackled other building refurbishment projects that have been seen to be in need of works and maintenance.

Other Government Housing stock undergoing or scheduled for refurbishment include St. Joseph's Estate, Anderson House, Sandpits House and New Police Barracks. The external refurbishment of St. Joseph's Estate is now complete. Essential external repairs have been undertaken to St. Joseph estate which includes a much needed toddlers playground in the area, the re-surfacing of pavers to access walkways to the middle and upper area of the estate, the upper east area parking bays to the estate have also been re-surfaced and the drainage rationalised to prevent ponding.

Extensive repairs to retaining walls within the estate have also been undertaken including the rearrangement to the slope angle of the stairs to the common areas. The replacement and re-levelling of the pavers throughout the estate to improve the drainage of surface water has been completed.

This is currently phase one of several refurbishment phases to be undertaken to the estate. Subsequent phases will include extensive repairs to several roofs in order to eliminate the long-standing water penetration problems being experienced by some tenants of the estate.

These works are scheduled to commence shortly. Other phases will include the redecoration of the building façade, railings, staircases and extensive repairs to the entrance doors.

Mr Speaker, Bado's Building is now completed.

Mr Speaker,

Gibraltar General Construction Company Limited (GGCCL) has been engaged to assist in clearing the historical inherited backlog of external works, pensioners bath to shower conversions and GHA Occupational Therapy conversions and I am pleased to say that there is a marked improvement in the turnover of works. In this way, it is possible to make allocations allowing people to acquire their much awaited home sooner.

The GGCCL has extended its role to provide further assistance to the Housing Works Agency (HWA) in tackling the most labour-intensive internal repairs. Close co-operation between these two Government entities has seen the secondment of

experienced HWA operatives to optimize GGCCCL's growing industrial-operations capability.

The current 'Self-Repair Scheme' represents a vast improvement over the scheme in operation under the previous administration in terms of accountability, financial control and service delivery.

Whereas before tenants were issued with Local Purchase Orders which could be easily abused (e.g. exchanged at suppliers for unrelated items of similar value), the current scheme requires a site visit by a senior HWA operative to assess the requirement, type and quantity of materials to be issued. The senior operative also provides professional advice, care and attention throughout.

Following the initial assessment the requisite paperwork is raised to draw the required materials from HWA stores and materials are delivered to tenants' homes at a pre-arranged date and time.

The paperwork provides an audit trail to verify proper accountability for all materials issued under the Self-Repair Scheme.)

Indeed the success of the current self-repair scheme is reflected by increased demand and the positive feedback received from tenants availing themselves of this service. Government has increased funding substantially this year to satisfy growing tenant-demand.

Mr Speaker, this shows our ongoing commitment to all Government Tenants.

TRANSFER OF HOUSING TECHNICAL DIVISION TO HWA

Mr Speaker,

The activities of the Housing Technical Division and those of the HWA will, at long last, be amalgamated with the transfer of Housing Technical Staff and assets to the Housing Works Agency.

This will facilitate a seamless flow of activities across the full spectrum of construction disciplines from conceptual, through planning stages to final execution of works.

It is envisaged that this merger will create a synergy that overcomes the typical operational barriers that exist between competing organisations to augment the value of services extended to Government tenants.

Mr Speaker,

I will now turn to my other areas of responsibility as Minister for Traffic and Technical Services.

TRAFFIC AND TECHNICAL SERVICES

Car Parks

Mr Speaker,

As part of THIS Government's projects, a further two car parks were opened in 2014. Firstly, South Pavilion Car Park which offered 43 parking spaces on a monthly rental basis. This facility has been greatly welcomed by residents of the area.

Mr Speaker,

Without a doubt, the one building that I am proudest about so far, and I say so far because Beach View Terraces could, in my opinion surpass all expectations, has to be the high quality construction of Eastern Beach Car-Park and its completion in record-breaking time, on 9th June 2014 just before the bathing season. Mr Speaker, this is a sign of the times, a sign of a new Government with a new style of working.

As most stood in awe and disbelief at how remarkably GJBS had created this splendid parking facility in time and on budget and where absolutely no compromise had been taken on the quality of materials and workmanship. This car park stood offering a total of 436 parking spaces on three different levels of which 2 floors are protected from the unrelenting summer heat. Users are delighted to be able to find free parking at the beach mostly out of the scorching sun. Parking will be free during the daytime hours for beach goers from 8am and 10pm. After this time there will be a charge to ensure that the intention of this car-park remains – that is as a beach parking facility and not a long-stay free car-park. In the future, the new contactless e-ID Card will provide the access key to this parking facility. Parking facilities at Catalan Bay have also been extended onto an area of reclaimed land adjacent to the present car park. Allowing for a further 100 parking spaces, bringing the total to 328.

Western Beach Car-Park was opened 21st August 2012 providing a total of 109 free parking spaces. A further 78 spaces were gained at the New Air Terminal Car-Park by extending the available space by successfully relocating Air Terminal staff to an alternative parking facility within the confines of the Terminal Building itself. These spaces will operate as Pay & Display during the busy hours when aircraft arrivals and departures place a large demand on parking space. After this time, these very spaces become free to allow overnight parking for persons wishing to avail

themselves of this facility. Hence, despite the closure of the Old Air Terminal parking facility a net gain of 70 overnight spaces have been gained in this area.

Traffic

Additionally, the new criteria for granting frontier passes to those persons that have a medical condition has been a great success. The assistance of the “blue badge” Medical Advisory Panel reviewing the medical conditions of “frontier pass applicants” ensures that the information provided is accurate and up-to-date; this new Government development secures the integrity of the scheme.

Mr Speaker,

The introduction of the Motorcycle Compulsory Basic Training Course for riders is now well underway and being delivered in-house by our qualified driving and vehicle examiners, the course structure covering a mix of verbal instruction and practical training is a tremendous success. Feedback from the public at large has been extremely positive. Notwithstanding, as part of Governments initiative to further reduce motorcycle accidents, the “Reach for Life” campaign will very shortly be introduced. This campaign will offer essential tips to our riders so that they ensure that pillion passengers [including small children] sit appropriately on the seat with both feet on adequate and secure footrests.

The demand for the issuing of the new photocard driving licences continues to be on the increase, yet the waiting times for the issuing of these driving licences is at an all-

time low (five to six working days). This combined with an extra business counter being provided in the DVLD offices will ensure an improved service for businesses and the public at large. On the technical side, the DVLD has also recruited two new vehicle testers [replacing promotion and retirement] this recruitment has reduced the roadworthiness appointments immensely; [9 days].

Mr Speaker, notwithstanding the above, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department continues to use information and communication technology as a tool to achieve better customer services. The general public is now able to access a number of online DVLD services and applications via the new e-Government portal; to name but a few are Roadworthiness Test bookings (MOT), Driving Test and Theory Test bookings. Furthermore, the department is also working on a service to purchase personalised number plates online. These services will allow people to access and pay for such facilities “at any time” and from the comfort of their own homes. This comes as a wealth of new market footprint coverage opportunities for the DVLD that will appropriately cater for market demands and service requirements.

As part of Governments initiative to provide personalised support to assist applicants wishing to undertake the new driver - certificate of professional competence “initial qualification” training provided by the DVLD is ongoing and continues to be a success. In the past year, eighteen (18) drivers have successfully passed the “Bus Licence” and eight (8) drivers have successfully passed the “Lorry licence.” Moreover, Government in an effort to ensure that all directive requirements are met is continuing to deliver the 35-hour periodic training for existing drivers. 2014 is seeing

the delivery of both the “Bus” and “Lorry” CPC. Government is confident that all the outstanding training will be brought up to date by August of this year, shortly before the directives deadline. [September 2014]

Carriage of dangerous goods by road can involve the risk of traffic accidents, taking into account the safety requirements of vehicles transporting dangerous goods, and in accordance with the Transport (Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road) Regulations 2010, Government has taken the initiative and provided training to a number of the DVLD’s technical staff in order to qualify them for the issue of an authorization certificate to vehicles carrying dangerous goods within Gibraltar under conditions laid down in these Regulations. Qualified persons from the Vehicle Operators Services Agency in the UK have delivered this course. At present seven (7) officers have taken and successfully passed the course and are now authorised to issue ADR certificates, the other five (5) officers will be attending the course throughout 2014.

Mr Speaker,

Further to and in keeping with our manifesto commitment, I am satisfied that all the relevant outstanding EEC legislation and amendments have now been transposed. Furthermore, and in anticipation the department is now studying future directive proposals in order to expedite their swift implementation as and when the need arises. To this end, I can proudly state that to date the DVLD has successfully completed all the Commitments as set out in our Manifesto.

Mr Speaker, as stated in our manifesto, there is a great need to extend and regulate the provision of parking bays for disabled persons. In this regard, Government is planning on introducing meaningful changes to the blue badge scheme; part of these changes is to ensure that the badge holder is aware of his/her responsibility in guaranteeing its proper use. This review has formed part of the Traffic Plan. As stated, Government is always looking for ways in which to improve the blue badge scheme and therefore in consultation with all relevant authorities/associations this system will be looked at on a yearly basis with the initial and first year of operation being based on overall statistics and feedback from users of the scheme. This system will look into the individual use and highlight any misuse of the blue badge permit. Government is confident that the data gathered will suggest whether these changes to the blue-badge parking scheme have been a success, in addition to highlighting any need for further improvement. Furthermore, in an effort to support our citizens with mobility problems, Government, is presently looking at increasing the number of disabled bays and also increasing the size of the present parking bays in order to assist and facilitate those persons with severe mobility problems. The number of disabled bays available has increased since December 2011 from 92 to 115.

Technical Services

Mr Speaker, I would now like to turn my attention to Technical Services. During the past Financial Year, the Technical Services Department has, as is customary, been involved with a number of projects covering a wide range of areas under their defined responsibilities, such as highway maintenance and works to the main sewer, as well

as coastal protection and rock fall protection works and works for other Government entities.

On the coastal works side, the main project, which Technical Services has been responsible for delivering over the past year, has been the beach protection and regeneration works at Sandy Bay. Two curved groynes have been constructed on either side of Sandy Bay, joined by an underwater breakwater, which has completed, with the last few quantities of rock armour being placed along the central section. In addition, the regeneration of the beach is now complete through the importation and placing of fifty five thousand tonnes of sand. The Department has had to overcome a number of challenges to deliver this project, some of which were non-technical in their nature and I give credit to them for the manner in which this has been seen through to completion. Sandy Bay has seen a major transformation arising from the completion of this project and in so doing; we have honoured yet another of our manifesto commitments.

Turning now to cliff stabilisation and rock fall protection projects, the Department completed the project to clear the rock fall protection bund at William's Way. This area had suffered a major rock fall and landslide a few years ago, and even though the bund did its job at the time, it required clearance in order to fully restore the retention capacity of this protection measure. This has now been successfully achieved. Assessments and designs for slope stabilisation works above Windmill Hill Road were also completed and works have recently started on this project as part of the Government's on-going cliff stabilisation and rock fall protection programme, which will continue during this Financial Year.

With regards to Highway Maintenance, the works programme has continued apace over the past year with on-going repairs to roads, footpaths and retaining walls. Resurfacing works have been carried out during the past year to Fountain Ramp and City Mill Lane, as well as the surfacing of a new car park on Devil's Tower Road. The replacement of pelican crossing lights and equipment has been undertaken in a number of locations working jointly with the Gibraltar Electricity Authority and this programme will continue during the coming year. The Department also continues with its ongoing annual program in liaison with the GHA OT Department and the new Equality Department with regards to undertaking improvements to our roads in particular pavements with a view to making pavement more disabled friendly.

As in previous years, the Department continues to successfully manage road closures and diversions on the Public Highway, both for its own in-house works and for all other utility companies and contractors, in a manner that balances the need to undertake works against allowing vehicles to circulate. The increased construction activity generated by new projects makes this task ever more difficult. Road closures are avoided during peak times wherever possible, and after hours and weekend work is the default condition imposed on contractors in order to minimise inconvenience to the public.

As stated last year, a comprehensive major resurfacing programme has been prepared by the Department aimed at tackling the under investment in road maintenance over a number of years. Work on the first phase of this programme has

already started. This first phase involves the full resurfacing of Rosia Road and Line Wall Road, two of our main roads, which have not seen full resurfacing for countless years. The works will be undertaken at off peak times and weekends, thus avoiding the traffic disruption that would inevitably ensure should these works be carried out during normal working hours. The second phase of the Highways Resurfacing Program will include the resurfacing of Queensway from Ragged Staff Roundabout up to and including Waterport roundabout, as well as the Sundial and Harbour Views roundabout. This Government has been well aware of the constraints posed by the importation of asphalt via the land frontier and this has been the traditional method used in the past ever since the production of asphalt ceased back in 1990. Hence, this administration was clear that if a Highways Resurfacing Program was to really work then we would need to revert to local production which would allow US to dictate when resurfacing took place and not only when it was possible to import. In this was it is possible to keep traffic disruption to a minimum by working during the quiet hours. Advance notice has been given to utility companies so that all non-emergency works could be carried out prior to the commencement of these works to avoid the re-opening of newly resurfaced roads.

Road users will no doubt be able to feel the difference after so many potholes and uneven surfaces, which we have tolerated but never got used to.

Mr Speaker, true to our Manifesto commitment, we were surprised that Dudley Ward Tunnel, which had remained closed for 8½ years since a tragic accident caused by rock fall had re-opened at a cost to the taxpayer of £10m, yet certain essential works, which would make the tunnel safer, were simply ignored. Mr Speaker, I am happy to state that we are now putting these things right. We have worked closely with the essential services to ensure that their needs and general Health & Safety concerns

were addressed. Works have now started in providing a new fire fighting main and emergency telephones along the full length of Dudley Ward Way tunnel in line with our manifesto commitment. Mobile phone coverage will also be provided and during the coming year, the ventilation requirements will be assessed with a view to improving the current situation as much as possible working within the constraints imposed by this ex-military tunnel. Mr. Speaker, yet another Manifesto commitment box in the process of being ticked.

Mr Speaker,

Moving onto sewers, during the past year, works to provide flood prevention measures along the southern end of Fish Market Road were successfully completed, as well as the second phase of similar works at Wellington Front. The third and final phase of the Wellington Front project will be completed during this Financial Year and once finished, the habitual flooding that affected this area during periods of concentrated heavy rainfall will no longer be a problem.

The state of Gibraltar's main sewer and storm water drainage networks remains a matter of great concern for the Government. The lack of investment and neglect in the past of this unseen, yet essential aspect of our infrastructure continues to cause problems as evidenced by the need to undertake major repairs to a collapsed storm water culvert on Europort Avenue. This has now been completed and the road reopened.

Funding is once again being provided this year to continue with the sewers rehabilitation programme started last year. This involved amongst other work, the

desilting and inspection of the main sewer along Line Wall Road. Arising from this, work will start shortly on the relining of a section of said sewer and this will be progressively extended to other areas.

Funding is once again being provided for the purchase of equipment in order that the operational ability of the Garage & Workshop is enhanced. They will continue to provide a service to maintain the fleet of Government vehicles, including the refuse collection vehicles.

Over the past year, the Department has also delivered other projects including the conversion of the ex-Royal Gibraltar Yacht Club site into a public car park. The demolition of the old air terminal complex was completed as was the conversion of the magazine located at Ragged staff car park into a Transport Museum.

A major project, which Technical Services has been instrumental in delivering, is the new Commonwealth Park. Even though this is under the remit of the Ministry for the Environment it has been driven through all its stages by Technical Services in another example of inter-Ministerial co-operation. Everyone is justifiably proud of what has been achieved in creating this oasis in the centre of our city for the enjoyment of all.

Mr Speaker, This brings me to a major manifesto commitment under my Ministry, working in conjunction with the Ministries for Public Transport and the Environment,

in the form of the delivery of a new Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking plan for Gibraltar. Work on this project continued throughout the past year with the completion of the data collection stage involving a variety of public surveys ranging from interviews at car parks, on buses and at the roadside right up to individual households throughout all of Gibraltar. Online questionnaires were also available. The data obtained was collated and analysed and then used to create a traffic and transport model for Gibraltar as existing. From this, potential options to bring about changes in the way Gibraltar moves have been developed and assessed. These will form part of the Plan, which the Government will be making public in the near future.

Mr Speaker, as can be seen, Technical Services Department will this coming year continue to deliver on their defined responsibilities maintaining public infrastructure and will continue supporting and providing technical input across the board throughout all relevant Government Ministries and Departments in all manner of projects large and small in order to deliver on the Government's extensive and comprehensive programmes.

Mr Speaker,

I am fully confident that the Ministries under my responsibility are right on target to fulfil all our commitments as set out in our manifesto and in our pre-election campaign. We are target Mr Speaker and I am confident that we are on target to complete all of our manifesto commitments.

Mr Speaker, Finally, I would like to conclude my contribution to my budget address to thank all my staff who have worked hard to see our dreams and ideas slowly become a reality. Thanks goes not only to those who ensure the rolling out of our commitments, my senior members of staff, but also to those who do not go by unnoticed who perform the valuable function of assisting at counters, having to put up with difficult situations, carrying out MOT's, repairing our Government Fleet of Vehicles, repairing and maintaining our Housing Stock, managing our Car-Parks, maintaining our Highways and our sewage infrastructure, ensure our construction projects progress to schedule, all my technical staff and all office and clerical staff helping to make our essential departments tick.

In particular, I would finally also like to thank my personal ministerial staff for all of their help and support during the past year. Thank you.