



HM Government of Gibraltar

Ministry of Health, the Environment,
Energy and Climate Change

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Minister for Health, Environment, Energy and Climate Change
The Hon Dr John Cortes MBE
Budget Speech 2015/2016

Mr. Speaker,

As I start this budget address, my fourth, and my last - before an election, I do so with an overwhelming sense of achievement and pride. And I do so also in my capacity as Gibraltar's first Minister for Climate Change in Gibraltar, a title which I also carry with pride.

For this Government has delivered unprecedented change in environmental governance, sustainability and climate change adaptation and mitigation, a level of change, which has placed Gibraltar in a position of leadership within the UK Overseas Territories and small island states.

Sound environmental governance includes government, business and civil society, and views natural resources as collective public assets that are not diminished when they are shared, thereby allowing communal benefit from clean air, water and biodiversity. Gibraltar's environmental policy has changed considerably to this effect over these past few years. This change Mr Speaker, has been specifically recognized by the United Nations Environment Programme, major international NGOs, the Global Island Partnership and others.

These last four years have seen the Department network in Europe where we have proudly flown the flag of environmental governance and leadership, leaving our mark in the international arena. Organisations such as the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Climate and Clean Air Coalition and of course the European Commission are now far more aware of Gibraltar and how we strive to lead by example in all that we do.

Mr. Speaker, to further prove the point, last summer we hosted an expert group meeting on Sustainability that included representatives from around the Mediterranean, from Universities, Government Departments and also from the European Union and the United Nations. Networking at the wider Mediterranean level is where we now propose to focus, having as we do a great deal to contribute and to learn from our counterparts at a regional level.

Perhaps the biggest testament to our increased presence in the environmental arena was the UN Climate Change Summit held at the UN headquarters in New York where I had the honour and



privilege of being invited on behalf of the Secretary General to represent Gibraltar, in the General Assembly Hall with world leaders from countries large and small, as we focused on our collective global ambitions to halt climate change and mitigate its impacts. It has been an inspirational year on the environmental front Mr Speaker. The icing on the cake came in December when the Department of the Environment and Climate Change was admitted as a member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) - the world's largest global environmental network. This is a ground-breaking achievement for the Department of the Environment given the international reputation and role of the IUCN, which acts as a United Nations observer and has consultative status on several international conventions on nature conservation, biodiversity and climate change. I had the pleasure of paying a visit to the IUCN's Secretary General in Geneva last month and was rightly proud of the positive reputation Gibraltar already has in these circles.

The Department of the Environment within the wider service

Mr. Speaker, environmental civil servants and advisers continue to be involved in discussion and decision-making at all levels of Government, working not only for my Ministry but for all other Ministers who call upon their input and advice on a regular basis.

Green Filter

The Green filter continues to work well with Department officials playing an increasing role in planning, as well as in the EIA process. Departmental scientists attend all DPC meetings and work hard to ensure that planning conditions are met. The Government's green procurement policy, which was instrumental in changing the environmental dynamics within the local market, is being reviewed and updated. By continuing to apply and direct the public sector's purchasing power towards green alternatives, we continue to stimulate the market and create niches for green initiatives, employment and economic regeneration.

Staff at the Department continue to work across the public sector through their involvement in numerous committees, ranging from transport to noise, planning, to climate change and infrastructure projects. In this context a number of policy documents are currently being updated, the most notable being the Environmental Action and Management Plan and the Climate Change Programme. These will be published in coming months and will be based on research and data that allow for informed policy decisions. This is how we work Mr. Speaker; we do not produce reports stating wishful policy without hard facts and substance. Policy in this Government is based on sound science.

I am pleased to say, that while Gibraltar continues to develop, I see no imminent conflict with or danger to its environment or its biodiversity. For example, the new Mons Calpe and Eastern beach developments will be ready for smart metering, for fitting of electric car charging points, will have low consumption water heaters and renewable energy sources. And the 1,700 new affordable homes and related developments on the eastside will not be a threat to our

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environment either. They are on brown sites, will be energy efficient, incorporate renewables, and contain large landscaped areas.

Waste management and recycling

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform Parliament that the 2015 figures on recycling have already seen an increase of approximately 38.5% in mixed packaging waste such as plastic and cans (the yellow bin), 15% on Glass (the green bin), 21% on Cardboard and 60% on Paper (the blue bin). This has been possible thanks to the combined efforts of the Department, Master Service, and of course, the general public, clearly and increasingly fulfilling its role in improving recycling practices at home and in the workplace. Additional pink bins have been provided this year to further increase the recycling rates of waste electrical and electronic equipment. In fact, we are already half way through the year and have nearly surpassed the amount of WEEE recycled in the whole of last year.

Our recycling campaign continues to expand and this year's World Environment Day saw the launch of yet another kerbside recycling service, the recycling of waste cooking oil in the new orange bins.

Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to announce the upcoming delivery of yet another environmental manifesto commitment in relation to waste management - the creation of Gibraltar's first dedicated eco-park. This new facility will be a one-stop shop for recycling all household waste streams and will be fully operational this summer.

Looking ahead in terms of our long-term waste strategy, we re-issued the tender for a waste treatment facility since none of the initial tenders submitted met the required technical specifications. This project is going through a renewed tender process in order to ensure that we get the best value for money and just as important, the best possible environmental option.

Mr. Speaker, one of the successful outcomes from the Litter Committee which continues to meet on a regular basis with stakeholders and includes NGO membership, is the designation of dedicated litter wardens. These officers have received the necessary training and patrol Gibraltar daily, creating awareness, educating and deterring people from irresponsible tipping. No-dumping signs will shortly be going up in litter hotspots to further remind the public that in Gibraltar, bins are only a short distance away and there is no excuse for the illegal dumping of refuse.

Works continue on refuse cubicles around Gibraltar, with 4 refuse cubicles being completed last year and 3 new temporary cubicles installed.

I once again take this opportunity to thank all the members of the committee for their hard work and dedication. It really is a pleasure working with them and I very much look forward to continuing to do so.

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Working with the Community

Collaboration with NGOs continues. Regular meetings take place between Government officials, and myself, and a number of organisations such as the GONHS, ESG, and Housing Estate Committees.

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

General environmental education and awareness

Mr. Speaker, this past year has seen a concentrated effort by the Department to raise awareness of a whole array of environmental issues in schools. This included once again their involvement in World Environment Day, which this year also saw involvement from NGOs and environmentally friendly businesses. A lot of effort has gone into both energy-efficiency and marine awareness and you may have seen the episodes on GBC on the work carried out by the Department in respect to Our Waters. Perhaps the most popular awareness initiative has been the launch of Gibraltar's underwater camera, the first of its kind in Europe. The underwater camera forms yet another element of the wider marine surveillance programme carried out by the Department to monitor the status of marine habitats and species within British Gibraltar Territorial Waters. A dedicated website has therefore been created on the Department's Thinking Green website to provide all with real time footage of Gibraltar's rich underwater environment.

This pioneering project is proving to be successful for many reasons. It is continuously providing scientific data on Gibraltar's marine diversity and water quality and perhaps more importantly Mr. Speaker, from the point of view of delivering a mindset of sustainability within our community, children and adults alike, entertain themselves in the wonders that underwater Gibraltar has to offer. The appreciation of nature and the realization that sustainable management is essential can best be achieved through visual appreciation and understanding. Our marine environment is too often remembered for the wrong reasons, or forgotten due to its inaccessibility, and this programme thrusts the marine realm into our daily lives, in a non-intrusive yet highly exciting and educational manner. Once again Mr. Speaker, this initiative has been recognized far and wide.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and INSPIRE

Mr. Speaker, the Government's online Geoportal also continues to work well and is being used widely, here and abroad. The interactive map of Gibraltar, produced by the Technical Services Department together with the Environment and IT Departments, is continually being updated. The increasing use of GIS among the public and private sectors is yet another success story in the Environment portfolio. An interesting point of note is that in the last two months the number of

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hits from USA has increased significantly to the point where the USA is currently the #1 country in terms of page visits to the geoportal.

I am also pleased to say that for the second time running, the Department of the Environment attended the UK Overseas Territories Workshop on the environment and the use of Geographical Information Systems. The workshop was funded by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and took place in the Turks and Caicos Islands in February this year, where the Department took the opportunity to showcase how Gibraltar is making use of GIS and 3D modeling tools for environmental research and planning purposes.

Gibraltar's participation in these workshops is important in fostering collaborations and strengthening links with the UK's Overseas Territories and Environmental Research Institutions.

Mr. Speaker, in order to stress the importance that this Government places on building partnerships with our colleagues from the Overseas Territories, Gibraltar will host an international environmental conference from 11th to 15th July this year with a focus on the UK Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and other small islands.

The conference will provide a forum for government environmental bodies, NGOs and commercial organisations to discuss key conservation issues and highlight success stories, exchange ideas, and to forge partnerships. Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and other small island communities that share similar environmental problems and possibilities will benefit from learning about one another's history and experience of planning and conservation initiatives. Delegates will include government and non-governmental officials from all the UK Overseas Territories and I very much look forward to welcoming them all.

Energy and climate change

Both the Gibraltar Electrical Authority, which I now chair, and the Department of the Environment and Climate Change have been working extremely hard on other fronts regarding Gibraltar's Energy and Climate Change Strategy.

The Department of the environment and the recently created Climate Change Task Force, chaired by the Deputy Chief Minister, have been actively addressing key aspects of Gibraltar's strategy during the course of the year. The strategy will be elaborated further in the revised Gibraltar Climate Change Programme and is divided into four main overarching themes which include:

1. Adapting to climate change by building Gibraltar's resilience;
2. Facilitating the transition towards a low carbon economy;



3. Improving our understanding of climate change science and;
4. Raising climate change awareness and changing consumer behaviour through educational initiatives.

This follows the strategic approach adopted by the United Nations Environment Programme for combating climate change.

Some of the key measures that form part of the strategy and are being implemented already include:

- Developing and encouraging the uptake of solar energy -
- Developing and encouraging the uptake of marine renewables
- Improving end-user efficiency.

The ongoing programme by the GEA to replace public building lighting and street lighting with solar powered devices and/or LEDs is proving particularly successful as proven by the figures released by the Gibraltar Electricity Authority which show a considerable reduction in energy use. The reductions represent 19% in street lighting from 2012/13 to 2014/15, 50% in floodlighting from 2011/12 to 2014/15 and 22% in traffic light consumption 2012/13 to 2014/15. These represent a reduction both in carbon emissions and in cost to the Government.

Other key initiatives that have been carried out recently include:

- The introducing of financial incentives to increase the uptake of solar technologies such as the Solar Energy (Deductions) Rules 2015. These Rules allows for a tax deduction to be claimed where a person has installed solar thermal systems or photovoltaic panels in their property.
- Protecting local carbon sinks – The extent of the Nature Reserve has been increased to ensure maximum protection of one of Gibraltar's main carbon sinks;
- An energy-efficiency awareness campaign, currently underway, and an energy awareness website is being developed to be launched later this year;

Mr. Speaker, that is not all. This year I also commissioned and published our first ever city level inventory of greenhouse gas emissions for Gibraltar which provides an accurate understanding and picture of the major sources, activities and contributors of these emissions.

Work on other day-to-day energy issues continues to take place. In relation to the Energy Performance of Buildings, the Government has completed a Building Renovation Strategy which sets 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. The assessment of the energy performance of public sector buildings is ongoing and all schools have now been done. In the last financial year, approximately 267 EPC's have been issued and 37 EPC site visits have been carried out by staff of the Department.

The Department has also participated and been actively involved in a number of EU conferences and workshops.

Mr Speaker, where does all of this leave us? Well, the total amount of Carbon Dioxide emitted from power generation fell by 24% from 181,182 tonnes in 2013 to 141,936 tonnes in 2014. Clearly our energy and climate change policies are not only taking shape, but showing results.

Coastal and groundwater quality monitoring

Our coastal water, bathing water and groundwater monitoring programmes continue to operate smoothly with samples being collected on a monthly basis from all our beaches, offshore locations around Gibraltar's coastline and from Gibraltar's freshwater aquifers.

The Department also continues to collect and monitor marine sediment, phytoplankton, fish and bivalve tissue samples.

Data collected is used by the Department to help meet its reporting obligations under the Bathing Water, Water Framework and the Marine Strategy Framework Directives; these are key pieces of EU legislation that have an important role in the management of our territorial waters.

Mr. Speaker a notable development in this aspect relates to Western Beach, already covered at length by the Deputy Chief Minister in his address yesterday. What I can add is that potential outflows to all the other beaches have over the past two years been systematically blocked or diverted, so that there can be no danger now of any sewage outflows in any of them. The Department closely monitors all discharges to the sea.

Wastewater treatment plant

The importance given to the quality of our waters and our beaches is clearly enshrined in the announcement I made earlier this year regarding Gibraltar's new wastewater treatment plant; a project that should have taken place many years ago but which the previous Government totally ignored, despite the fact that it is an EU Directive requirement.

The tender process is now nearing completion and I will be making an announcement soon. This will ensure that Gibraltar is finally compliant with the EU's Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive.



Marine surveillance and artificial reefs

Mr. Speaker, the Department of the Environment and Climate Change is also making steady progress with its support of the artificial reef programme with new additions to the artificial reef network such as the Sunswale which was recently deployed in the vicinity of the Rosia Marine Conservation Zone. This project has been warmly welcomed by local conservation groups, recreational divers and fishing associations.

It has now been nearly two years since the artificial reef programme was re-invigorated by the Department with the creation of the North West Artificial Reef and I am very pleased to say that, as I had anticipated, the reef has proven to improve marine life in the area.

Work is also being carried out on other marine ecosystem restoration. This facet of the marine programme draws on historical sources and local expert knowledge to inform the re-introduction of species that were known to exist in the Bay such as fan mussels, oysters and sea grasses, the latter species being a tremendously important source of food, oxygen and habitat as well as an excellent carbon sink.

The Department of the Environment and Climate Change is working with the University of Algarve's Centre of Marine Sciences to plant mature plants and seedlings around Gibraltar. The recently created Dive team within the Department has greatly assisted the process and is going from strength to strength as officers increase their skills in scientific diving allowing for faster deployment when dealing with a wide array of environmental issues such as protected species relocations.

Fishing

Mr. Speaker, in line with this Government's manifesto commitment to regulate fishing, diving and other marine activities in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters, it gives me a great sense of pride to be able to say that this past year has seen the publication of the Marine Protection Regulations and the Tuna Preservation Regulations. These are probably the most significant pieces of local environmental legislation published for 20 years. They set to regulate a myriad of activities that take place in our waters such as fishing, diving, scientific research and the activities of dolphin tour operators.

Some of the key measures introduced in the regulations include the licensing requirements, minimum fish sizes, the creation of Marine Conservation Zones and the ability to implement designated fishing seasons and yearly quotas for species requiring additional protection such as Atlantic Bluefin tuna.

No-anchoring zones have also been designated and included in the regulations to protect the seabed, particularly reefs. On the eastside for example, the no anchoring zone extends up to 1.5 nautical miles. This is, Mr. Speaker, real conservation in action.

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Mr. Speaker, the regulations are a very significant step in the long road of regulating marine activities in our waters. The Department has had to make key changes to the way it operates to be able to administer the functioning of the regulations. A dedicated counter has been created to process all license applications and queries and a number of guidance documents published to better inform the public on how the regulations work. A marine species identification booklet has been produced and is made available to all applicants to highlight some of the common fish and mollusc species found in Gibraltar along with their corresponding minimum sizes.

Both regulations were subjected to a lengthy consultation process encompassing a wide variety of stakeholders, including but not limited to, recreational anglers, divers, marine biologists, cottage and big game fishermen, spear fishermen, diving and dolphin tour operators and sports fishing enthusiasts.

In line with the spirit of cooperation and continued consultation, the Marine Protection Regulations 2014 also provided for the creation of a statutory Working Group, which I chair. This Working Group meets on a regular basis and serves as a platform to discuss relevant issues such as sustainable fishing activities in BGTW.

Mr. Speaker, this fulfills many of the recommendations of the 2013 Fishing Report. And it has stopped, virtually overnight, the past problem of non-resident anglers along the shores with multiple rods not allowing space for others and littering the shoreline. I cannot but stress the immensity of this task and achievement, involving tremendous dedication from the Department's staff and wide ranging discussion with many people, to arrive at what are workable pieces of legislation that achieve the dual purposes of safeguarding the marine environment for future generations while allowing all responsible activities to continue in an organised manner.

The Tuna Preservation Regulations in particular show the world that Gibraltar has stepped up to assume its international responsibilities and is well capable of being entrusted with legislating for the protection of its marine resources within the whole of BGTW, much of which falls within a European Special Area of Conservation. The closed season for Tuna, for example now follows the provisions of ICCAT, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna. Any Bluefin Tuna that is now caught within British Gibraltar Territorial Waters during the open season needs to be reported to the Department of the Environment. A dedicated office and landing point has been created within the North Mole - No. 1 Jetty - where anglers are able to dock against the jetty to weigh and report any tuna catches. Alternatively, anglers may also submit the required catch forms electronically. An awareness campaign on sustainable fishing practices will also form part of this landmark initiative along with a tuna-tagging programme. The tagging programme builds on the ongoing work carried out by the Department together with local fishing clubs on species that are commonly found in Gibraltar such as the White Bream.

Mr Speaker, Gibraltar has never ever had this level of responsible regulation which looks after the interests of nature, those who fish, and those of us who enjoy eating fish, sustainably. In this way

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we can clearly refute any allegations from Spain that we are illegally exploiting or failing to protect our marine resources.

Environmental Agency

Mr. Speaker, in terms of environmental health, the Environmental Agency, with its dedicated team of Environmental Health Professionals continues to work on many fronts and expand its work in, environmental monitoring including control, building control, waste regulation and food import controls. In addition to the developments mentioned in my speech last year, the Agency has also:

- Incorporated the issuing of ship sanitation certificates into its work
- Become the main entity liaising with the UK's Health and Safety Executive on major projects such as the new power station;
- Continued to liaise with pollution specialists;
- Continued to expand its GibEnviro app;
- Introduced the Ship Sanitation Certificates service;
- Continued to provide specialised waste management training to EA staff and to waste industry representatives;
- Established a partnership with the University of West England to provide practical Environmental Health training;
- Continued expanding its anti-dog fouling campaign;
- delivered Food Hygiene courses to organisers and participants of outdoor events such as Calentita night, Gibraltar Fair and revamped its annual Christmas campaign.

The Agency does a tremendous amount of excellent work for the community that often goes unnoticed but is nevertheless absolutely essential for maintaining the level of Gibraltar's environmental governance.

Cemetery

Mr. Speaker, works on the improvement of the North Front Cemetery are progressing. In the past twelve months, walls have been plastered and painted, toilets refurbished, signs and information



panels erected as well as paths cleared. We will be installing CCTV cameras in order to combat any future spouts of vandalism as was, unfortunately, the case recently.

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased with the recent publication of a command paper on the revised Cemetery Act, bringing this legislation in line with modern times and allowing for more efficient management. Another important development that I am pleased to share with this House is the digitization of cemetery records using Geographical Information Systems.

Green and Planted areas

Mr. Speaker, we all know how important green areas are for our well-being. Between April 2014 and April 2015, we have therefore continued with the urban planting programme and planted a total of 158 trees around Gibraltar. At the same time, the Department has worked extensively on the maintenance and improvement of existing green areas.

And what better showcase of the value of green areas and the benefit they bring both environmentally and socially to the community than Commonwealth Park. The park continues to be enjoyed by very many and has now become one of Gibraltar's prime recreational areas.

How many in this House doubted. How many questions were asked suggesting it would be a waste of money, or impossible to achieve or maintain. People have voted with their feet, Mr Speaker, and their feet are now firmly in the grass. And to think that the Opposition could not find a way to vote in favour of the Act that guaranteed the protection of what is now one of Gibraltar's most cherished assets.

Work will now shortly start on the first of our new dog parks, which is expected to be completed in September.

Botanic Gardens

The Gibraltar Botanic Gardens have also been improved. Their work is expanding beyond the purely recreational to an increasing role in taxonomy, ecology, conservation and education. Indeed, this capacity building has facilitated the integration of the Botanic Gardens as a Key Associate Partner of the University of Gibraltar's Institute of Life and Earth Sciences, which will allow the Botanic Gardens to continue to develop as a key player in research and conservation in the region, and promote Gibraltar internationally. In addition there have been many improvements to planted areas and a much greater outreach to involving young people. April next year sees the 200th Anniversary of the opening of the Alameda Gardens, and a number of improvements and events are planned to celebrate this historic date.



Gibraltar Nature Reserve

I move now to the Gibraltar Nature Reserve, an area that as you know I hold very dear. The Government remains committed to restoring Gibraltar's natural assets in a sensitive and environmentally friendly manner for the enjoyment of residents and as an improvement to our tourist product. No one can deny that the Government, through its Environment, Tourism and Heritage Ministries has pumped more investment and done more to revitalize this natural treasure in three years, than the GSD did in 16 years of Government. That is what I call delivering change!

The revitalisation of the Nature Reserve was well overdue. The gravitational pull of such new attractions to cruise liners to Gibraltar cannot be underestimated. To assist the marketing process, a Nature Reserve app for smartphones has been launched and is available for both apple and android devices. Another application that is currently being developed is an interactive encyclopedia of Gibraltar's rich wildlife.

Mr. Speaker, formerly derelict areas of historical interest continue to be renovated and reopened to the general public. The project also includes upgrading the various paths in the Nature Reserve with an all-round enhancement of safety and accessibility features. Innovative attractions and facilities for the general public will be provided as part of the project including a spectacular new suspension bridge at Royal Anglian Way and a glazed lookout point, or "sky walk", at Mount Misery.

Mr. Speaker, the launch of the Gibraltar Nature Reserve Management Plan is imminent. The new plan contains a wide range of recommendations for the Upper Rock and other areas of ecological importance in Gibraltar that were afforded protected area status under the Nature Conservation (Designation of Gibraltar Nature Reserve) Order 2013. These areas include Windmill Hill, the Mount, Jacob's Ladder, Northern Defences, Great Sand Slopes, the Talus and Europa Foreshore.

A large number of measures being included within the new plan have already been implemented or initiated in different parts of the reserve during the past year such as:

- Improving visitor access and restoring paths within the Upper Rock and the Northern Defences;
- Improved firebreak clearing programme including the creation of new firebreaks;
- Installation of nature reserve demarcation and traffic awareness signs along with interpretation panels;
- Installing new balustrades and restoring road barriers;



- Re-populating key species such as the Barbary Partridge and the Wild Rabbit.

Mr. Speaker, I have to pause here given the fact that I was accused by Members of this House of being responsible for the decline in the numbers of the secretive Barbary Partridge, and was blamed for its imminent disappearance. Ongoing surveillance has revealed that not only have the imported partridges acclimatised well to their new environment, but more importantly, hatched young in several locations within the Nature Reserve. I would like here to acknowledge and thank GONHS, the Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society for their support and for the monitoring that they do, providing the Department with vital scientific information without charge, and to also thank the Upper Rock management team for their increasing role in improving this wonderful natural asset.

There are other measures that have been carried out including:

- Increasing resources for the Department Environmental Protection and Research Unit;
- Increasing human resources for the Upper Rock Management Team;
- Increasing security in the Upper Rock. There are now dedicated environmental security guards patrolling the Upper Rock during the day and night;
- Creating new picnic areas;
- Securing, restoring and improving access to heritage assets within the Upper Rock such as Genoese Battery and Royal Anglian Way;
- The continued systematic removal of invasive and alien species, largely through the astounding voluntary work by Bart van Thienen; and
- The Continued installation of bird and bat boxes within and outside the Nature Reserve, particularly in the town area.

Macaques

Mr. Speaker, the exportation of a group of Barbary macaques to the Blair Drummond wildlife park in Stirling, Scotland, grabbed international headlines in October last year. This was the first large scale export of macaques since the 1990s. The exportation followed a period of extensive research and discussions with park officials which allowed for the relocation of approximately 30 macaques from the Middle Hill troop, which was frequenting Laguna and Catalan Bay.

The macaques were flown to the UK on a chartered aircraft and then transported by road to the safari park. They were accompanied at all times by two experienced Gibraltar keepers from the

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Macaque Management team with additional support provided by officials from the Department of the Environment.

The selection of this particular group was facilitated by the tracking work carried out last year by a team of US researchers from Notre Dame University together with the Gibraltar macaque management team, GONHS, the Gibraltar Veterinary Clinic and the Department of the Environment, sponsored by National Geographic. The exercise was carried out flawlessly since all the animals were trapped with minimal disruption and I would once again like to thank all those individuals involved for I know how hard they worked to execute this task to perfection.

Mr Speaker, Members, and the public will have noticed that, since October last year, the trouble caused by macaques in built-up areas is hugely reduced. Mr Speaker, as they are free ranging animals they do of course have the ability to turn up anywhere in Gibraltar of their own free will. They will surely do so, and there are still one or two areas where this is the case, but the situation is very much improved, thanks to both the exportation and the increased resources which allow movements to be better tracked, problems pre-empted, and response and action to drive them away to be much more effective.

Mr Speaker, a year ago I was repeatedly condemned in this House by members opposite for what they claimed was a total failure in the management of the macaques. I would reply that the problem dated from before my time as Minister, that my former advice to the former administration had been systematically ignored, and that Nature takes time to respond. They didn't want to hear. Well Mr Speaker, while we can of course in future have a resurgence in macaque activity in some areas – to which we will of course respond – I think that I have so far been proved right. Just imagine, if Mr Netto and other GSD Environment Ministers had in fact listened years ago to the advice my colleagues-at-the-time and I had given, how much better the situation would have been and how much inconvenience would have been avoided. It would do them good to listen to me on other things too.

Work on the management of our macaques has continued on numerous fronts. New personnel have been employed to tackle on the ground situations and new ponds created in different parts of the Upper Rock such as Prince Phillip's Arch, Royal Anglian Way, Farringdon's Battery and Middle Hill. All the macaque feeding sites are being given a facelift and I am pleased to say works are now nearing completion. The end product will undoubtedly result in a significant improvement for our macaques and clearly our tourist product.

Mr. Speaker, the new Macaque Action Plan will be published this summer although, once again, numerous measures are already well underway such as:

- Providing new facilities for food storage and preparation at Farringdon's Battery;
- The clearing of scrub in different parts of the reserve;



- The provision of new watering points;
- Developing a macaque education and awareness application for mobile devices.

We have also recently embarked on a revitalised macaque awareness initiative in collaboration with the GONHS, the Gibraltar Veterinary Clinic and Monkey Talk Gibraltar, thus bringing all stakeholders together for the first time.

Environmental Protection and Research

Mr. Speaker, the Environmental Protection and Research Unit goes from strength to strength. During this past year, the section has more than doubled in size and I am proud to say that there are now 6 officers working on a shift basis. The section is making good use of the Department's maritime assets which include the *Storm Petrel* and the *Darwin* – a 10 metre cabin cruiser and a 6 metre RHIB respectively. A new vehicle has also been procured and environmental patrols are now being carried out every single day of the week; both on land and at sea. The fact that our own environmental protection vessels are now regularly patrolling Gibraltar's marine protected areas is clearly sending the right signals. The section continues to work hand in hand with the Royal Gibraltar Police.

Air Quality

Mr. Speaker, the Gibraltar Air Quality Monitoring Programme has continued to operate smoothly during this past year and has once again achieved levels of data capture above 90% thanks to the efforts of the Environmental Agency and Government appointed air quality consultants.

As always, there is still room for improvement and a 5 yearly Monitoring Regime Assessment is being carried out to inform the configuration of the network over the life of the next air quality monitoring contract. This will consider what additions we may have to make to monitoring units and how these will need to be relocated following the commissioning of the new power station, which may include a monitoring unit in the North District.

Other notable developments that have taken place in this field during the course of the year include:

- Investigating the implementation of an air quality forecasting service for Gibraltar.
- the expansion of the monitoring suite at the Bleak House background monitoring station which is now monitoring heavy metal concentrations in air;
- Upgrading the Gibraltar air quality compliance dashboard to optimise the page for visualisation on mobile devices and;



- Participating in the EU's CAIMANs project aimed at evaluating the impact of maritime tourism on air quality and climate change.

Mr Speaker, the Department of the Environment and Climate Change has been transformed. It is now what it deserves to be, and its staff in all the disciplines, scientists and administrators, as well as all its various contractors, work tirelessly to improve the environment in Gibraltar and our environmental performance on the world stage. It is a pleasure to have them all as colleagues.

GIBRALTAR ELECTRICITY AUTHORITY

Mr Speaker,

2014 was a very challenging year for electricity production in Gibraltar when on Easter Sunday one of the Waterport engines suffered a major mechanical failure, which subsequently led to a huge fire that took out Gibraltar electrical power supplies and extensively damaged poor old, battered Waterport power station. Government was quick to react and within a period of one week it had arranged for the delivery of additional rental plant to replace the generating plant that had been lost in the fire in order to ensure that there was sufficient installed generating capacity to deliver the electrical energy demands of Gibraltar.

This led to seven months without power cuts – the longest period since at least 1995. Even with the three power cut episodes that we have suffered recently, the average number of power cuts is infinitely smaller for this year than for as many years as I have been able to go back – which is more than twenty.

And why? Because we have a tremendously professional team at the GEA, and because the Government now cares.

The Authority will continue to improve the reliability of the system to minimize the likelihood of generation power cuts and reduce emissions during this interim period, while the new power station is being designed and constructed.

To this end we have already started the process of decommissioning the ex OESCO engines in the South District Power Station and this will be followed by decommissioning GMES power station as both of these power stations had ageing plant and have been major contributors to NOx emissions in the South District.

The failure of Waterport last year sadly led to a brief increase in NOx emissions last year, reversing the trend we had started in 2012, although happily these levels started to fall once again this year.



Mr Speaker, there is no doubt whatsoever, whatever the Leader of the Opposition might say, that all the problems that we have been facing in relation to power, stem from the former administration's crass and irresponsible failure to act on advice, recommendations and reports that the Waterport station and the distribution system were on the point of collapse about a decade ago. I am not at all convinced that their horrendous, polluting, carbon-belching eyesore of a power station would have been ready by now. For one thing, Mr Speaker, they are the ones who were having trouble finding the money for it.

And Mr Speaker, minutes after his speech, claiming it would have been finished, the Leader of the Opposition said to GBC that ours would take more than four years to complete! Even though the new plant will require much less infrastructure, being close to Waterport, and cause much less disruption being as it will be in an essentially industrial area and accessible by sea. What lack of knowledge of the subject, Mr Speaker. He didn't mention the problems they were encountering with storing the diesel in the old MOD tanks, having to set up a new docking operation that would have poured diesel from tankers into pipes by GibDock. No concern for the flammability of diesel – which is much greater than LNG, or the smells that would have affected the residents of the South District in the event of a leak. Nor how long all that would take?

Perhaps more extraordinary Mr Speaker were his allegations of inside information claiming that the project was 'beset' by problems. What problems Mr Speaker? Are his informers letting him down? Or maybe he's seen something I haven't when he's been there at night with his wire cutters?

But in any case, it was too little, too late. Or perhaps too much too late when you consider the huge price of their proposal and their secret promise to increase the cost of electricity by 5% per year for 20 years! If an air terminal quadrupled in price, what price a power station?

Mr. Speaker, THE biggest headline last year from the point of view of improvements to the environment and quality of life in Gibraltar was the award of the contract for a new power station to the French construction giants Bouygues. This state-of-the-art power plant will be capable of using both gas and light fuel oil in order to be as efficient and environmentally friendly as is technologically possible. It will deliver a potential 80 MW of power, plus an additional 4MW through heat recovery – a tremendous environmental plus, about 20MW more than the GSD's planned station. Moreover, it will guarantee energy self-sufficiency for Gibraltar's population for the next 30 years and more, if not quite "to infinity and beyond" as Buzz Lightyear would say.

We were absolutely right not to proceed with the previous administration's contract for a power station that would have burnt more polluting fuel and would have cost more and incurred huge

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finances for Gibraltar in respect of carbon emissions. This was not just the right decision, it is the right investment for our nation's future.

Mr Speaker, it may not be wise for me as a politician to publicly reveal one of my biggest weaknesses. Let's call it a 'rookie error' Mr Speaker. But here it goes. I have a weakness for science fiction. I enjoy moving into a fictitious world of technological fantasy, ridden with fantastical dangers which at once excite and terrify you, but with the comfort of knowing that they will never really happen.

It is with some knowledge of the genre therefore that I must attribute to the Opposition one of the worst examples of science fiction writing that I have ever read. Fiction certainly, although in fact it verged on science comedy, because, at least true science fiction tends to be well researched. Mr Speaker, their leaflet on the "dangers of LNG" was a veritable disgrace. From the photograph of a burning tank which had burnt on their watch, and in any case was of a totally different fuel, to their mathematically incorrect analysis of comparative cost, it was an insult to the community. Fortunately it has already been almost forgotten. Which shows, thank goodness, the maturity of the electorate.

Mr Speaker, the true figures show that even allowing for costs of cancellation, relocation of businesses from the North Mole, reclamation and temporary supply, this Government's power station will cost about £26 million less than the former administration's. When you take into account that ours will be able to produce 84mW as opposed to their 64, the cost per megawatt capacity for their station would have been £2,014,208, and ours will be £1,218,988, nearly half the cost. And this still does not factor in the cheaper fuel for our station, savings from discarding rental plant, nor the clear environmental benefits in the emissions of virtually no particulate matter, no sulphur, and much less NOx.

Let me reiterate, Mr Speaker, that LNG is just about the safest fuel around. LNG (Liquid Natural Gas) is NOT LPG (Liquid Petroleum Gas), which is the one that can cause explosions. The few googled reports of LNG burning that the GSD have used are NONE OF THEM in the kind or size of plant that we are planning for Gibraltar.

The plant being designed for Gibraltar will be a world leader in safety.

Seriously, Mr Speaker the people from Lloyds went on the information that they were given. This information was incomplete and inaccurate. In good faith they prepared the best possible report based on the worst possible quality of information. No-one is questioning their calibre, but you can only work with the information that you have, and the GSD just did not have it. So Lloyds, I repeat, in perfectly good faith, made assumptions on conjecture. Such important decisions cannot be based on inaccurate information.

Mr Speaker, the Opposition has abused the name of Lloyds Register and has tried to manipulate their honest report to suit their own scheming ends.



The report points out potential difficulties that need to be overcome, these in many cases being precisely the difficulties that our potential providers are succeeding in resolving.

Mr Speaker, the Lloyds report concludes that SOME of the risks are “significantly greater than those found to be acceptable for conventional LNG marine storage terminals”. I repeat the key words, “conventional marine storage terminals”. This one WILL NOT BE conventional.

The report does express concerns that the port is at this point in time, not equipped for handling LNG. Well of course it isn't. It isn't equipped for handling herds of stampeding elephants either. We've had no need to deal with either up to now!

But all the necessary adaptations will be made in order to be able to do so. (to handle LNG, Mr Speaker, not to handle stampeding elephants. Although there's just about as much danger of a significant incident in our LNG plant as there is of a stampede of pachyderms suddenly disembarking in the Port and taking our fair city by storm).

Mr Speaker, I am certain that Lloyds Register would not recommend boiling water being poured over anyone's head. And they would point out that you have to be aware of the potential dangers of boiling water and the need for it to be handled carefully, and for there to be safeguards in place to avoid scalding. But that doesn't mean you can make yourself a cup of tea! You must ensure you use a safe kettle and that you are trained in how to pour, and how much to put into a cup.

Mr Speaker, the Government and the GEA are doing things responsibly. The UK's Health and Safety Laboratory have advised that an LNG power station and storage in Gibraltar are doable – provided it is done correctly. Therefore we are awaiting the detailed designs – which we are on the point of receiving – in order for them to finalise the detailed assessment. That is the time when we will, responsibly, share these with the public.

Lloyds has essentially said nothing different to this.

Mr Speaker, the GSD does not care about power, or clean air, or safety. They do not care who they scare with their misinformation and fabrications. Their approach is not about genuine concerns, but a vile attempt to inject needless fear into our community. It is an absolute disgrace.

Mr Speaker, the Opposition will very soon find all its arguments come tumbling down. As the author Gonzo Arzuaga, paraphrasing none other than Albert Einstein, said, “A smart person knows how to fight a battle. A wise person knows which battles not to fight.” Mr Speaker, the Opposition, are not smart, and, most certainly, they are not wise.

And they have lost the debate even before it's really started. As members will know, and the Chief Minister made reference to this in his address, cruise ship giants Carnival Cruises have just



ordered four brand new cruise liners, with a capacity for 6,600 passengers each, all powered by gas and carrying LNG storage tanks. And to quote the President and CEO of Carnival, Arnold Donald, speaking recently to Bloomberg TV, “We certainly wouldn’t be doing anything we didn’t think was perfectly safe”.

Mr Speaker, I have spent my entire life fighting for a safe environment – and I am not about to change now. I can confidently say that the new power station will be safe, clean, virtually non-polluting, with enough capacity to cover our energy needs for years, and will be supplemented by renewable energy as we develop this. To this end I can announce that for the first time ever the GEA is planning to recruit a renewable energy specialist to join the team.

To return to the more mundane, Mr Speaker, I can report that during the last financial year a total of **179.2 million units** were billed and the amount collected was **£ 24.6 million**.

The number of consumers rose slightly to **19,411** an increase of 138 from the previous year.

The total installed generating capacity at the end of the year stood at **95.48 MWe** as new rental plant was brought in to replace the ageing plant. Once this plant is decommissioned and the turbines removed from site to make way for the new power station, the installed capacity will reduce to **75.08 MWe** which is more than sufficient to meet the forecast peak demands until 2017 of approximately **42 MWe** until the new station is commissioned.

The price of fuel supplied during the last financial year has decreased substantially to levels that that had not been seen over the last fifteen years. It started the year at **£559.40 per tonne** in April 2014 going down to £358 at the end of December 2014 before going slightly up to **£368.94 per tonne** in March 2015.

These low oil prices have not had a huge impact on our fuel expenditure on account of the Authority having entered into a hedging arrangement which has been in place for the last six years.

I must add here that the cost of LNG remains lower.

Electrical Infrastructure Improvements

The Authority continues to upgrade and expand the Network and the SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) that is used to monitor the generation and main distribution system thus providing a better and faster response when dealing with power outage scenarios. This year we have installed the fibre optic link throughout No 7 High Voltage ring in preparation for the full automation and monitoring of the all substations as part of the new power station infrastructure works.

Improvement works have also continue to the electrical supplies to Laguna and Moorish Castle Estates as part of the block refurbishment and lift programme.

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Improvements to the public lighting network continue with replacement of existing street lights with LED and /or low energy lanterns. This year Waterport Road, Queensway and Catalan Bay village have been done. As I mentioned earlier, this has seen a reduction in the street lighting electrical consumption of 15.3 % compared to 2013/14 consumption and 18.7 % compared to 2012/13. True savings in energy and money.

We continued also replacing our Christmas lights with LED lights and again received very positive feedback from the public of last Christmas' lights, and in particular the switching on ceremony that was organized in conjunction with the Ministry of Culture.

Training

Training and development of technical staff of the GEA continues. This year we arranged specialised training courses to introduce modern jointing techniques that reduce the down time in repairing low voltage joints by more than 50 %.

This was in addition to the refresher health and safety and fire training that is part of the continuous development of Authority staff.

2015/16

During 2015/16 in addition to the day to day maintenance and repairs, work will continue on the new power station infrastructure and we will see the start of the associated infrastructure new Distribution centres at Waterport and Mid Harbours.

The design of the new power station will gain momentum with the EIA and the technical review of the engineering design by Bouygues that will be carried out by the Authority technical team supported by Mott MacDonald as technical engineering consultants.

Work is also programmed to continue on the replacement of substations which were procured this last financial year and which now will be replaced to increase the reliability and robustness of the high voltage network.

AquaGib

Mr Speaker,

As you know, my portfolio was extended by the Chief Minister last December to also include responsibility for water production, as Chair of Aquagib Ltd. During the period AquaGib has maintained and improved on its levels of service and performance indicators in respect to the



provision of potable and seawater, and sewerage services. In order to achieve this level of service AquaGib has had an expenditure of £12,115,000.

In addition AquaGib Ltd has continued to invest over the period on capital projects as part of its asset replacement plan aimed at maintaining and improving the water infrastructure assets in Gibraltar as included for in their contract with Government. During this period a total of £730,000 was spent on capital projects, which included:

- The replacement of potable and seawater mains,
- replacement of customers' water meters, meter cupboards and meter manifolds,
- improvements to the Reverse Osmosis Desalinations Plants by the building of new chemical dosing equipment at the Governors Cottage Plant and a second pass RO polishing unit at the Waterport Plant,
- phase 1 improvements and upgrading to the Scada system of remote monitoring and operation of RO plants, Pumping Stations and Reservoirs,
- IT upgrading to handheld remote meter reading equipment, and
- the replacement of the pumps at the Varyl Begg Sewage Pumping Station

The form of electricity and water bills has been changed in order to provide more information and encourage efficiency. Indeed, this reflects Aquagib's policy and new energy efficiency measures are constantly being reviewed in all the company's activities.

The approved budget set by the Company for the provision of potable and seawater supply, and sewerage services in Gibraltar next year is £11,100,000. This reduction in budgeted costs follows the resolution of the ex MSF employees employment issues as a result of the Collective Agreement between HMGoG/AGL and Unite.

The approved budget set by the Company on capital projects as part of its asset replacement plan in Gibraltar has been set at £638,000. This includes the following projects:

- The replacement of potable and seawater mains,
- replacement of customers' water meters, meter cupboards and meter manifolds,
- replacement of RO plant membranes at Governors Cottage Plant,
- rock stabilisation works at Governors Cottage RO plant complex,



- phase 2 improvements and upgrading to the Scada system of remote monitoring and operation of RO plants, Pumping Stations and Reservoirs,
- IT upgrade to the Sage 200 system, the main use of which is related to the company accounting and customer billing systems.

As you can see Mr Speaker, there has been tremendous activity in all my 'non-health-portfolios, much of it interconnected, and revealing the logic, and forward thinking of linking all of these within one Ministry.

And so, Mr Speaker, I turn to my health related portfolios.

ENDS.