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Ministry of Health, the Environment,
Energy and Climate Change

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Minister for Health, Environment, Energy & Climate Change

The Hon Dr John Cortes MBE, D.Phil, C.Biol, C.Env

Budget Speech 2016

PART I: Environment and Utilities

Mr. Speaker,

In a speech I delivered last week at our University of Gibraltar, at the opening of an international conference on promoting sustainable development in further education, I said that the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union was the greatest threat to sustainability the world has seen in decades. Whereas, rightly, much of the emphasis on the impact of the UK's exit has been placed on economic considerations, potentially, the greatest long term impact will be on the environment and on sustainable development.

Mr Speaker, without a doubt, over the past thirty years, the European Union, as a collection of largely progressive and environmentally aware states, has in its collective environmental decision-making been greater than the sum of its individual parts. Environmental policy and governance have been driven by the EU, not just in Europe, but globally, and member states, and countries



outside Europe, have taken steps in responsible stewardship of our planet that in many cases would not have happened if the EU had not existed.

This is the case with both the UK and with Gibraltar.

Mr Speaker, the developed world today sees the economy as the main driver of well-being - and well-being is the very purpose of my task as Minister for both Health and the Environment. This may very well be the case on a stable planet where monetary riches or industrial prowess can directly benefit the lives of many. But on a planet in the throes of climate change unprecedented since modern civilisation began, this is far from the truth.

Mr Speaker, the last year has seen a great deal in the media covering the exodus of thousands from Africa and the Middle East, fleeing from war and social collapse. Mr Speaker, this will be dwarfed many times by the attempts of millions, particularly from Africa, who will need to flee as drought and famine, caused by man-induced climate change, ravage their ancestral homes. Mr Speaker, recent estimates put the price of battling climate change in Africa in order to prevent this, at £2.7 trillion. The knowledge that 'the West', as it struggles with its own, in proportion petty arguments about party leaderships and dubious presidential candidates, and as it buries itself in latter-day xenophobia, that 'the West' will do little to assist, gives me no comfort.

Mr Speaker, it is climate change, and neither the economy as a whole nor Brexit in particular that should make us lose sleep at night.

But, Mr Speaker, there is hope. Only last week, scientists reported a decrease in size of the ozone hole of 40 million square kilometres, thanks to the work a decade or so ago to ban ozone-depleting chemicals. In the natural world, the control of catches of Atlantic Blue-fin tuna has resulted in a great recovery. And while neither have to do directly with climate change, my conclusion is that every little thing we can do to combat climate change must be given the utmost priority, by us in this House, and by every citizen in their homes.

And so Mr Speaker, while I will cover a great deal in this, my fifth budget speech, my message will be that there is a great deal more to do. When I took the reins of Environment as Minister at the end of 2011, there had been absolutely no direction in the Government, nor appetite in this regard. Gibraltar had decades to make up, and it has been that catching up that has left me, pleased with the progress, but frustrated still. We took the quantum leap, now we must consolidate and stride on.

And so Mr Speaker, I will now need to push the environmental agenda ever more strongly, both in the public and the private sectors. Both have been increasingly responding to the environmental challenge. And the youth, particularly, as we have seen by the success of environmental projects in the Young Enterprise Scheme, is with me.



Mr Speaker, if in the past I have been enthusiastic and passionate about the environment, I will now be ruthless too.

Mr Speaker, in this context I think that it is important for me to state that, regardless of how things pan out, the government has no intention of diluting environmental standards and will continue to apply in Gibraltar such laws that the EU may make. Moreover, if we do depart from European targets, I will do my utmost to ensure that the departures is in that we will achieve **better** standards, not worse.

Let me now, Mr Speaker, dwell on the positive.

Indeed, as I was working through this, my first budget speech in our second term of office, I reflected on the unprecedented achievements in environmental governance and sustainability. We have taken Gibraltar from the environmental dark ages and placed it firmly the modern day, international arena. This level of environmental dynamism and delivery has yet again, ranked Gibraltar as *the* environmental leader among the UK Overseas Territories and many of the small island states.

Environmental leaders, Mr Speaker, are those who look at environmental problems in light of their own experience, are committed to leveraging their area of expertise into realising sustainable development in their professional and private lives, and exercise leadership in fulfilling their social responsibilities. How are we doing this? By increasing the number of environmentally-conscious citizens, particularly amongst our young, who are then working locally and abroad, to better our local and the global environment.

Mr Speaker, we are making use of our ability to make the socioeconomic system more harmonious with the environment. The environmental policies which we have implemented have encouraged and promoted environmentally friendly products, services, business and technologies. One of the many examples which spring to mind Mr Speaker, is the steady increase in hybrid vehicles being used in Gibraltar. We led by example five years ago when there were almost no hybrids locally, and now, not a day goes by when we don't spot these cars moving efficiently around Gibraltar. The sale of these vehicles is increasing as a result of the market incentives and leadership provided by this administration. This is the vision which this Government set out to deliver four years ago, a vision of environmental action and commitment, endorsed by each Minister within his or her respective area of responsibility. Our new schools and housing refurbishments are energy efficient and allow for the introduction of renewables, we are delivering eco-tourism by investing in the nature reserve, and we are actively looking at inward environmental investments.

These last four years have seen the Department of the Environment and Climate Change network regionally and internationally, we have proudly flown the flag of environmental governance and leadership, leaving our mark in the international arena. The attendance of our Chief Scientist in



Cop21 in Paris - the Climate Change summit - is an example of this, and I am happy to say we will be announcing further developments shortly, again showing our scientific delegation working at different levels with our international colleagues to deliver meaningful global environmental change. We may be small, but our environmental influence greatly outweighs our geographical size.

Mr. Speaker, last year we hosted an international conference on “Sustaining Partnerships”, organised jointly with the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum. Its focus was on the UKOTs, Crown Dependencies and other small islands. The conference provided a forum for government environmental bodies, NGOs and commercial organisations to discuss key conservation issues, highlight success stories, exchange ideas and most importantly forge partnerships. One of the most important achievements of this conference, Mr Speaker, was the creation of an Environment Ministers Council. It is our intention to meet again this year as guests of the Government of Montserrat and continue our work to push our environmental mandate internationally.

The Department of the Environment within the wider service

Moving on to our work at home Mr. Speaker, my team at the Department continue to work in close collaboration with many departments across the public sector, including Education, Port, Procurement, TSD, GTB, GEA, GMA, RGP and Customs. They are continuously involved in discussions 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. Increasingly too, they continue to engage with the private sector, through the Chamber and GFSB to promote green business initiatives.

Green Filter

The Green filter continues to work well and now constitutes normal practice within the civil service. By way of example, departmental scientists have attended 15 tender boards, reviewed 592 building applications in addition to attending all DPC meetings. Four EIA's have been reviewed. The Environmental Action and Management Plan and the Climate Change Programme are in the final stages of review and will be published before the end of this calendar year.

Waste management and recycling



Mr. Speaker, once again, recycling figures have seen an increase from those reported last year, with an increase of approximately 15.5% in mixed packaging waste such as plastic and cans and an increase of 18.6% on Cardboard and Paper. The biggest achievement and thanks go to the general public, clearly it is their contribution which is allowing us to fulfil our role in improving recycling practices at home and in the workplace. Waste electrical and electronic equipment recycling figures also continue to increase with a further 51.4% increase during 2016 compared to figures for 2015.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that Gibraltar's first dedicated eco-park, a 2011 Manifesto commitment, is now open 365 days a year and has helped to boost our overall recycling rates by 25.23%. A compactor and baler have been set up onsite to ensure greater efficiency in the handling and processing of recycling waste streams. Greater volumes can now be transported in fewer trips, thereby reducing costs as well as our carbon footprint.

I can confirm that the Government remains committed to both a waste treatment plant and a sewage treatment plant during this term of office.

Mr. Speaker, since the appointment of our dedicated litter wardens, the number of instances of fly tipping is reducing. These officers patrol Gibraltar daily, creating awareness and educating and deterring people from irresponsible tipping. They have placed a total of 42 litter tickets in just 7 months. No-dumping signs have been placed in litter hotspots to further remind the public that in Gibraltar, bins are only a short distance away. We still seeing certain problem areas where we will be increasing our efforts. Works continue on refuse cubicles around Gibraltar and two new bins stores will be constructed this year.

Meetings of the Litter Committee continue and we have progressed on various fronts. I once again take this opportunity to thank all the members of the committee for their hard work and dedication, especially those volunteers from community groups and tenants' associations.

Working with the Community

Collaboration with NGOs continues. Regular meetings take place between Government officials, myself and the GONHS and the ESG, both of which continue to make a tremendous contribution to Gibraltar, largely on a voluntary basis. 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. I have formally met approximately, 4 times with each of these in the past twelve months, and there is a great deal of informal contact too on a much more regular basis.



General environmental education and awareness

Mr. Speaker, this past year has again seen the Department spearhead the environmental education programme which involves visits to all schools to raise awareness on key environmental issues and how we can help to resolve them. The Department has delivered a total of 34 talks and many field trips this year. In other work coordinated between Environment and Education, small characterised recycling bins have been delivered to infant schools.

The Department also participated in the World Maritime Day celebrations, organised by the Gibraltar Port Authority last September. This was an opportunity to showcase the underwater camera and our marine surveillance work.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and INSPIRE

Mr. Speaker, H.M. Government's Geoportal continues to be used both locally and internationally. The interactive map of Gibraltar, continues to be updated, providing more Gibraltar specific spatial data than at any other time. To date more than 17,000 hits from 145 countries have been registered at the Geoportal. These range from regional neighbours to Brazil, Canada, Australia, and China. The geoportal continues to support both the local public and private sectors, which continue to be the largest users of our geographical information assets.

Furthermore, the Department for the Environment continues to spearhead the use of GIS. GIS is not only used in relation to the Geoportal and the Government's international reporting obligations, but also in conjunction with leading terrestrial and marine ecological assessments, which support key legislative conservation tools.

Energy and climate change

Both the Gibraltar Electrical Authority and the Department of the Environment and Climate Change continue to work hard to deliver improvements in the field of energy. The recent appointment of a dedicated Renewable Energy officer is a testament to this commitment. This year will see the delivery of a flagship solar project for Government. Solar thermal and PV panels will be installed at St Bernard's Hospital. This project will deliver large savings in water heating and will place us on par with many hospitals across Europe.

And the commitment is starting to deliver real results as demonstrated by the launch of the Eco Wave Power project in May. This project, which attracted huge international interest, demonstrates Gibraltar's pioneering attitude in the field of renewable energy, it is the first grid-



connected wave energy power plant anywhere in Europe and, while in the initial stages energy production is still small, when the full project is completed, it will deliver a significant percentage of Gibraltar's electricity needs.

Our interest in marine renewables also extends to marine current energy and last autumn, officials from the Department accompanied representatives of Blue Shark Power during their marine current survey. We remain committed to exploring opportunities with this and other technology providers, to find long term sustainable solutions to Gibraltar's energy needs.

In respect of climate change, Gibraltar took a significant step in October when we committed to the Compact of Mayors, a global coalition of city leaders dedicated to reducing their greenhouse gas emissions, making their communities more resilient to climate change and regularly reporting their progress publicly.

The Department will be making use of the tools and resources provided by the UN through the Compact to deliver more accurate emissions assessments and to refine its Climate Change Programme, due to be published shortly.

In other areas, the Department organised Energy Auditor Training towards the end of 2015. This provided an opportunity for individuals to become Accredited Energy Auditors and to carry out energy audits for businesses and organisations. These audits form part of HMGOGs wider initiative to increase energy efficiency and reduce energy consumption. Energy efficiency has been deemed the most effective way of cutting carbon emissions and tackling climate change; understanding how you currently use energy is the first step towards understanding how to reduce your use. HMGOG will shortly be introducing legislation which mirrors the UK Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme, requiring large organisations to conduct energy audits every 4 years.

In relation to the Energy Performance of Buildings, the minimum standards for energy performance for new and existing buildings are being tightened and these will be introduced with the launch of the latest version of the Gibraltar Simplified Building Energy Model. Last month a training course for new assessors was held, thus increasing the number of individuals able to offer this service to the public. In the last financial year, approximately 240 EPC's have been issued.

Mr Speaker, the Department will shortly be inviting companies to apply for inclusion in an 'environmentally friendly companies' register'. This will result in the company being assessed on its environmental policies and performance, and given an environmental rating, to allow proper assessment of a company's credentials, not just in relation to employment policies as in the approved contractors' list, but to environmental impact too.



Coastal and groundwater quality monitoring

The Department of the Environment's monitoring and surveillance programmes, which consist of sampling and monitoring of Gibraltar's coastal waters, groundwater aquifers and bathing waters, continue to operate smoothly. The Department also continues to collect and monitor marine sediment, phytoplankton, fish and bivalve tissue samples. In addition, the Department will be commencing a marine litter monitoring programme as part of its obligations under the Marine Strategy.

In late 2015, the Department issued its 2nd River Basin Management Plan; a centre piece of the Water Framework legislation which classifies our water bodies. With the use of sampling and monitoring data, the classification exercise concluded that both Gibraltar's coastal waters and groundwater aquifers are meeting the objectives set out in the Water Framework legislation, and are both achieving good chemical and ecological status. To that effect, the Department continues to closely monitor and license discharges to the marine environment and abstraction from our groundwater aquifers.

We are clearly fulfilling our international responsibilities within BGTW.

Regarding our beaches, with the exception of Western beach which as we know is a transboundary issue, water quality has improved in most of our beaches, two of which are now classed as "Excellent" under the new EU classifications.

Marine surveillance and protection

Mr. Speaker, there are those within this Chamber who insist on concentrating on the negative and who pretend to believe that the fact that we still have illegal fishing by Spanish boats in BGTW is proof of the demise of our seas. Mr Speaker, apart from the fact that such visits are dropping regularly in numbers and significance, these unfortunate, unwelcome and unacceptable intrusions are far outweighed by the huge positive steps taken in marine conservation over the past four years.

Mr Speaker, the Department continues making steady progress with its marine ecosystem restoration programme.

The Department has been working in close collaboration with the University of Algarve's Centre for Marine Sciences for well over a year. Mature seagrasses have been transplanted from sites in Portugal and the team is now gearing up to plant seedlings later on this year. These new plants will continue to be monitored by the Department's Dive Team.



The Oyster reintroduction programme began in May. Approximately 125 kg of mature oysters were strategically placed within different areas of the Gibraltar Marine Reserve.

Mr. Speaker, the Department also installed an underwater camera last spring providing live footage to the general public. The camera has also become an underwater research tool used by scientists in different parts of the world. In addition to providing a live feed, the underwater camera system also measures environment parameters such as pH, temperature and salinity on a real-time basis. This installation is the first of its kind in Europe.

Mr Speaker, this Government's incessant desire to pioneer marine initiatives in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters also gave rise to the creation of 'no fishing and no anchoring zones' such as that found in Seven Sisters. The Seven Sisters Protected Area has been demarcated with specially designed buoys to conserve an area of reef habitat as well as a wide array of marine species including fish, pen shells, corals, gorgonians and seabirds.

The Department's Environmental Protection & Research Unit, working together with the scientific staff, has been collecting data on marine animal strandings and sightings involving dolphins and turtles

The Department has noted an increase in sightings of marine mega-fauna, specifically whales such as Fin Whales, Sperm Whales and Humpback Whales. A first for Gibraltar has been the presence of a juvenile humpback within BGTW during the months of March and April. As of late there have already been 14 sightings of Fin Whales which have navigated through our waters on their migratory route towards the Atlantic. Three basking shark sightings have also been recorded this year. All these give an indication of the improving quality and richness of our waters.

The Department will be rolling out a volunteer marine monitoring programme during the summer months which will draw upon various volunteer marine users such as scuba divers, fishermen, spear fishermen, boat users and snorkelers. This citizen science project will assist the Department in collecting data for various indicator marine organisms which will assist in monitoring the ecological status of our waters and at the same time inform, educate and create awareness in the public domain.

Fishing

Mr. Speaker, fisheries management is an issue that this Government has had the courage to regulate despite the challenges confronting us. Over a year after the implementation of the Marine Protection Regulations and the Tuna Preservation Regulations, I can report that over 7,000 licences have now been issued. This, Mr. Speaker, is a significant achievement that many thought would not be possible.



The creation of the Fishing Working Group has been critical to the successful implementation of both Regulations. To date, the group has met on eight occasions with representatives from all the different angling fraternities, as well as other stakeholders, actively participating in discussions regarding the sustainable management of marine resources in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters. The extension of the Seven Sisters No Fishing Zone and the creation of new Marine Conservation Zones inside the Gibraltar Harbour are just some of the outcomes that have been achieved as a result of the close working relationship that I have established with the group. I want to thank all its members, who give of their time for free, for their work in this vitally important role.

The revision of minimum sizes, the delivery of marine conservation awareness and the collection of valuable marine resources data are also areas that are being tackled in consultation with the group. New guidance documents will shortly be published to disseminate the information and knowledge that has been gained over the past year. It is clear that we now have a greater understanding of fishing activities and marine resources in our waters than ever before. This allows us to take informed decisions for the benefit of our marine environment with key stakeholders in a transparent and constructive manner.

Mr. Speaker, we have now commenced the regulation of Gibraltar's second Bluefin tuna fishing season. Last year's season was managed exceptionally well with officials from the Department and the Landing point staff monitoring and recording catch data all the way through until October. I would like take this opportunity to thank local anglers for their cooperation and continued support in ensuring the successful implementation of these regulations. This year, building on the experiences gained during our first season, we have improved the facilities available at the North Mole landing point and revised the procedure for reporting Bluefin tuna catches. In addition, we have also reviewed the protocols for the Bluefin tuna tagging programme to ensure a higher level of protection for the species.

Environmental Health

Mr. Speaker, in the field of environmental health, the Environmental Agency continues to work on many fronts and expand its duties in the areas of building control, waste regulation, food inspections and food import controls. In addition to the developments mentioned last year, the Agency has continued to provide the new Ship Sanitation Certificate service, which includes a service to Super Yachts. The Agency is the main point of contact locally for the UK's Health and Safety Executive and work with them on major projects such as the new power station and LNG plant as well as any COMAH issues.

They service and calibrate all of our air quality monitoring stations and liaise with pollution specialists and form part of the European Network of Drinking Water Regulators (ENWARE).



Additionally, they are now a participant in the EU Vectornet programme. This programme is based on sharing data relative to the distribution of the mosquito, tick, sand fly and other disease vectors. This data sharing will assist those working in the fields of environment and public health.

They also provide specialised training in waste management to waste industry representatives and continue to provide practical Environmental Health training for both local students and students from the University of West England.

They will shortly be launching a revised website, providing easier access to users for the dissemination of environmental information

They advise the Government on the provision of new legislation such as Lifts, DNA testing of dogs and the storage of petroleum products, as well as advising on the updating of existing legislation.

The Agency does a tremendous amount of work for the community and is always at my and the public's disposal.

Cemetery

Mr. Speaker, works on the improvement of the North Front Cemetery continue. Despite recent negative media coverage, in the past twelve months the surrounding wall of the cemetery has been repaired and maintained and the public toilets inside the cemetery have been repaired. The cutting of the grass is now completed, and is trimmed on a daily basis. Areas are cleaned daily and the cemetery is kept as a safe place for visitors. Signs continue to be installed around the different plots as required. We are presently upgrading the drainage system to avoid flooding during the winter months.

Mr Speaker, the Cemetery is a difficult place to work in for obvious reasons. We have an average of 260 burials a year, in addition to an average of 50 transfers of remains. Cleaning of the inside of vaults is also done by the team, and I have to thank them for their work.

Green and Planted areas

Mr. Speaker, green spaces are a great benefit to our environment. They not only provide areas for leisure and respite from the stresses of city life but they also filter pollutants and dust from the air, they provide shade and lower temperatures in urban areas, and they reduce energy consumption by countering the warming effects of paved surfaces. Lawns can be up to 30 degrees cooler than asphalt in summer. One tree can remove 12 kilograms of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere annually, equaling up to 18,000 kilometers of car emissions. With all this in mind, the



Government's tree-planting programme and has been going from strength to strength. A total of 1614 trees have been planted between 2015 and 2016 so far. Tree planting will continue this year, Mr Speaker. At the same time, the Department continues to work extensively on the maintenance and improvement of existing green areas. And of course, the biggest contributor to this achievement continues to be Commonwealth Park. The park continues to be enjoyed by thousands and has now become one of Gibraltar's prime recreational areas. I am looking forward to working on the new park that will be created north of the Leisure centre as part of the Mid-town project.

Botanic Gardens

The Gibraltar Botanic Gardens continue to grow in capacity and influence. Its work extends well beyond the recreational with a role in taxonomy, ecology, conservation and education. It is an Associate Partner of the University of Gibraltar's Institute of Life and Earth Sciences and is involved in planning of the University's research programmes and other capacity building measures. Thus, the Botanic Gardens and the University are assisting each other in their development as key regional players in research, as well as promoting Gibraltar internationally. As is expected in a dynamic and developing garden, improvements to planted areas continue to be made. In particular, its children's education programme is going from strength to strength. As well as running activities within the Alameda itself, the Botanic Gardens' education team is now advising schools on the development of their own gardens and horticultural schemes. April this year saw the 200th Anniversary of the establishment of the Alameda Gardens. A number of improvements and activities took place to mark this, including articles in the press outlining the Botanic Gardens' work, a series of wooden sculptures, a special anniversary bed, children's activities and the bicentenary's main celebration, the inauguration of Bicentenary House, a glasshouse that showcases plants from rainforest and arid environments and further enhances the Alameda's capacity for education work. A commemorative stamp issue is planned for later this year.

Gibraltar Nature Reserve

The Gibraltar Nature Reserve is yet another area where the hard efforts of the Environment, Tourism and Heritage Ministries are paying off and one that I take immense pride in overseeing. Work has steadily continued on all fronts and there is more to come; not only for the Upper Rock but also for the other components that make up the Gibraltar Nature Reserve.



The opening of the new suspension bridge at Royal Anglian Way serves to highlight this Government's commitment to improving and diversifying Gibraltar's main environmental and tourism assets. The 75-meter "Windsor Suspension Bridge" offers stunning views of the Bay and the beautiful city of Gibraltar below. It is part of a wider Nature Reserve renovation programme that has seen tonnes of rubbish, including asbestos cleared from Royal Anglian Way and Rooke Battery to make way for user-friendly trails and the opening up of historic buildings and tunnels dating back to World War II. Although the bridge is firmly rooted to the ground with supporting anchors driven 12 meters into the rock and 132 steel cables supporting its deck, a slight wobble adds to the thrill of the experience. It is therefore no surprise that the general feedback received so far in Gibraltar and beyond has been extremely positive. There is no doubt in my mind that the upcoming Sky Walk in Mount Misery will be just as successful.

Mr Speaker, the Gibraltar Nature Reserve has evolved and developed significantly since the Upper Rock was officially designated as a Reserve by the GSLP Government in 1993. As part of the continued effort to further protect biodiversity and natural habitats in Gibraltar, the then Upper Rock Nature Reserve was re-branded by this GSLP/Liberal Government in 2013 and its size extended to include new areas that would further help protect important habitats and species.

The Gibraltar Nature Reserve now encompasses more than 2.33km², which is approximately 36% of Gibraltar's terrestrial area: A staggering statistic that shows our enduring commitment to environmental protection. Providing specific habitats with legal protection carries additional responsibilities. It requires a robust management framework together with a plan to ensure that conservation objectives are met. To this effect, the Government is about to publish the Gibraltar Nature Reserve Management Plan, a document that sets out the management priorities for the different components of the Gibraltar Nature Reserve.

One of the key measures included in the plan is a renewed management structure and the creation of a Nature Reserve Management Board. The implementation of a hierarchical, coordinated and effective management regime will play a critical part in ensuring that all sites, habitats and species within the Reserve are protected. The unique wildlife and sites found within the Reserve continue to attract a vast number of tourists to the Rock and this is an economic resource of immense importance to Gibraltar and its people, but it must be managed sustainably.

Achieving the delicate balance between conservation and tourism is by no means an easy task. It must be guided by an adherence to the principles of sustainable development. The new plan seeks to apply these principles by considering the environmental aspects of the Reserve as well as the social and economic dimensions. To achieve this, the plan will be a dynamic document that will be regularly updated in response to changing pressures and management requirements.



In keeping with the aim of improving the value of the Reserve, the new plan also includes a commitment to the continued removal of introduced invasive species, and to re-introducing species that were once found in Gibraltar. This is one of the most ambitious and exciting measures that the Department of the Environment and Climate Change will have ever embarked upon and it will require continuous effort and dedication. Co-operation with regional authorities and experts will also play an important role in the delivery of this measure; one that will undoubtedly increase the recognition of the Gibraltar Nature Reserve internationally. Our success with the re-introduction of wild rabbits and the secretive Barbary partridge shows that we are able to do this successfully. The count of 52 partridges at the January Winter Bird Count, only a proportion of the current population, was higher than it had been in decades.

Species such as foxes, eagles and other animals that were once common in the area will once again have the opportunity to have a foothold on the Rock for the benefit of all to see and enjoy. A tagging programme will also be implemented by the Department so that scientists and the wider public may follow the movements of some of the re-introduced species. Similar to the BBC's Springwatch Programme, live cameras will be installed in known breeding locations for a number of species as part of the Department's drive to increase environmental awareness. This, Mr. Speaker, is real conservation and environmental education action being carried out in Gibraltar: Action that will resonate at the regional and international scale.

Yellow-legged Gulls

Mr Speaker,

Surveys of Yellow-legged Gulls were carried out during the breeding season of the years of 2015 and 2016. Although in the past these surveys took place on an ad hoc basis, the Government has now arranged for surveys to take place on an annual basis.

Due to the Rock's topography, it is impossible to ascertain accurately the number of breeding pairs of Yellow-legged Gulls in Gibraltar. Instead, these surveys provide relative estimates of abundance and their main purpose is to assess population trends as a response to culling activity.

The trend is clear: the data estimate an average decrease in numbers of breeding pairs of some 4% per annum, with an estimated 40% decrease in breeding Yellow-legged Gulls between 2002 and 2016. Although this represents a substantial decrease, the trend is not as marked as would be expected from a closed population. For example, approximately 16,000 fledged Yellow-legged Gulls - mainly adults - have been removed between 2012 and mid-2016, and the expected decrease should be much greater if there were no input of gulls from elsewhere.



Gibraltar has to contend with what appears to be considerable repopulation of gulls from nearby Spain and possibly elsewhere from this “Meta population” of Western Mediterranean Yellow Legged Gulls, and that makes the control programme more difficult. Even accounting for this however, the breeding population of gulls in Gibraltar is definitely declining as a result of the culling programme.

Macaques

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to the management of our Barbary Macaques. Let me start off by highlighting the fact that the Macaque Management Team is now better resourced than ever before with over 9 dedicated staff attending to their well-being and continuously responding to any issues that may arise within and outside the Upper Rock. This development has had an immense impact on the macaque contraception programme, which is increasingly effective in controlling population numbers. As always, the behaviour of the macaques will sporadically attract the public’s attention but the joint efforts of the GONHS, Gibraltar Veterinary Clinic and the Department of the Environment and Climate Change have ensured that any incidents are tackled swiftly and effectively.

Research into our macaques continues to play a an important role in their management and the increased resources provided to the Macaque Management Team will allow them to embark on a much needed genetic study of Gibraltar’s Barbary Macaques this year. Other areas of research are also being investigated such as human-macaque interactions and the ecology of the macaques in conjunction with renowned research institutions.

Raising awareness on the importance of our macaques forms another element of the macaque management strategy. The collaboration between the Department of the Environment and Climate Change and Monkey Talk Gibraltar is yielding excellent results which we plan to continue well into the future. To date, there have been two Macaque Awareness Days and these have helped spread the message of seeing our macaques as of one Gibraltar’s unique assets and not nuisances. The awareness events have also allowed the collation of valuable data using a specially designed ‘macaque questionnaire’. A Barbary Macaque Educational App has also been created to help inform locals and tourists alike and this is now available for free on both Android and iOS platforms.

Mr. Speaker, not only is the Barbary Macaque listed as Endangered by the IUCN Red List but it is regarded as *critically important* by this Government. All the hard work that is now clearly visible in the Upper rock with new feeding areas, human resources and educational material serves to showcase this point and it will not stop here.



Environmental Protection and Research

Mr. Speaker, the Environmental Protection and Research Unit continues to go from strength to strength. There are now 6 officers working on a shift basis. The section is making good use of the Department's maritime assets, the *Storm Petrel*, the *Darwin* and the *Sea Eagle*.

Environmental patrols are being carried out daily; 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, regionally and in the wider international area. Environmental Protection Officers, together with the departmental scientists, have responded to 41 out-of-hours call outs. Reasons have included illegal fishing from land and sea, wildlife rescues, fallen trees, air pollution and suspected oil spills. The section continues to work hand in hand with the Royal Gibraltar Police and with HM Customs as well as with GONHS, whose excellent Raptor Unit ensures rescued birds of prey are rehabilitated and released. I would like to thank both the RGP and HM Customs for their invaluable assistance in providing training to this section.

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.

Despite the recent alarmist press coverage of the WHO's urban air quality database, Gibraltar's air quality in terms of particulate matter has actually been improving over the last 3 to 4 years. In addition, the monitoring equipment records our oxides of nitrogen at the lowest levels ever since recording was commenced and data to May give our levels as below the EU maximum of 40ug per cubic metre also for the first time. This is a tremendous achievement no doubt due to intelligent managing of power generation. Nevertheless, there is no room for complacency. HMGoG continues to review its policies in relation to air quality and will be revising and updating its Air Quality Action Plan. In conjunction with my colleague, the Minister for Traffic & Transport, the Department will be assisting in the roll out of the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan and will be participating in European Mobility Week and organising an In Town without My Car Day for September.

Environmental Legislation

Mr Speaker, delivering home grown environmental policy and legislation has always been a strong suit of this administration. We have updated and amended existing environmental legislation and



brought new legislation into our statute books. This term will see further work on new environmental legislation in the fields of:

- Cemeteries
- Contaminated land
- Recycling
- Pets
- Caves
- Dog fouling

In relation to this I must thank all those advisers including the Gibraltar Veterinary Clinic, GONHS, the Heritage Trust, the Gibraltar Museum and the Responsible Pet Owners for their hard work and support.

Energy

Mr Speaker,

Never before in Gibraltar's history than in the last 12 months has so much been said by a few about energy and energy production. In the run-up to last November, instant experts and prophets of doom sprang up, claiming to doubt the Government's diligence and honesty in respect of the new power station. I am not going to repeat it all now, Mr Speaker, because on 26 November last the people gave an overwhelming vote of confidence to the Government and to the new, clean technology we are introducing. A great deal of hot air expended by some not too far from where I am, was converted by the electorate into overwhelming support for a gas-powered energy plant. And so the new, clean and efficient gas power station and associated LNG plant, using best available technology including stack monitoring, will come to be operational in a little over a year's time. I am pleased to say that work on the station is progressing extremely well, with the first of the new engines expected in just a few of months' time.

Significantly Mr Speaker, I can report that the laying of much of the new infrastructure including the construction of the new high voltage distribution centres has been contracted to Bouygues, the firm constructing the power station, within the total agreed contract sum, proving once again that the new plant will be much cheaper than the grimy, slimy, dirty diesel one planned by the GSD administration.



I am pleased to confirm, Mr Speaker, that the ageing ex OESCO engines have now been decommissioned and the ex MOD station is now on standby mode only. These steps have greatly reduced pollution in the area.

Mr Speaker, the number of consumers rose to 19,805, an increase of 394, but despite this, total emissions dropped for the second year running from 179,759 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide in 2014 to 161,543 tonnes in 2015. This shows the success of energy efficiency measures such as promotion of efficiency and conversion to low energy lighting.

The total amount collected from electricity bills was £24.97 million pounds – with very little backlog in unpaid bills – and the total installed capacity at the end of the year stood at 79.18MWe.

Training and development of technical staff of the GEA continues with an emphasis on the new power project. We will continue to work on the network, including the SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) system which is used for monitoring and aids response in case of problems. We will also continue work on the replacement of substations.

Mr Speaker, the community will have noticed that once the specific issues were tackled about a year ago, power cuts due to generation problems have ceased. While I don't want to tempt fate, as this is always a possibility until we fully renew the plant and network, I can report that the only significant outages have been the result of cables being cut during works by contractors. I must here praise all the staff of the GEA for their incredible commitment to their work.

And I must thank and pay tribute to Manolo Alecio, who recently retired as CEO, for his professionalism, dedication and support. At the same time I would like to wish the new CEO, Michael Caetano, and deputy CEO, Ian Payas, every success in their work over the coming year, which will be the most significant and exciting in the history of power generation in Gibraltar.

Water

In relation to water production, this year also sees the retirement of AquaGib's CEO, Derek Cano, and I would like to think him also for his commitment during his many years of public service.

During the past year AquaGib has maintained and improved on its levels of service and performance in respect of the provision of potable and seawater supply, and sewerage services in Gibraltar. In order to achieve this level of service AquaGib has undertaken an expenditure of £12,115,000.



In addition AquaGib 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. During this period a total of £730,000 was spent on capital projects, which included:

- The replacement of potable and seawater mains,
- 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 approved budget set by the Company on capital projects for the coming year has been set at £638,000. This includes the following projects:

- Continuing the replacement of potable and seawater mains,
- 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.

Conclusions on Environment

Mr Speaker, there is a lot more I could say about plans for the environment in the coming year, and omissions are not due to anything other than a desire to not extend the length of my contribution even more.

Mr Speaker, the events of recent weeks have left us all on uncertain ground. In relation to the environment and sustainability at large, I would like to close my piece by saying that this administration's environmental ethics have always been deep rooted and have never consisted of doing the bare minimum in order to comply with EU law, as was the case before our time. Our track record clearly proves this.



Part II: Ministry of Health and the Gibraltar Health Authority

Mr Speaker, I now turn my attention to the Ministry of Health and the Gibraltar Health Authority.

Mr Speaker, nowhere is the vote of confidence given us by the community last November more appreciated than in the complex, testing, intense and sometimes heart-wrenching world of healthcare.

Together with the excellent staff that we have across the GHA, I am looking forward to continuing this exciting journey in providing that outstanding quality of healthcare that our community deserves.

Mr Speaker, the challenge is to continue to deliver excellent healthcare while becoming more efficient and reducing the rate of increase in expenditure. This is a challenge indeed, for healthcare keeps developing, treatment and treatment opportunities keep progressing,

And the expectations of the citizen keep growing. Healthcare is not about a culture of false entitlement, Mr Speaker. Healthcare is about the obligation to deliver the very best we possibly can to each and every member of our community, from before birth to the very last breath.

Mr Speaker, Expenditure in Health, as the Leader of the Opposition said yesterday in his contribution, has increased significantly over the past four years. Of course it has, Mr Speaker.

Four years ago there was no Calpe Ward, no Day Surgery, one and not four operating theatres, fewer doctors and nurses, 10,000 fewer outpatient appointments in St Bernard's, and 34,000 not 39,000 entitled persons – a difference of 5,000 - under the Group Practice Medical Scheme. It was a different health service, Mr Speaker.

The main thrust of our work in the coming year will be to improve services but at the same time do what we do more efficiently and effectively and bring back to Gibraltar all that which we are able to do here and so try and contain the need to travel abroad for treatment

Mr Speaker, the progress made in healthcare over the last four years is a reflection of our central focus on patient welfare and our overriding principle where 'the patient always comes first', changing a culture where system goals mattered more than the care of the individual.

Mr Speaker, since 2011, the number of nurses was increased by over forty and the training of enrolled nurses re-commenced, giving career prospects to nursing assistants for the first time ever. We also increased the number of GP's, NCHD's and Consultants. We now have a Consultant Microbiologist and a haematologist, all part of a holistic strategy of implementing long term improvements.

Mr Speaker, the decrepit, Victorian, KGV institution was finally closed and replaced with the outstanding Ocean Views, Mental Health Unit. Health promotion and screening progressed as never before, with the introduction of Colorectal Cancer Screening and screening for Abdominal



Aneurysms of the Aorta, both of which have already diagnosed serious conditions and have saved lives.

Mr Speaker, cancellations of operations came down tremendously following the opening of the Day Surgery Unit with only 3 cancellations in 2014 and 21 cancellations in 2015, down from 118 operations cancelled in 2010 and 114 in 2011. Together with the Day Surgery Unit we have four functioning operating theatres compared to pre 2011 when there was only one functioning operating theatre being used regularly.

Mr Speaker, this has resulted in the number of operations being done annually rocketing to nearly 4000. We have more doctors and more Visiting Consultants, more patients being diagnosed and treated than ever before. All of this has also had a great impact in reducing waiting lists and waiting times in all specialities.

Mr Speaker, I have highlighted some of the successes of the last four years, which has improved the service to the point of being unrecognisable, with its central focus on patient welfare, but I am fully conscious that there are many challenges ahead, and there will be things that we can do even better, and do them better we will.

Mr Speaker, to be able to do this we have a comprehensive and ambitious healthcare manifesto plan which together with the GHA's three year strategic plan developed by the CEO and his Senior Management Team, will drive change and improvement forward.

Our vision is one that sees a move from a narrow focus on access targets to a broader view of what high quality care entails. The change from disjointed episodic care to holistic integrated care, the move to prevention over cure with a much bigger focus on public health and more personal responsibility for our wellbeing. Running through all of these things is a fundamental shift in power from a bureaucratic system where power sits in the hands of politicians, to a democratic system where the most powerful person is not the doctor, nurse or manager, but every single member of our community who uses the health service every single day.

GHA's 3 Year Strategy

Mr Speaker, October 2015 saw the completion and launch of the GHA's three year strategy with the collaboration of staff across all specialities of healthcare.

The plan sets out the priorities, describes what will be done, individual responsibilities, desired outcomes and benefits, and is intertwined with the Government's current Manifesto.

The Strategy identifies risks and assurance processes to oversee these and protect patient care whilst delivering significant on-going transformation. The document has 29 different work streams with over 280 specific objectives.

Mr Speaker, this is a working document with additional work streams being developed at present which will include Dementia, Diabetes and Cancer Services.



Public Health & Health Promotion

Mr Speaker, in my last budget speech, I announced the second 'Health & Lifestyle Survey' which was to take place during 2015. This follows from the first ever Health & Lifestyle Survey of the Gibraltar people, which was published in 2012.

The Health and Lifestyle Survey aims to find out the levels of perceived health in the resident population as well as gather information on lifestyle parameters like eating, drinking and physical activity. The Public Health department compiled the questionnaire for the survey, which consisted of 46 questions, which were externally validated.

Mr Speaker, the long process of analysis has been completed, with the publication of the survey report due this summer.

Mr Speaker, as part of its Childhood Vaccination programme, the GHA introduced a new vaccine against Meningococcus B, which protects the baby against serious diseases like Meningitis B and Septicaemia. Meningococcus B is the leading infectious killer of babies and young children, causing infections that come on very quickly and can leave permanent damage.

Mr Speaker, the Meningitis B vaccine is very safe and will be offered to all babies at the age of 2 months in line with the UK's vaccination programme.

Mr Speaker, Screening Programmes save lives. In my last budget speech, I announced the launch of the 'Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening Programme'. Since its launch a total of over 200 men have been screened. The programme has already detected aneurysms in persons who would otherwise seem perfectly healthy. One of these aneurysms was a large one with the patient being referred to a tertiary specialist vascular centre for treatment. His life was saved. All other persons with smaller aneurysms will be kept under close surveillance.

Mr Speaker, in line with the aim of Screening programmes, the Colorectal Cancer Screening Programme has shown that it has achieved its key outcome target of 100% cancer detection, following the end of year one audit results.

Mr Speaker, on Health promotion and Public Education, the department, now with its full complement of two Health Promotion Officers, has held key health promotion events. These included:

- Heart Health Awareness
- The Well Child
- Skin Cancer Screening
- World Crohn's Disease Day
- World Hand Hygiene Day
- World Diabetes Day



- World AIDS Day

Mr Speaker, one of the more comprehensive campaigns was the 'European Antibiotic Awareness Week' which was celebrated by the GHA through several initiatives in order to raise public awareness about the importance of correct antibiotic use and antibiotic resistance.

Part of this campaign included the launch of the GHA's comprehensive evidenced-based guidelines on antibiotic prescription now in use by the GHA's doctors and nurses.

Cancer Services

Mr Speaker, I would now like to turn my attention to an area of healthcare which this Government and the GHA considers a priority, cancer Services.

Cancer is one of the highest causes of death and touches every single family in our community. A diagnosis of cancer will have a major impact on many areas of a person's life and that of their loved ones. They may be dealing with many medical, emotional and financial issues. The GHA will endeavour to make the patients' cancer journey as seamless as possible, offering advice, support and a range of options.

Mr Speaker, to this end the new Cancer Services Department was established with the aim to improve the patient experience and improve cancer outcomes.

Mr Speaker, the Cancer Services Department was created in September 2015 with the employment of a new Cancer Services Co-ordinator. The role entails the co-ordination of services between the different cancer service providers such as primary, secondary, tertiary care, palliative care and local cancer charities to ensure best practice in access to cancer services and active case management. By liaising with all service providers, the Cancer Services Co-ordinator identifies gaps in care and implements possible improvements to GHA services such as new patient care pathways, policies and protocols.

Mr Speaker, so far, communication between service providers has improved and there is an established link between senior clinicians both in and outside Gibraltar. Oncology multidisciplinary teams are now meeting on a regular basis and the draft Cancer Strategy has already been developed which will include new services that will soon be developed for our patients.

Mr Speaker, this takes me to the development of the Chemotherapy Suite and the repatriation of Chemotherapy, which at present sees patients either being sent to Spain or the UK, and which is about to open.

Mr Speaker, this Government has listened to patients, their relatives and local charities and has understood the great hardship and difficulties encountered when travelling abroad to have Chemotherapy. No longer will patients require to travel abroad, but will be able to receive their treatment locally in the company of their relatives.



Primary Care

Mr Speaker, as previously mentioned in this House, the GHA is fully aware that Primary Care is an area of our Health Service that needed to improve especially with respect to access to services and availability of GP appointments. The appointment system at the PCC has been under constant review since 2012. First, the Government, on the advice of staff and patients, shortened the period of open appointments from three months to one month, and introduced the last prescription direct appointment system. This system did in fact work much better, which was acknowledged at the time in Parliament by the then Opposition Spokesperson for Health who congratulated the GHA for having dealt with this.

Mr Speaker, this new system although better than the previous one was not without its problems, which is why it has been under constant review. After further consultation, a new system which entailed changing from the monthly appointment system to a 48 hour appointment system was introduced in January 2016 with the aim of decongesting the PCC on the first of the month, increasing the availability of appointments and giving users greater choice, together with reducing the high number of DNA's (Did-Not-Attend).

Mr Speaker, this change has not been without its challenges as is expected with any new system. The first indication is that this system is far better than the previous one, with a marked reduction in the DNA rate for advance appointments and greater availability and access to appointments for service users. We have increased the number of routine slots available from 1361 in January for advanced appointments to 1905 in May and from 1630 for on-the-day appointments in January to 2805 in May. Now, on most days there are appointments left over, so no patient needs to be left unseen - this is indeed progress, and rare in other jurisdictions.

Mr Speaker, we will continue to review this system in order to continue improve the service.

Mr Speaker, apart from the introduction of the new appointment system, the PCC has seen further improvements during the last financial year. These have been on multiple levels and are now bearing fruit and resulting in improved accessibility for service users. Some may not be obvious to the public but they have resulted in a better standard of care for users of the centre.

Mr Speaker, these improvements have included;

- Improved training for staff
- An increase in the number of GPs
- Introduction of live video-linked British Sign Language (BSL) translation
- Introduction of the Electronic Health Record

Mr Speaker, all of these improvements would not have been possible without the professionalism, commitment and hard work of all the staff at the Primary Care Centre, especially the hard working records and other counter staff who work on the front line, under great pressure, and subject to



abuse from some members of the public, but despite this, never let us down. A very special thanks to you all.

Dementia Day Care Centre and Dementia Services

Mr Speaker, this Government has a firm commitment to look after our elderly population, especially those who have Alzheimer's and Dementia. Not only the patients, but their relatives and carers need our support even more.

Mr Speaker, this Government will continue to improve and expand facilities and care, as well as promoting awareness and also establishing a long term sustainable policy that ensures support and dignity for generations to come. On this note I was pleased to announce last autumn the publication of the draft Dementia Strategy.

Mr Speaker, Government has already improved facilities, such as the opening of Calpe Ward in St Bernard's and the complete refurbishment of the John Mackintosh Home. We are now in the process of opening the new Dementia Day Centre and Residential home at the former RNH site.

Mr Speaker, this facility is already complete and we are aiming to open in September. It will offer day therapy for up to 90 patients on a daily basis. It will also house the Memory clinic and other essential dementia services, including a dedicated GP service, offering a one stop shop for dementia patients and their families.

Mr Speaker, this Government and the GHA will continue to work with the Gibraltar Alzheimer's and Dementia Society (GADS) who have been instrumental in the development of the Gibraltar Dementia Strategy and the development of the new Dementia facilities at the RNH site.

This is a good point to refer also to the work of Elderly Residential Services, who are also planning to open the residential unit in September and who work for our elderly in Mount Alvernia and John Mackintosh. Their work goes far beyond what is expected, and they are always providing activities for residents around Gibraltar. They are a great team, led by the indefatigable Susan Vallejo. This year we will be investing in Mount Alvernia in improving facilities for resident and staff. I must here also thank the Friends of Mount Alvernia for their outstanding contribution to improving the lives of our residents.

Electronic Patient Records (EPR)

Mr Speaker, in 2014 the GHA embarked on what may arguably be its most important quality improvement initiative, the Electronic Patient Record programme. One of the aims was to deliver on this Government's manifesto commitment to computerise all patient notes.



But, Mr Speaker, the main aim and benefits go beyond this, an integrated Electronic Patient Record system, the most advanced of its kind anywhere, will assist in improving the quality of the service provided, making it safer, more patient focused, effective, efficient and transparent.

Mr Speaker, the GHA went live with EMIS Web in the Primary Care Centre and Symphony in the Accident & Emergency department in June 2015. Along with the implementation of eCAmis in the registration department, this formed the core of Phase One of the EPR programme.

Prior to this, there was considerable testing of the new clinical systems by end users, GP's, hospital medical staff, nursing and allied healthcare professionals, and extensive training of staff. Access to records is instant at the point of delivery, with all clinicians being able to make use of the system regardless of location. Within weeks, GPs and other practitioners in the Community will be able, for the first time ever, to access patients' primary care notes during house calls on mobile devices.

Phase 2 will now see the programme rolled out into secondary care and mental health.

As with all change programmes these are demanding and difficult times while staff adapt to the transformation. However GHA staff have been exceptional in the way they have managed the very complex transition in a very short timeframe.

Mr Speaker, the GHA should be considered an example to any other organisation that embarks on a similar journey.

Information Management and Technology

Mr Speaker, the Information Management and Technology team continue to manage the GHA's extensive computer and network infrastructure which due to the opening of facilities such as Ocean Views and the new Catering facility together with the addition of hardware to accommodate the Electronic Patient programme is expanding and increasing in complexity. Additionally they have been involved in planning various development programmes in order to enhance the robustness and security of the GHA's IT systems, ensuring that all systems remain current and fit for purpose.

Mr Speaker, the following are some of the many projects which the IM& T team have been involved in;

- The installation of all hardware required for the EPR programme - Phase 1
- The new Catering Facility and Dementia Day Centre IT requirements and installation
- The completion of the deployment of the Digital Dictation System (Bigband) across the whole of the Hospital and Primary Care Centre
- The Chemotherapy suite IT infrastructure installation
- The upgrade of the aging CCTV infrastructure.



- The in-house development & launch of a replacement bespoke Sponsored Patients System
- The in-house development of a Human Resources System
- The in-house development of a Hospital stores inventory & stock control system
- Further development of the Colorectal screening software to include other screening programmes such as the AAA screening programme

Mr Speaker, the IM&T team have also completed the installation of the Wi-Fi network. Once fully implemented, it will make a huge improvement to the patient experience and also achieve full mobile device connectivity across the hospital, allowing clinicians to view patient details at the bedside and providing improved efficiency in the delivery of patient care.

Estates & Clinical Engineering

Mr Speaker, the services provided by the Estates & Clinical Engineering team, now a combined GHA/GEA team, are crucial to the smooth and safe running of our health service. The team supports health professionals, working in the background in an area which is of vital importance to patient care, yet seldom in the public eye.

Apart from the work related to departmental requests and emergency call outs which saw record figures for 2015, peaking at 3,105 requests, together with a comprehensive lifecycle programme which ensures that all GHA assets are fully operational and up to date, the department is also engaged in major capital projects.

Mr Speaker, the section has been able to deliver on many capital projects with the participation and collaboration of staff from many departments including essential input from clinicians.

Mr Speaker, the following list highlights some of the major initiatives carried out during the last financial year;

- New escalators at the entrance to St Bernard's Hospital
- Installation and commissioning of the new 128 Slice CT Scanner
- New improved surgical lighting for General theatres
- Installation of a new Surgical microscope for the Ophthalmic theatres
- New emergency back-up generator for Primary Care
- New Dental Clinic at the Primary Care Centre
- New Cardio Vascular Ultrasound for the Medical Investigation Unit
- Up-grade to St Bernard's Hospital Fire Alarm System
- Commencement of works to the new Chemotherapy Unit



- Design works for the expansion of the A&E Department.

Mr Speaker, given that the GHA is a large consumer of energy, the Directorate takes energy efficiency very seriously. The GHA's Technical Staff continue to be engaged with various initiatives to monitor and improve energy efficiency across the GHA estate, some of these initiatives have included:

- Introduction of LED lighting in all new developments
- Smart metering
- Heat recovery from air conditioning systems
- Assisting with the design of the new Solar Thermal System

Mr Speaker, it is very encouraging to report that the GHA's sustained commitments with respect to energy efficiency has been formally recognised following an exhaustive energy use audit carried out by an independent energy assessment team. In addition both St Bernard's Hospital Catering Facility and Ocean Views were awarded an 'A' rating for energy efficiency and for environmental impact.

Mr Speaker, in line with this Government's priority and commitment to training and development, the Government and GHA are exploring opportunities for training schemes as part of its workforce strategy.

Human Resources

Mr Speaker, the Human Resources department has been working on a variety of policies with the aim of ensuring that all staff starting in whatever grade or discipline within the GHA will undertake a structured and comprehensive induction programme that will enable them to provide a safe and efficient service within their area of work.

Through this policy the GHA will ensure that all members of staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve excellent customer care, and the ability to meet the changing needs of patients, service users and the organisation.

Mr Speaker, the GHA's IT department is working with the HR department with the aim of developing a bespoke HR IT Management system for the department. The new system will consolidate a number of functions in the department and streamline processes, resulting in an overall improvement in the functionality of the department and the service it.

Mr Speaker, the GHA's HR department continues to closely liaise with department heads and the Department of Education and Training with the aim of ensuring that there is a supply of qualified staff and, where necessary, appropriately experienced local applicants for clinical posts, with the aim of increasing employment opportunities for our recently qualified young people. HR staff,



along with representatives from other areas across the organisation continue to visit local schools with the aim of promoting careers in healthcare and future employment opportunities in the GHA. In this way, we are expecting to shortly recruit at least four Gibraltarians as designate Consultants to take on work in Gibraltar when their training is complete.

Registration of Doctors

Mr Speaker, in the last budget speech I announced that all the relevant legislation with respect General Medical Council (GMC) registration of doctors practicing in Gibraltar and the establishment of a Responsible Officer (RO)/Suitable Person for Gibraltar had been completed and was in place.

Mr Speaker, further work this year has included consolidating the Medical Appraisal Process, a comprehensive CPD programme and getting our RO recognised by the GMC as a Suitable Person.

Thanks to our diligence, the GMC has made it possible to revalidate GHA doctors by recognising the GHA's RO as a Suitable Person.

Mr Speaker, I am therefore now glad to announce that all the pieces of the jigsaw are in place to ensure that GHA doctors are able to meet the requirements of the GMC to be able to revalidate and obtain a license to practice. I am expecting similar progress very soon in the private sector.

It is a huge step which will lead to significant improvements in standards of practice and good clinical governance.

I must here thank both the Medical Registration Board and the Nurses' and Midwives' Registration Board, for their thorough and often complex work in ensuring proper regulation of our health professionals.

School of Health Studies

Mr Speaker, the School of Health Studies (SHS) offers a wide range of educational activities. The programmes are proactive, anticipating not only today's expectations but the demands of tomorrow. The SHS offers academic excellence ranging from those taking their first steps in healthcare to practitioners with many years' experience in their field, creating an exciting and innovative learning environment.

Mr Speaker, we are continuing with the provision of an eighteen month 'Enrolled Nurse' programme, which upon successful completion leads to registration with the Gibraltar Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Registration Board.

The BSc (Hons) Nursing (Adult) students also apply for registration with the Gibraltar Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Registration Board and leave the programme with an honours degree. Currently there are two cohorts of student nurses studying the degree programme. The



SHS lecturers, with the support of in-house clinical staff teach and assess the programme, with external scrutiny of the academic standard being undertaken by Kingston University of London and St Georges' University of London. All external appraisals show that our courses, trainers and students have all achieved the highest standards.

Mr Speaker,

I am particularly proud of the fact that we have this year witnessed a total of 19 students achieving degrees and one obtaining the Diploma on a programme delivered here in Gibraltar. November 2015 actually saw the graduation ceremony of the first ever totally locally run Degree in Adult Nursing. Mr Speaker, these new graduates will become ambassadors of patient care and set the tone of a contemporary and vibrant healthcare service, now, and most significantly, in the future. Nursing has in fact proven its worth once more in getting two nominations for the British Journal of Nursing awards.

Mr Speaker, this success also demonstrates this Government's commitment to providing training for our youth in these key professions.

Mr Speaker, in a complex, challenging and rapidly changing modern healthcare service, it is important for staff to be able to access relevant and flexible Continuing Personal Professional Development (CPPD). The GHA continues to invest in CPPD for all staff across the organisation, and this element of the School's work continues to expand.

This year also saw the agreement and signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the GHA and the University of Gibraltar, making the GHA an Associate Campus of the University. This agreement will provide greater learning opportunities and an improved teaching environment for all staff and students of the GHA.

Mr Speaker, it is evident that this Government has trained its healthcare staff like never before giving rise to greater standards of care for patients and service users.

And I would like here to congratulate Prof Ian Peate, who heads the School, for being awarded an OBE in the UK Queen's Birthday Honours list. Not only has his leadership been fundamental, but he has also encouraged the students academically, a number of whom have recently had papers published in learned academic journals.

Medical Staff

Mr Speaker, CPD is particularly important in medicine, and this last year the medical body began a programme of formal professional CPD on a monthly basis, bringing together many of the doctors.

The re-established Medical Advisory Committee remains active and provides valuable input to management and to me as Minister and Chairman.



Mr Speaker, agreement has been reached on the new Consultant Contract and minor details are now being finalized. Work is also progressing on a Junior Doctors' contract, if I may say, much more cordially than in the UK!

I would like here to thanks to Dr Antonio Marin the outgoing Medical Director for his work and congratulate the new Medical Director, Dr Danny Cassaglia with whom I look forward to working in his new role.

Sponsored Patients

Mr Speaker, as I announced at this time last year, as from the 1st July 2015 the weekly maximum allowance for Sponsored Patients was increased from £427 to £504, with a corresponding percentage increase in the allowances for those staying at Calpe House. Other improvements have included greater flexibility in arranging return dates and escort conditions for children and the elderly.

Mr Speaker, the number of referrals to tertiary centres outside Gibraltar continues to rise with a total of 6,277 cases managed in 2015 compared to about 3,500 cases in 2014. The first quarter of 2016 has already seen a total of 1,673 cases referred, a trend which if it continues on these lines will surpass the record figure witnessed in 2015.

Mr Speaker, this is not a record we **seek** to surpass, as it means that there are a lot of sick people we are looking after. As more patients survive illness, but need monitoring and review, the numbers grow cumulatively. This of course increases costs, which we are aiming to control with repatriation and other initiatives. But it is a financial challenge that is for a worthy cause. The saving of life Mr Speaker is surely worthier than any other.

No doubt the new Calpe House, an initiative which I am pleased to support - just as I supported the original one - will help not only in improving facilities for our patients, but also in reducing cost.

Mr Speaker, new contracts have been developed with several hospital accommodation centres which will facilitate the booking of accommodation for patients and relatives. This has been received positively by service users since it removes the added pressure for patients and relatives in having to find their own accommodation at a very stressful time in their lives.

Mr Speaker, finally with respect to the Sponsored Patients Programme, new international transfer protocols for emergency transfer of patients to specialist hospitals in Spain and the UK have been developed which include retrieval teams for paediatrics and those who require high dependency care.

My thanks to the hard working staff of the department for constantly delivering under a great deal of pressure.



Radiology

Mr Speaker, this year saw the commissioning of the new CT Scanner. The new 128 Slice Computed Tomography Scanner is the most advanced model in Europe, and has replaced the 10 year old 16 Slice Scanner. Its significantly higher specification enables greater flexibility on the range of investigations that the GHA can offer.

The new scanner has the capability to conduct Brain Perfusion, Cardiac, Colonography and Dental Scans.

Mr Speaker, another major development has been the establishment of a tertiary reporting service via an electronic link which shares patient imaging. A direct link with the Radiologists at St Georges Hospital NHS Foundation Trust means that the GHA is able to obtain tertiary expert opinion in complex cases via a prompt and formal process.

On similar lines, the GHA has also established connection of an image exchange portal (IEP). This network will secure digital exchange of radiology imaging information between the GHA and UK hospitals. This is a fast, efficient and secure method that eliminates the need to transfer patient's radiology images via CD's to the UK for tertiary referrals or second expert opinions.

Mr Speaker, the Radiology Department has also been targeting the reduction of waiting lists for ultra-sounds. Routine scans has been reduced to 5 weeks with more urgent ones being done within 2 weeks of the request.

We are planning to replace most of the equipment in radiology in the coming year.

Pathology Services

Mr Speaker, the department of Pathology last year introduced a range of new tests with the aim of providing an improved service to clinicians for diagnosis and patient care.

These new tests include:-

- Brain Natriuretic Peptide (BNP), assists in the diagnosis and differentiation of heart failure, acute coronary syndrome, acute pulmonary embolism and pulmonary hypertension.
- Haptoglobin, used primarily to help detect and evaluate haemolytic anaemia.
- Beta 2- macroglobulin (B2M), used as a tumour marker for some blood cell cancers. It helps determine the severity and spread of multiple myeloma and assists in evaluating the prognosis of the cancer.
- The department has also introduced a CRE (Carbapenem – Resistant Enterobacteriaceae) Screening programme to test patients who arrive from tertiary centres and prevent spread of infection.



Mr Speaker, in order to meet European Quality Standards with respect to Blood Donation and Transfusion Services, the Pathology Department commissioned an external audit review with the ultimate aim of obtaining ISO accreditation.

Ambulance Service

Mr Speaker, the number of patient transfers continues to grow and the average local emergency ambulance deployments increased by 7% during this past year.

The four paramedics have completed their first year of practice which has resulted in tangible benefits in pre-hospital care, particularly in the field of analgesia. Additionally, Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT's) have completed their fourth year of being able to administer a range of safe and effective medications in emergency situations which has also improved pre-hospital management and outcomes.

The new Paramedic Clinical Governance framework has been completed and introduced with the aim of focusing on best practice in patient care and quality assurance of paramedic practice.

Mr Speaker, the Major Incident response and training has been reviewed and new and more effective methods are now in place.

Mr Speaker, finally on the ambulance service, the Government has taken the decision to transfer the Gibraltar Fire & Rescue Service emergency ambulance over to the GHA. This will entail the purchase of a brand new emergency ambulance, plus the recruitment of the required ambulance staff and will be completed this autumn.

Catering

Mr Speaker, the GHA's new Catering facility at St Bernard's Hospital opened in October 2015, replacing the old kitchen at the North Mole.

Mr Speaker, food is no longer transported by van from the North Mole in trollies, but is wheeled directly into the hospital corridors, ensuring much greater freshness. It no longer travels on plates covered with cling film or plastic lids, but in bulk containers to be served hot in the wards.

The new facility is purpose built, to the highest standards of hygiene and efficiency. Flow of food is now a continuous process reducing both the risk of cross contamination and the amount of food waste.

Mr Speaker, the design, which can cater for the production of up to 2000 meals a day, also means that the need for daily maintenance is greatly reduced. Staff facilities have been greatly improved. All equipment is energy and water saving, using less electricity than the old unit, there is a full ventilation system with the building attaining an 'A' rating for energy performance and environmental impact.



Mr Speaker, this new facility will ensure much better quality food, better prepared and served for the benefit of all patients. It has boosted the morale of staff who were working in sub-standard premises with old, inefficient equipment, has greatly improved working conditions and has allowed for training for all staff.

Maintenance and Domestic Services

Mr Speaker, we have over the past year, as in other years, welcomed visitors from hospitals and health establishments from the UK and elsewhere. One of the things they almost invariably point out is the cleanliness and tidiness of St Bernard's. Mr Speaker, our team of Domestics is exceptional in its skill, diligence and most important, pride in their work, and i want to publicly thank these ladies - and one or two gentlemen - for this. They do us proud.

I would also like to acknowledge the Maintenance Team for their contribution to keeping standards in GHA buildings.

Mental Health

Mr Speaker, at my last budget session, I apologised to patients, relatives and staff for the length of time it took to complete the new Mental Health facility, Ocean Views, but reported on its opening in February 2015.

Mr Speaker, since the opening of the new facility, further change to the services has been introduced, in consultation with patients, relatives and staff. The most tangible improvement is the effect of change of setting, which now provides a modern, therapeutic and recovery focused with greater privacy in more relaxed and comfortable surroundings. It has even resulted in a decrease in the use of certain types of medication. All clinical areas have benefited from this change, but this has been more evident in the following three facilities:

- Sky Ward – Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU)..
- Multi-Function Suite (MFS) – which has been used constantly to facilitate the care needs of young adults, forensic cases, vulnerable adults and pregnant patients; cases which would have been unmanageable in the old KGV Hospital.
- Rockside Rehabilitation Flats –where patients move into a more independent living environment.
- Together with the work being done by The Arc (Activity & Rehabilitation Centre) and the excellent work of the Community Mental Health Team, patients develop existing skills or learn new ones in order to complete their rehabilitation programme and their eventual reintegration into the community.



Mental Health Act 2016

Mr Speaker, critical to the overall Mental Health Service has been the need to review and update the current Mental Health Act.

The new Mental Health Act will make provision with respect to the reception, care and treatment of those with mental illness, the management of personal welfare, property and affairs of persons who lack capacity and consent issues.

The Act is concerned with the circumstances in which a person with a mental disorder can be detained for treatment. It sets out the processes which must be followed, and the safeguard for patients to ensure that they are not inappropriately detained or treated. The main purpose is to ensure that people with serious mental disorders which threaten their health or the safety of the public can be treated when it is necessary to prevent them from harming themselves or others.

Mr Speaker, the Act also covers other key areas such as consent to treatment, the treatment of patients in the community, Mental Health Tribunals, and the setting up of a Mental Health Board whose main function will be that of an independent body to review the treatment of patients.

There will be a Code of Practice being developed locally and work will now commence on a Mental Capacity Act.

Other key developments during FY 15/16

Complaints

Mr Speaker, I am very pleased to report that the overall number of complaints in the last year is slightly up from previous years. This comment may surprise you, Mr Speaker, and I will explain. On 1 April 2015 Government introduced the new complaints handling service, as a 2011 manifesto commitment, passing the complaints process directly to the Ombudsman's office. All complaints, even lesser ones that in the past would have been dealt with and would not have been logged as such, are now recorded. In addition, there is a policy to actively **encourage** complaints to come forward, as this helps in identifying problem areas and generating positive change.

New Contract between the GHA and St Georges University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Mr Speaker, in line with another of the Government's 2011 Manifesto commitment 'to make arrangements with a large tertiary centre/trust in the UK for modernisation of services, tertiary/specialist care and opportunities for staff development' the GHA signed a new clinical services contract with St Georges Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.



Mr Speaker, this new contract will provide the GHA with a comprehensive Visiting Consultant programme and in-patient access to all their high quality specialist services, particularly neurology and neurosurgery, cardiology and cardiac surgery and endoscopy services in support of our Bowel Cancer Screening programme. Already, for example, the St George's neurology team has hugely improved the service we provide. This has included a visit by a specialist Multiple Sclerosis Nurse, who will now visit every six months, with a phone-in service direct to a specialist in UK for MS patients who need rapid advice. This is a type of service which, together with tele-medicine, we are looking to emulate in other areas too.

Maternity

Mr Speaker, we are completely reviewing our delivery of maternity services including improved access to care for women with threatened miscarriage.

Acupuncture

Mr Speaker, the GHA approved a policy to introduce the use of acupuncture as a treatment modality. This modality is research based and provides our chartered physiotherapists with an added tool with which to treat patients with a variety of musculoskeletal conditions. This has been possible through the professionalism and commitment of the GHA's Physiotherapy team who have completed the required training and learning portfolios leading to full accreditation in the use of acupuncture as a modality.

Mr Speaker, the use of acupuncture under their expertise will greatly benefit those who we care for.

Repatriation of Services - HIV

Mr Speaker, due to difficulties being experienced by patients affected by HIV, the GHA has taken the decision to repatriate this service from Spain. The main problem being encountered included missed appointments, the need to be re-referred and the language barrier.

A visiting Consultant specialised in the treatment and management of HIV and Hepatitis will be holding clinics twice a month in Gibraltar. These clinics will now be further expanded to incorporate the management of Hepatitis C patients who were also being referred to Spain.

Organ Transplants

Mr Speaker, following my announcement at last year's budget speech on organ transplant for Gibraltar patients, I am pleased to say that further work on this field has consolidated the



understanding with the NHS Blood and Transplant Service which now makes Gibraltarians eligible to be included in the UK's official transplant list. This is already happening and it is a huge step forward for Gibraltar to be able to finally have the green light for organ transplant in co-operation with the NHS.

Mr Speaker, evidence of the progress made is that we have already had a Gibraltarian undergo a successful liver transplant with several other local patients are being assessed for kidney and heart transplants.

We are currently also working out the logistics of Gibraltarians being able to go on a donor list so they can donate their own organs in the UK transplant service.

Other Improvements

Mr Speaker, once again I round up due to lack of time, not enthusiasm nor plans. Very quickly I can mention the work of the Allied Health Professionals in many areas such as developing stroke care plans, or the inter-departmental work we are doing to improve Child and Mental Health Services.

Conclusion

Mr Speaker, this has been another extremely productive for the health service.

To finish, I would like to thank all at the GHA without whom the achievements outlined would not have been possible. I am incredibly proud of all our staff for their professionalism, dedication and commitment.

Mr Speaker, before I finish, please allow me to thank you and the staff of Parliament for the professionalism and hard work throughout what has been an extremely busy year.

I also want to particularly thank my **personal** staff in both Health and Environment, for going well beyond the call of duty in supporting and assisting me at all times. I want also to publicly thank my recently retired Principal Secretary in Health, Christine Crawford, who was with me nearly three decades ago when the GHA project started, and who has contributed more to the development of healthcare in Gibraltar than most will ever know.

I must especially thank the whole team at the Gibraltar Law Offices, who provide exceptional legal advice and drafting support in such a wide range of areas, and always of supreme quality.

Thanks also to the staff at No 6 for their support always, and most especially when I have had the privilege of acting as Chief Minister,

My thanks too to the staff of Elderly Residential Services, the GHA, GEA, DECC, Environmental Agency, Aquagib, GIC, Master Service, Gibraltar Veterinary Clinic, Botanic Gardens, Greenarc, Gibralflores and Eden, for their continued service to the community, each in their own niche.



Thanks too to both of the Unions with whom I regularly work, Unite and GGCA, for being an example always of strong, but responsible trade unionism.

And to all those health related charities, too many to mention, but they know who they are, for their commitment to our shared cause of improving health and care in our community, and for giving me a well-meant and most acceptable hard time!

Mr Speaker, if in finishing up I may return to where I started. Mr Speaker, Climate Change is a threat too to the health of many communities, including our own. Hotter weather, fiercer storms, more pollen leading to increases in the effects of allergies, shifting of populations of disease vectors such as mosquitos, can all impact directly on our lives.

So, Mr Speaker, I have come full circle.

Mr Speaker, when I retire from this world of politics, I want to be able to look out over Gibraltar, perhaps from our new Skywalk at the very top of this Rock of Ages, while breathing fresh, clean air, with birds singing and eagles soaring, and I want to see a prosperous city of healthy and happy people, surrounded by pristine shores bathed in crystal clear water, and with the satisfaction of our having become a healthy, environmental example to the world.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.