



Date: 27th June 2017

Budget Speech 2017 – The Hon Paul Balban

Introduction:

Mr Speaker, it is an honour to rise today as Minister for Infrastructure and Planning to give my 6th Budget Address, since this Government was elected into Office in 2011.

I will start, with my Ministerial responsibilities for Technical Services.

Technical Services Department

Mr Speaker, Technical Services is truly an inter-ministerial department that works throughout most other Ministries and departments and whose responsibility lies in providing technical advice within the disciplines of engineering, drafting, surveying, planning, construction, management and infrastructural maintenance and development. It is a vibrant and challenging department where no two days are alike. Technical Services has now seen the development of a totally new discipline within it, that of Traffic Planning. Technical Services has always had responsibility for Roads and Highway Maintenance but traffic and transport planning management, which is a speciality of engineering, is not a technical field that has existed within the civil service structure in the past. As a result, this year will see the introduction of a new post, that of Transport Planner. The new post holder will be responsible for all matters relating to the recently launched Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan or STTPP – which is how I will refer to the Plan from here on.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, during the past Financial Year, the department has continued to provide technical support to Government Ministries and Civil Servant Departments on a wide range of construction related matters as well as meeting its defined responsibilities for maintaining public infrastructure, namely roads and highways and the sewer network.

Cliff Stabilisation:

Mr Speaker, with respect to cliff stabilisation and rock fall protection projects - during Financial Year 2016/17, the department was involved in the construction of a new high capacity rock catch fence on the Eastside slopes just to the south of Both Worlds. This represented Phase 1 of a larger project aimed at providing additional protective measures to reduce the risk of rock falls in the area. During the current financial year, the department will extend the work carried out under Phase 1 and provide an additional 60m of high capacity catch fencing in the same area.



Additionally, the department will continue to monitor and develop cliff stabilisation schemes in line with Government's on-going cliff stabilisation and rock fall protection programme.

Highways Maintenance:

Mr Speaker, with regards to highway maintenance, the works programme has once again been successful over the past year with on-going repairs to roads, footpaths and retaining walls.

Mr Speaker, in addition to the above, the department continues to successfully manage road closures and diversions on the Public Highway, both for its own in-house works and for all other utility companies and contractors. All road closures are assessed and carried out in a manner that allows essential works to be undertaken, whilst allowing vehicles and pedestrians to circulate in a safe manner, with the minimum of disruption. The increased construction activity generated by new projects over the past few years makes this task increasingly difficult. In order to reduce the impact as much as possible, road closures are avoided during peak times wherever possible, and after hours and weekend work is a condition that is normally imposed on contractors in order to minimise inconvenience to the public.

Highways Resurfacing:

Mr Speaker, this year will see the continuation of the road-resurfacing programme. Last year, major resurfacing works were undertaken at Cumberland Road and at the Sundial Roundabout, and recently Governor's Street was also resurfaced following the completion of the STTPP project for in this area.

During the current Financial Year, funding is being sought for resurfacing works at both Rosia Road in the area of New Harbours and along St Bernard's Road.

Main Street Paving:

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to state that the second phase of the project to fill the joints in the paving on Main Street was completed last year. The works entailed the lifting up and re-laying of the stone blocks and the filling and stabilising of all joints using a special polymer. In line with our manifesto commitment, we are pleased to announce that Phase 3 of this project will continue this year and will see the filling of the joints extend southwards along Main Street and its side streets.

Retaining Walls:

Mr Speaker, during the past year, Technical Services Department was also involved in the reconstruction of two retaining walls. The first works carried out were along Lower Castle Road at the entrance to Moorish Castle Estate. The existing wall had developed a significant bulge that was of growing concern to the department's engineers as this could lead to internal instability and ultimately collapse. A section of wall was therefore demolished and reconstructed using the same materials. The second retaining wall reconstructed was at the site of the City under Siege Exhibition within the Upper Rock. Following heavy rains in late November last year a section of



retaining wall collapsed and led to concerns of further instability that could affect the entire historical site. Technical Services developed a new design, and works were carried out as a matter of urgency. In both circumstances, the walls were found to have significant heritage value so works were carried out in close consultation with the Ministry for Heritage, once again demonstrating the importance of interdepartmental cooperation between Technical Services and other Government departments.

Sewers Section:

Moving now onto arguably one of the most important parts of our essential infrastructure, our sewerage system. Mr Speaker, during the past year the Sewers Section of the department have been carrying out significant works to maintain the public sewerage network as part of Government's commitment in this area. A new storm water culvert, 1m in diameter, that doubles up as a Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) was laid at Europort Avenue from its junction with Queensway to the area of Charles Bruzon House. It was laid during the school summer break in order not to disrupt normal term-time school operations. This was successfully completed together with the construction of two deep access manholes to assist in future inspections and maintenance programmes. The project also saw the introduction of additional road gullies in the area to reduce the risk of flooding along Queensway in periods of heavy rain.

Apart from the works at Europort Avenue, the department has been working on a scheme for the relining of the existing foul sewer network along Devil's Tower Road. The increase in developments along Devil's Tower Road has required the existing network to be upgraded to cope with additional flows in the area. It is expected that these works will be completed during the course of the current financial year.

The condition and upkeep of Gibraltar's main sewer and storm water drainage networks continues to be a matter of great concern for the Government arising from a lack of sufficient investment and neglect over many years. This Government is still playing catch-up as a result of these years of neglect. The Department, as part of its maintenance programme, will therefore this year be continuing its major desilting and cleansing works to the Main Sewer along Rosia Road and southwards towards Camp Bay.

Other works will include improvements to the storm water systems at both Prince Edward's Road and the Southern end of Main Street where flooding has become an annual problem during periods of very heavy rainfall.

Light Controlled Crossings:

Mr Speaker, the replacement and enhancement of pelican crossing lights and equipment is a function of TSD's Highways Section and has continued in a number of locations working jointly with the Gibraltar Electricity Authority. The provision of pedestrian crossings and their locations are now planned taking into account the recommendations of the STTPP and the Traffic Commission.

The programme to improve walking routes continued during last year with the installation of new pedestrian crossings at a number of key locations. These included a new crossing along Harbour



Views Road, providing improved access to St Bernard's Hospital and a new light controlled crossing at Europa Road to provide a safe crossing point for visitors to the recently inaugurated Dementia Unit, Ocean Views. The lack of a crossing in this particular location was something of great concern to GADA (Gibraltar Alzheimer's and Dementia Association) as the new facility would require a safe pedestrian access. This pedestrian crossing has probably been the most technically challenging crossing to deliver, given the existing geometry of the road. A series of traffic calming measures were also required to help improve both pedestrian and vehicular safety in this area, known for its many sharp corners, and especially taking into account the unique needs of the facility and its users.

Countdown Timers:

Mr Speaker, following the successful introduction of the initial pilot countdown timer at the Haven crossing on Line Wall Road, further countdown timers were recently installed at Waterport Road, at Queensway and at Europa Road adjacent to Ocean Views. These countdown timers inform pedestrians of the time that they have left to cross the road and drivers as to when it is safe to proceed, therefore improving safety at these crossings. A firm objective of the STTPP is to provide safe pedestrian facilities to help encourage walking as the best alternative to motorised travel and transport. The Government will continue to provide further countdown timers at other crossings, and in future all new traffic light sets purchased for new locations or to replace existing sets, will have countdown timers installed as a standard feature.

During the coming year, the department will continue to provide additional pedestrian crossings at a number of already identified locations including Europa Road by Shorthorn Estate and Rosia Road in the area of Bayview Terraces as per the recommendations of the STTPP. The provision of these crossings are seen as important in the context of improving walking routes as already mentioned, which is an important and fundamental element of the Sustainable Traffic Transport and Parking Plan (STTPP).

Traffic Plan (STTPP):

Mr Speaker, I recently announced the publication of the Government's Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan. This project was a key manifesto commitment for the GSLP / Liberal Government.

Mr Speaker, a study of this magnitude has never been conducted locally with regards to Traffic and Transport, together with its effects on our environment as a whole, in a way that is both scientific and solid in its grounding.

The Plan has seen a multi-departmental team approach involving the Ministries of Infrastructure and Planning, (Traffic & Transport) and the Environment. The research and preparatory background for this extensive document saw many months of painstaking groundwork and research, something which I am eternally grateful to those within the Traffic Team, Technical Services Department and the Civil Service for; who embarked on weeks of data collection, questionnaires and surveys, to be able to provide the solid groundwork required for such a plan. The work has encompassing very wide consultation. Opinions and feedback were sought from a wide sector of the community including, members of the public, NGO's, commercial entities and



associations, Tenant's Associations, other interest groups, schoolchildren, essential services and of course the road user, often each with very competing interests.

Our Traffic Consultants Mott MacDonald, who are world-wide professionals in this field have provided the technical expertise to complement the wealth of local and professional knowledge that already existed within the Technical Services Department and have been instrumental.

The Plan has considered everything, from the needs of children and vulnerable groups within our society, to the needs of businesses and visitors alike. No plan will ever be able to satisfy every sector's interests and there will be a need to strike a balance between these once again, conflicting needs.

Key improvements in the use of public transport will no doubt provide a more reliable service with improved journey times and higher levels of punctuality, which I am certain, will be welcomed by its users. No stone has been left unturned in order to formulate a plan that we will be proudly able to call, all of ours, Gibraltar's Plan. Using the most innovative and latest techniques we have developed the tools by means of digital traffic modeling to help us predict the reaction and behaviour of traffic, following a proposal for change. In this way, we may now start to analyse what effect a proposed change will be likely to have with respect to traffic flow before we even carry it out.

Mr Speaker, this plan is clearly a live document, one that will evolve and grow with us. As Gibraltar grows and our needs change, so will it too. It is our intention that the Plan be a fluid plan, one that is malleable to our needs. I am personally satisfied that this has been in fact achieved and that all the work done will see a truly valuable result that we can all be proud of. Not all the concepts within the Plan will be achievable, some will require further work, others may be economically unviable and others may simply never come to be, at least not at this moment in time. But the Plan will hopefully open our minds to the vast potential that exists for improvement, and for the need to change our mindsets in the future.

But, change is change, Mr Speaker and human nature does not adapt easily to change at first. With time, I trust that we as a Community will all be able to appreciate the bigger picture and will begin to understand that things have to change, if we are to make inroads into our health, our environment and our wellbeing, making Gibraltar a more attractive place to live, work, visit and do business in, in the future. The plan is hence, simply that, a plan. There are general principals, aims and targets set, and ideas for potential pilot schemes for us to explore, some relatively inexpensive to carry out, others more ambitious. This is by no means a finite list and we will be developing further ideas and plans in the future as we evolve as a people. With time, it will hopefully change the way that we live so that we can improve sustainability.

Mr Speaker, Gibraltar has an extremely high vehicle occupancy rate per capita, yet our largest constraint is our size. Reducing our reliance on private transport, our beloved cars and motorbikes, will be one of the hardest things to achieve but through encouragement, education and perseverance perhaps we may be able to achieve a change in the way that we move, sharing vehicles, either by way of our buses, public services or through other more innovative ideas such as car-sharing or car clubs, for example. We cannot forget the importance of walking and cycling with regards to our traffic and our environment, but also the undeniable and positive effect that it has on our general health, fitness and physique.

Changing our mindset, especially one that spans so many generations, when our cars were an



extension of our very own living room, our only means of independence and freedom, our “rite of passage” at a time when many generations shared one single flat will be one of the most challenging hurdles to overcome.

This is something that will task our generation and those in the future. As science develops so too will our means of local travel. Already we are seeing how hybrid and electric vehicles are slowly becoming more prominent in our society and we need to further encourage the use of these.

I greatly appreciate the support that we have received so far from many sectors of the community and sincerely hope that we will continue to have the same support as we now embark on the next stage of the plan, its implementation in earnest.

Mr. Speaker, in the short time that the STTPP has been published, a number of initiatives have already been rolled out. Redibike, our bicycle sharing scheme, the launch of the Pilot Residential Parking Scheme for Zone 1, the completed Bus Tracker, the Speed Limit Review, Governor’s Street pedestrian improvements, speed cameras.... Other initiatives had already been implemented, the pilot roundabout at Glacis Road, Pay & Display schemes in numerous locations, countdown pedestrian timers, new pedestrian improvements at the Trafalgar interchange and even before that, the introduction of environmentally friendly staff car fleet vehicles. I had made it clear on numerous occasions in the past that regardless of the status of the final plan, that is, regardless of whether the Plan had been published or not, its key objectives were already being rolled out.

Car Parking:

Mr Speaker, as part of our review of car parking in Gibraltar, a number of new Pay and Display areas have already been implemented. These include those at Line Wall Road, Watergardens and Portland House. The philosophy behind the introduction of the Pay and Display areas is to provide a turnaround of parking facilities at key locations for the benefit of all. It is through parking and its control that we may be able to eventually reduce car usage within what are described as key Environmental Zones within the Plan. This year, further Pay & Display areas are earmarked for Glacis Road, Waterport Road and Grand Parade.

Mr Speaker, Technical Services Department has been instrumental in developing a Pilot Residential Parking Scheme for the area of Alameda Estate and Trafalgar House. Mr Speaker, you may ask? Why pilot? Well simply because we are entering uncharted territory and we will need the flexibility to be able to adapt the concept of Residential Parking to try to make it a scheme that works as well as possible for as many as possible. This Pilot Residential Parking Scheme has taken on-board concerns raised by tenants of the area and has aimed to de-conflict the shortage of parking for the various types of user, be they residents, commuters or tourists. The scheme will see the introduction of exclusive residential parking areas, Pay & Display shorter-term parking zones and free parking, and it is hoped that this will go some way in improving the situation in the area. The scheme was officially announced on 26th May and will fully come into effect on 1st July, merely days away now. Residents are NOT forced to be part of given residential schemes, and in fact, those who are in government arrears will not be able to be part of the scheme in any case. There will be small administrative charges associated with the scheme and these are set as a first step in trying to tackle the issue of car ownership, an underlying matter of concern within the STTPP. Hardly a prohibitive sum, but it is a fair start in starting to at least recognise, if not, start to



address the local phenomenon of the second car. Providing free residential parking would simply not dis-incentivise a reduction in car ownership and migration or increased dependence on the public transport network. With an excellent FREE bus service there is no better excuse, even if it is only for the environment, than to get rid of the second car and keep the one, environmentally friendlier car for those trips across the border or the local supermarket shopping.

Mr Speaker, what is evidently clear within the STTPP, and even clearer to those who drive around endlessly, looking for somewhere to park their car, is that we have a problem and need to recognise that! With one of the highest rates of car ownership in the world, we simply cannot sustain the numbers of cars we own as a population. As a result of Zone 1, we have discovered that there are a considerable number of couples, many pensioners that own at least 2 cars. In some cases where only one of the couple drives! The 2-car principle, that of the shabby rock runner and the better, more up-market car for those trips across the border is clearly still alive and well. BUT, this is THE whole point, THE real crux of the matter. It is the old rock runner that generally destroys our environment, the vehicle that emits those nasty fumes, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter, the vehicle that competes for that extra parking space, while the main car is snugly parked away safely. The old banger is THE vehicle that has the greatest likelihood of being parked in that illegal spot, where the chance of that nick, scratch or dent is the greatest, but that is its entire purpose of it, its state and condition does not matter to us and in the end it is most likely the vehicle that remains derelict for months or years before it is spotted, taking up that valuable parking space. This is where the change in mentality needs to come, at least for the good of our environment and this needs to start in earnest through education. It is mainly through education, especially of those more receptive to the warnings of today's experts reference our suffering environment, that is, our younger generation, our children and grandchildren.

Mr Speaker, in conjunction with Residential Zone 1, the department is working on plans for further Residential Parking Schemes in both the town area and the South District and it is expected, these will be rolled out during the latter part of this year.

Mr Speaker, furthermore, as part of the STTPP, a project to construct a new roundabout at Devil's Tower Road was already well advanced within the planning stages having already received the green light from the DPC. This roundabout, once constructed will increase driver options when leaving Cemetery Road allowing vehicles to turn left and travel south to Europa Road should they choose. It would also allow quicker access into that same commercial area and be particular useful to access the very busy church of St. Theresa's and Devil's Tower Road car park.

Redibike:

Mr Speaker, as part of the STTPP, the Government has also recently introduced the new Redibike bicycle-sharing scheme. It is hoped that 'Redibike' will encourage the public to think of cycling as a healthier and environmentally friendly alternative to other modes of transport. 146 persons have registered on the scheme so far. This is the first phase of a wider scheme - A scheme that has been privately sponsored by GibOil Ltd and consists of 105 bicycles and 120 docking points in 13 locations throughout Gibraltar. I would like to extend my gratitude to our sponsors GibOil Ltd, especially Mr Harry Murphy who is busy collecting medals for us in Gotland, who have gratefully supported us in this very important STTPP initiative.



All Redibikes are fitted with a carrier, a locking device, and bell, and will be available to rent at all times of the day and night. These bikes are sturdy and virtually vandal-proof with drive shafts fitted instead of the traditional bicycle chain mechanism for propulsion.

And that was all that I was going to say on this matter, until my better judgement told me otherwise following the latest activity on social media regarding the failed Gibi Bikes scheme, following on from the honourable member's comments on Viewpoint recently. This is not about red or blue, as perhaps the blues would like you to believe. This is not about Government deliberately and intentionally bringing about the demise of the Gibi Bikes Scheme purposefully, alluding that this was done to discredit the GSD initiative without consideration whatsoever to the cost of the scheme to the taxpayer as the blues would like you to believe, Mr Speaker. The concept of a bicycle-sharing scheme is in fact a very good one, and it is a scheme accepted and promoted through many cities worldwide. That was NOT and is NOT the issue. If the GSD wants some credit, well done to them Mr Speaker, very well done, but the concept was not their concept, they did not invent it, they adopted it, which is great, great for the environment and it ticks all the boxes of any Traffic Plan worth its salt. This is why our STTPP also contains a bicycle-sharing scheme, had Gibi Bikes succeeded then it would have been one thing less that we would have had to do. I will not make further comment about past traffic plans at this point, unless I am pushed, Mr Speaker. Gibi Bikes was an abject GSD failure; it was badly researched, badly executed and badly procured. Once again Mr Speaker, it was not about red or blue. Although the demise of the scheme came before my time as Minister for Transport, it was not because they were coloured blue, I can assure you. It was for the following reasons, Mr Speaker:

The Gibi Bikes project was introduced and operated by a company, which had no previous experience of running such a scheme – Gibraltar was their first project, their test project.

Almost all of the Gibi Bikes equipment was substandard. The anti-theft devices, the electronic tags and the locks were all of poor quality hence the system failed regularly. Maintenance was poor and there was a lack of spare parts from the suppliers on the UK.

The bicycles themselves suffered badly from corrosion.

The scheme started with 130 bicycles and 13 docking stations. Only six months later, only 47 bicycles remained and 8 docking stations were available for use. In fact Mr Speaker, many bikes were permanently locked in their stations failing to release due to software malfunctions and other bikes simply went 'walkies' Mr Speaker, stolen Mr Speaker.

The scheme, which cost the taxpayer over £300,000, back in 2011, operated for only 6 months before it closed and its supply company in the U.K. folded.

That is the story as it is, Mr Speaker the only thing is that it is far better politically to blame the Government, blame us for the failure of the Gibi Bikes.

Furthermore, bicycles had to be collected at night, stored and brought out again in the morning, which was hugely labour intensive. Why would that need to be the case, Mr. Speaker? Redibikes stay out all night, having been implemented and hence tested in many cities, not least, in the north west of England in not such a sleepy town, Liverpool, a major City with safer, quieter areas and the noisier and let us say more boisterous areas and it rains there too, Mr Speaker. They also have, the reds and the blues there Mr Speaker, but their reds and blues are more to do with sport. But I am sure that many a fan person would have had a good ride on a bike after a match, late at night, and



there they are, Mr Speaker, bicycles trialled and tested in a real-life laboratory not tested in Gibraltar by a company trying their luck with bicycle sharing schemes!! Redibikes took their time, yes, Mr Speaker, just like the STTPP took its time, and that's the way it was going to be. In this way, things have been done well or at least as well as humanly possible.

Mr Speaker, you may ask, what became of those blue bikes. Well Mr Speaker, thanks to the staff and mechanics down at Gibraltar Bus Company Limited, a total of 52 bikes have been put together out of 130 bikes that once were. An announcement will be made, shortly, yes shortly, Mr Speaker, the honourable Mr Clinton's 'pet' word, when these bikes will be presented to a charity, all for a good cause. So the story does have a happy ending, of sorts, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, as part of our commitment to encouraging cycling, a major review of our existing road network will also be carried out this year to assess the feasibility of introducing dedicated bicycle lanes, where possible and indeed if possible, linking the frontier to the South of Gibraltar. This will be by no means a simple feat, as there are many difficulties associated with Gibraltar's size, especially when trying to marry and share the very limited space available between vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians. Nevertheless, the Government is committed to exploring this matter in a holistic way in order to try to introduce improvements, where possible, in order to encourage this healthier alternative to motorised forms of transport common today.

Speed Cameras:

Mr Speaker, another major STTPP initiative, launched recently has been the introduction of Speed Cameras at a number of known speeding hotspots throughout Gibraltar. This builds on the recent initiative of introducing speed indicator signs and is primarily aimed at making our roads safer by way of speed management.

The speed cameras are fixed devices set up, as a pilot first phase, at Devil's Tower Road, Europa Advance Road and Rosia Road in an effort to reduce speeding on these particular notorious hotspots. These locations were chosen on the advice and recommendations of the RGP who are the experts on the ground. The cameras will be a valuable deterrent and will complement roving speed cameras already used by the RGP throughout Gibraltar. The static speed cameras have already seen a visible reduction in speed on our roads. This will hence statistically help reduce risk to both road users and pedestrians alike from the consequences of speed related accidents. Additionally, a reduction in speed has positive effects on the environment helping to reduce noise pollution and emissions. Since the scheme went live, over 1920 persons have been caught speeding. The initiative will continue to be monitored but so far the intention is to further improve the current set-up by introducing rear facing video capture to the existing cameras and introducing additional speed cameras in other major roads throughout Gibraltar.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention the RGP, the legal team that drafted all the relevant legislation the staff of the I.T. & Logistics Department, Technical Services, our back-office at Gibraltar Car Parks Ltd and all those who have assisted us with this STTPP project.

Speed Limit Review:



Mr Speaker, Technical Services Department in conjunction with the RGP will continue with its full review of the present speed limits on all of Gibraltar's roads and in the coming year improvements will be made to signage and road markings on a number of our arterial roads including Europa Road, Queensway and Line Wall Road.

Mr Speaker, furthermore, we have, upon the advice of the RGP, also recently amended legislation to make the Road Watch Offences punishable by way of fixed penalty notices or FPN's hence reducing unnecessary and valuable court time and making the process much more efficient.

Bus Tracker:

Mr Speaker, if there has been one thing that I feel has made the biggest difference as part of the STTPP to the enhancement of our public transport offering, it has surely got to be the Bus Tracker. This is a major STTPP achievement. I am most proud that this project has been carried out in-house by the staff of I.T. & Logistics Department, a project that has been technically very complex to put together; one that has been developed on a route-by-route basis over time. As a result, it is now possible for bus users to track their bus and therefore manage their personal time accordingly, knowing exactly where the bus is at any given moment in time and at what time they are able to meet it at the bus-stop as opposed to having to wait for it to arrive. The STTPP stakeholder surveys highlighted that one of the reasons detracting potential bus users, was the perceived uncertainty of the service, leading to a lack of user confidence. The new bus tracker reverses all these potentially negative attributes that could dis-incentivise bus use. Public transport is a vital part of our transition, from using our own vehicles and moving to more sustainable modes of travel and transport. The last route to go live was the Night Bus route. Since the Night Bus Tracker went live, there appears to have been at least a 50% increase in take-up of the service, which is very positive indeed.

Government is looking into the possibility of extending this fleet management system in order to provide passenger real time information (bus arrival times) to bus users at the bus stops. This will allow those citizens that do not have access to smartphone devices or internet access to be able to track their bus in real-time at their bus-stop.

Main Street Safety:

Mr Speaker, one of the most important issues raised by the STTPP regarding pedestrian safety was that of Main Street during the early morning delivery hours. These hours directly conflicted with pedestrian movement making this a serious safety concern and one that had also been highlighted by the Commissioner of Police. The STTPP emphasised the problems faced by pedestrians and especially persons with mobility problems while trying to transit through Main Street amid goods vehicles unloading merchandise and doing their daily morning deliveries. This was even more relevant when cruise ships; especially large ones were in port, resulting in thousands of passengers mixing with the local population and the local and cross-frontier workforce. This provided a very poor image generally, both aesthetically and environmentally and was most importantly seen as a major safety and security concern for Government within the busy Main Street. It has been as a result of close networking with the Chamber of Commerce, the GFSB and other commercial entities generally that we have been able to agree on improved delivery



times. I wish to express my gratitude to the commercial business community for supporting the Government's proposals and agreeing and accepting the new delivery hours which although, inevitably will mean a change in the way things are done in Town, it has generally been accepted, that this will in fact be better for the tourist product and for Main Street users generally. In this respect the Ministry for Commerce led by my colleague Albert Isola have been instrumental.

TSD are now involved in the process of procurement of retractable bollards which will investigate the range of products available in the market for these purposes in the first instance. Once a suitable product is identified, TSD will then be involved with the infrastructural preparations for the set-up of a permanent retractable bollard system, which is planned for the near future, and expected to assist the policing of delivery hours in town.

Mr Speaker, the full initiative, as already described and set out within the STTPP included the creation of new loading hubs and the reduction in the hours of delivery within our highly populated Main Street. I am pleased to announce that this has now been done.

New Main Street access times have now been set between 8am and 9.15am with final exit being no later than 9.30am. Furthermore, an additional delivery window has been set between 6pm and 8pm, the last exit from the pedestrian zone being 8.15pm.

A number of new delivery areas have been created to allow deliveries to take place outside of these hours in dedicated hubs within John Mackintosh Square, Cooperage Lane and Convent Place. These will be controlled by means of permits issued to commercial entities by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department (DVLD). Deliveries in these new areas will be exclusively on a permit holder basis and the hours will be between 7am and 7pm Monday to Friday, Saturdays between 7am and 2pm. These new delivery bays are distinct to the loading bays that already existed in town. Mr Speaker, one of the major issues raised by the business community was the abuse that existed regarding loading bays generally, and the difficulty that businesses were facing when trying to access these bays. As part of the plans within the STTPP, new legislation will prohibit the use of loading bays by the general public during delivery times but will allow their use after hours, and on Sundays and Public Holidays where appropriate for parking. Nevertheless, the STTPP recognises the need that residents have too, and to this end, the department is looking at the possibility of creating of short stay drop off areas for residents and visitors over and above the creation of further Pay & Display zones which would allow visitors to park within the distinct residential zones.

Mr Speaker, I must thank the RGP once again, especially the Commissioner of Police Eddie Yome, who has been advocating these improvement for Main Street and who has shared the same vision for Main Street, that is, for a safe, modern shopping and business hub.

Mr Speaker, the STTPP would be impossible to achieve without meaningful and effective policing. It is to this end that the Ministry for Infrastructure and Planning whose responsibility is also that of Traffic and Transport will be working closely with the RGP, Gibraltar Parking and Management Services Limited who manage our newly contracted team of PMO's and our team of Transport Inspectors whose role will be to see that the policies within the Plan succeed.

Mr Speaker, before moving away from Technical Services I would also like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the Infrastructure Section of the Technical Services Department for their hard work and commitment during those times in the past year where Gibraltar has suffered from storms and very heavy rainfall. It is thanks to the very hard work and dedication of this team, who



work on those cold, dark, blustery and rainy nights whilst most of us are sheltered within the warmth of our homes, that the impact of these storms is not greater on both our sewerage and road networks. Thank you.

Finally Mr Speaker, funding is once again being requested this year for the purchase of equipment to allow the Sewer Infrastructure Section's to continue to expand and provide an enhanced service in respect of its inspections of the sewer network. This also applies to the Garage & Workshop where funding for new equipment is also being sought. They will continue to provide a service to maintain the fleet of Government vehicles, including the refuse collection vehicles.

Mr Speaker, the Technical Services Department is one of those Government departments that is rarely in the limelight but works tirelessly behind the scenes to deliver on their defined responsibilities maintaining public infrastructure and to support and provide technical advice to other Government Ministries and Departments in order to deliver on the Government's extensive and comprehensive programmes.

Public Transport

Mr Speaker, turning now to Public Transport, the new MAN buses continue to provide Gibraltar with a modern bus service. Providing an efficient, comfortable and user-friendly bus service is critical in meeting the objectives as set out within the STTPP. The STTPP highlights the importance of Public Transport to support people's quality of life and economic wellbeing. Its primary aim is to encourage greater use of public transport by providing a high quality, reliable, stable and well-maintained network.

New Upper Town Buses:

Mr Speaker, the investment in the six new buses has greatly improved the service to the Upper Town; I am pleased to announce that the procured Ford Transits have proved to be powerful enough to deal with steep inclines while at the same time providing an adequately comfortable climate within for its users. This also includes the much needed and much sought after service to Mount Alvernia, where this innovative small bus design and investment has given wheelchair users greater access to the bus. 3 out of the 6 new buses have wheel chair lifts fitted.

Night bus usage:

Mr Speaker, the introduction of the Night Bus route, itself, is also a major positive change to our public service offered during the weekends. This was an STTPP recommendation as set out in the draft 2015 document. Today's present route evolved from 2 distinct trial routes, namely routes N8A and N8B to become the one unified route N8. Night bus usage is slowly increasing and this is especially so, on specific events, for example Calentita Night, GMF and Summer Nights. There have been 1,689 more passengers this year compared to last year.



Mr Speaker, a new branding for the Gibraltar Bus Company, which will involve the launch of a new Bus Logo both, for the buses and new bus stop signage is already in progress. This will improve the visibility of bus stops, especially for those not familiar with the location of the bus stops in their immediate surroundings.

The present arrangement of buses stopping at each bus stop creates unnecessary delay and inconvenience to traffic flow. By re-introducing the concept of the 'request' stop, it may be possible to improve timetabling and hence efficiency. This will need to go hand in hand with a targeted awareness campaign as bus users have become used to buses stopping at each bus stop by default. Bus stops that become request stops will be clearly labelled to avoid confusion.

Transport Inspectors:

Mr Speaker, in order to continue to improve the Public Transport service, Government has increased the transport Inspector compliment by two thereby bringing the total compliment to seven officers. These officers are now fully trained to ensure that our public transport meets the expectations of its users and that service providers fully abide and conform to all the legal requirements under the Transport Act. Transport Inspectors have the role of enforcing the Transport Act and hence Public Transport Operators and Transport Undertakings. They strive to ensure adequate taxi service at the Airport Terminal at key arrival times. Transport Inspectors are also responsible for policing the use of permits to enter pedestrianized zones and are assisting with recent measures regarding the introduction of the new delivery hours in Main Street and Irish Town.

Taxis:

Mr Speaker, the Government continues to work with the Gibraltar Taxi Association in order to jointly identify strategies to continue to better the Taxi service throughout Gibraltar. It is only through user feedback that we may be able to truly ascertain whether service actually improves or otherwise, and there is unfortunately still reluctance, to bring complaints to the attention of the Transport Commission. In an attempt to improve transparency new external rear signage was agreed which makes it easier to identify taxi licence numbers. The GTA has increased its service by way of their fleet of private hire vehicles, which now have 2 drivers providing longer service hours. The GTA itself proposed a new shift roster for taxis while on City service once again providing greater breadth in the service hours. Furthermore, the relocation of the taxi rank at John Mackintosh Square adjacent to the Parliament Building itself, to outside the City Hall should result in an improvement to the City Service. Nevertheless, it is clear that much work still remains to be done. It is in fact the GTA committee who are often the most self-critical, and many taxi drivers generally agree and support these measures with a view of safeguarding their business by providing an adequate service to the population from taxi ranks and the airport alike. I wish to thank the GTA and its members for their willingness to help improve what is already a very difficult service to provide amidst daily traffic pressures especially around the Frontier and the airport. I hope that amid our colourful and noisy meetings we can continue to seek ways to further improve the service to all during this coming year.



Driver & Vehicle Licensing Department:

Mr Speaker, I now turn my attention to the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Department. Procedures for the introduction of the tachograph card in Gibraltar are now ready. The Department has been working closely with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) in the UK for the introduction of the tachograph cards that will serve our drivers, operators, and enforcement agencies. All the administrative procedures, that is, application forms, information letters and databases are now in place. A Memorandum of Understanding and a Service Level Agreement drafted jointly by the Driving & Vehicle Licensing Department and Government Law Offices has already been agreed by the DVLA.

CPC:

Mr Speaker, drivers of Transport Undertakings wishing to complete the driver - Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) initial qualification and periodic training, can obtain the training that is continually being provided by the DVLD. So far, 29 drivers have successfully passed the "Bus Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC)" and 36 drivers have successfully passed the "Lorry CPC" initial qualification. Government, in an effort to ensure that all Directive requirements are fully met will continue to deliver the 35-hour periodic training for existing drivers during 2017/2018. Presently, in total, 183 Bus and 97 Lorry drivers have successfully attended the CPC periodic training.

European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR):

Mr Speaker, taking into account the safety requirements of vehicles in Gibraltar that carry dangerous goods is of great importance, and in accordance with the Transport

(Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road) Regulations 2010, the Government has invested in training to ensure that all of the technical staff at the Motor Vehicle Test Centre are now fully trained and qualified to assess vehicles that carry dangerous goods by road. This training has been carried out locally by a qualified instructor from the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) from the UK. At present 8 vehicles used for the carriage of dangerous goods locally have been issued with the relevant ADR certificates.

CBT:

Mr Speaker, the introduction, by this Government of the Motorcycle Compulsory Basic Training Course for riders continues to be a tremendous success. Feedback from parents and the public at large has been extremely positive. 172 individuals, mainly under the age of 17 years of age have been trained over the past year. Mr Speaker, I am very confident that this Government training



incentive is constantly contributing in continuously improving road safety and reducing motorcycle accidents especially in first time motorbike users. This initiative falls directly in line with the general principles of the STTPP regarding road safety. Since the CBT scheme was established, a total of 1,260 persons have completed the course in order to acquire their learner's licence.

Photo-card Driving Licences:

Mr Speaker, due to an unexpected increase in demand of the photocard driving licence locally, Government has needed to procure an extra 8,000 blank driving licence cards from the UK. To date, the department has issued a total of 15,500 photocard driving licences.

Furthermore, the department is in close contact with the DVLA in the UK to ascertain how the format of these licences may be affected as a result of BREXIT, if at all.

Mr Speaker, due to an increase in need for counter services as a result of the CBT, ADR and CPC over and above the usual traditional counter services provided by the department, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department, as a means of improving customer service, has introduced a bespoke business counter that is assisting businesses with the aim of reducing respective waiting times. This counter has been operating daily since last year and the feedback from its users has been very positive. Furthermore, the department continues to use e-government information and communication technology as a tool to achieve better customer services. The public can presently actively access a number of online DVLD services and applications via the new e-Government portal, mainly Roadworthiness Test bookings (MOT), Driving Test and Theory Test bookings. This is proving to be very popular and is allowing customers to access and pay for such facilities "at any time" from the comfort of their own homes. Mr Speaker, Government is also considering other measures and incentives in order to offer customers additional e-Government opportunities thus allowing the DVLD to cater for the increase in market demands and service requirements.

Traffic Commission:

Mr Speaker, The Traffic Commission continues to meet on a monthly basis. The Traffic Commission is constantly working to assist our citizen's in all matters relating to Traffic. The Commission is also heavily involved in recommending to Government the improvement of facilities and eco-friendly traffic advice regarding new project applications submitted to the Town Planning Commission. It is via the Traffic Commission that road users are able to interact with the Ministry and Departments so that their concerns and suggestions can be considered. It is also via this forum that other larger Government initiatives receive recommendations and approval.

Transport Commission:



The Transport Commission works hand in hand with all the Transport undertakings, the Bus Company and the Gibraltar Taxi Association (GTA) in order to mutually find strategies to continue to better the both Commercial and Public Transport Services in Gibraltar.

I would like to extend my gratitude to all the members of both Commissions, many of which give up of their own personal time on a voluntary basis for these purposes.

Data-Sharing:

Mr Speaker, The DVLD has gone a long way in establishing a linked-up database with other Member States in accordance with EU directives. The DVLD is sharing "European Register of Road Transport Undertakings" – known as ERRU, via the Driver and Vehicle Services Agency. This allows for a better exchange of information between Member States, so that the competent authorities can better monitor the compliance of road transport undertakings with the legislation in force.

EUCARIS (the European CAR and driving license Information System) is another example of information exchange system that DVLD uses to provide the infrastructure and software to other countries in order to share, their car and driving licence registration information. This system will ensure the assistance in fighting car theft and registration fraud within Europe.

Mr Speaker, the Cross Border Enforcement Directive has been the latest directive to be transposed into our laws. The practical procedures refer to the pursuit of traffic offences committed by drivers of a car that is registered in a EU Member State other than the Member State they were detected. The implementation of this will offer an automated tool for enforcement authorities in the Member State where the offence was committed to pursue and fine the drivers of cars registered in another EU Member State when they commit traffic offences there.

Therefore Mr Speaker, I am fully satisfied that to-date all EU Directive relating to Traffic and Transport have been fully implemented.

Town Planning and Building Control

Finally, Mr Speaker, I now turn my attention to my responsibilities for Town Planning and Building Control.

Applications

The Town Planning & Building Control Department continues to deal with large numbers of applications in the administration and enforcement of the Building Regulations. During 2016, the Department has received:



632	Planning and Building applications
16	Demolition applications
48	Advertisement applications
32	Tree applications
24	Tax relief applications

That is a total of 752 applications for 2016.

Mr Speaker, if we exclude tax relief applications, there have been a total of 728 applications this year compared to the 544 applications received in 2015, that is, a significant increase of 33%.

Some applications were large and complex involving environmental impact assessments that have also required extensive discussions with respective applicants to try and achieve the highest standards of design.

Building Control has also been working on the introduction of what will be known as '**Part R**' – that is, **Access to and use of buildings** under the provisions of the **Public Health Act**. At present, our Building Rules do not make adequate provision for this very important building aspect, rules, which will undoubtedly, in future be provided for, with the necessary legal framework to make buildings safe and accessible to all. By introducing these rules, we are bringing our legislation closer to that of the United Kingdom within this very important area. The objective is to enable all people regardless of disability, age or gender to gain access to buildings and hence use its facilities. These will therefore benefit the wide spectrum of special requirements that are increasingly prevalent in our society today as our life expectancy in conjunction with better medical care.

Mr Speaker, the document is in the final stages and should be able to take effect sometime, shortly after the introduction of the Disability Act.

Government/MOD applications – considered by DPC

Mr Speaker, Government and MOD projects continue to be submitted to the Development and Planning Commission (DPC) for guidance and advice. In 2016 the forum considered a total of 45 planning, building, and demolition applications from HMGoG and the MOD projects alone. The DPC provides advice and guidance on such applications, which are then considered by the Government and/or the MOD in finalising their plans.

Public DPC meetings

Mr Speaker, DPC meetings continue to be held in public with a total of 12 meetings held in 2016. In addition, the DPC's sub-committee meets regularly to determine minor applications. In 2016



there were 40 meetings of the sub-committee. This process greatly helps in speeding up the decision-making process.

All agendas and minutes continue to be made available online, together with application forms and planning guidance, ensuring that the planning process remains open and transparent, facilitating ease of access to relevant planning information and documentation.

e-Planning

Mr Speaker, the e-Planning service, which was launched in October 2015, continues to operate successfully. The service allows anyone to search and view the details of any application submitted after the launch of the service, including all the plans and other documents submitted with its respective application on-line. This makes it much easier for the public to be able to see what is being proposed and members of the public can even submit comments in respect of any application through this e-service.

Furthermore Mr Speaker, e-Planning makes it much easier for applicants to submit their applications on-line. Planning applications can be submitted on-line in their entirety without the need for a given applicant to have to deliver a hard copy of such application to the Departmental Counters at Town Planning & Building Control. During 2016, just over 60% of all planning and building applications were submitted online.

Throughout 2016, staff at Town Planning have continued to develop the e-Planning system. Numerous improvements and enhancements having been implemented, predominantly on the 'back end' of the system, in order to improve the internal flow of information to make the processing of applications more efficient. The system has also greatly reduced the need for paper copies of documentation resulting in savings to both applicants and the Department.

The same e-planning system has been useful to disseminate information about applications to members of the Development and Planning Commission (DPC) ahead of meetings. A specific feature has been developed for e-Planning that now allows DPC members easy access to the details of every application that is due to be discussed at DPC meetings. This makes it easier for DPC members to familiarize themselves with the details of applications prior to the DPC meeting and therefore allows for better decision-making.

Mr Speaker, in May of this year, I was pleased to announce another improvement to the e-Planning service comprising the addition of a facility to allow the public to carry out map-based searches for applications online. The public can now, view what applications have been submitted in any given area by way of a map view and can also access all the details of the applications displayed. This is yet another example, of how the planning process is being made much more accessible to the general public. This is considered of utmost importance as planning decisions may and can have a direct impact on people's immediate surroundings and their environment and therefore can have a bearing on their quality of life.

Town Planning staff will continue with a rolling programme of improvements to the e-Planning service to improve both internal systems as well as to further improve the services being offered



to the general public. In particular, staff will be working on the introduction of a facility that will enable applicants to also be able to pay application fees online. This will therefore be much more convenient and efficient for applicants who will no longer have to visit the Department's counter to pay in person or have their payment sent by post.

Geographical Information System (GIS)

Mr Speaker, the department also continues to develop its Geographical Information System (GIS) to enable it to record and analyse data geographically. The department has recently completed development work that allows it to manage geographical data in a more user friendly and efficient manner. This in turn allows for better integration between the department's geographical data and the e-Planning service.

Town Planning Act

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to say that we expect to be in a position shortly, to bring before Parliament the new Town Planning Act together with its subsidiary legislation.

I am also pleased to announce that my staff, working closely with the staff of the Government Law Offices have reviewed and published amendments to the Town Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations in May, this year. The enactment of these Regulations ensures that we continue to be fully compliant with the latest EU Directive on Environmental Impact Assessments.

Tax Relief on buildings

Mr Speaker, the Town Planning Department continues to encourage property owners to improve the appearance of their buildings through the Tax Relief on Façade Improvements Scheme. During 2016 there were 24 applications under this scheme. A similar tax relief scheme has been introduced to encourage the use of solar water heating and photovoltaic cells as a way of contributing towards sustainable energy generation; a scheme, Mr Speaker, my staff are encouraging homeowners and developers to make use of, when applicable.

Urban Renewal

Mr Speaker, following the incorporation of the post of Urban Renewal Officer into the Town Planning Department in 2015, we have been able to focus more attention on this important issue. In this respect, the department works closely with my colleague the Hon Dr J Cortes who leads on Urban Renewal. Work is currently focused on identifying specific buildings in need of refurbishment and encouraging owners to undertake improvement works to maximise the use of these properties thereby bringing new life back into such urban areas.



Conclusion:

Mr Speaker, I would like to conclude my contribution to my budget address today, by thanking all my staff that have worked so hard to see our commitments become a reality. My thanks goes not only to those who ensure the rolling out of our commitments, my senior members of staff, but also to all those who do not go by unnoticed, who perform all the valuable functions within the civil service throughout all the various departments and offices.

I also wish to reinforce my appreciation to all the staff here within Parliament whose role is to ensure that proceedings run as smoothly and efficiently as they do and who are always there to help when necessary.

In particular, I would finally also like to thank my personal ministerial staff for all of their help and support during the past year. It has been a very busy year and they have lived up to the expectation as usual. Thank you.