



PRESS RELEASE

No: 451/2019

Date: 12th June 2019

Budget Address – The Hon Paul Balban MP

Mr Speaker, this year I will once again aim to make my contribution to the budget debate as concise and to the point as possible.

The Ministry for Infrastructure & Planning works hard each year to ensure that all funding approved in Parliament is put to the best use in order to achieve the maximum benefit for the community.

A large part of the Ministry is responsible and dedicated to delivering real change in the way that we live, but especially how we move. The Ministry predominantly, lives and breathes traffic & transport while keeping a watchful eye on Construction and Development as this may have a direct bearing on the way that we move. The mainstay of daily work is centred around mobility, trying to ensure that we may become a happier, fitter and healthier nation over time. We all want all of these things, but the real challenge, especially for a nation with one of the greatest vehicle ownership rates in the world, is getting there.

Government has gone very far indeed in providing green and open spaces. Commonwealth Park has been an amazing success story and makes a massive environmental statement. The newly announced Mid Town Park will do likewise providing another much-needed carbon sink, but this alone will not eradicate the root of our problem. We simply cannot reduce our carbon footprint by simply planting trees or paying for a carbon offset. We all have to play our part, however small that may be.

Our daily dependence on vehicles is simply unsustainable and, in many cases, quite difficult to justify in terms of the short distance travelled relative to the environmental effect caused. Yet slowly more and more of us are developing a greater awareness of our environment, our emissions, about plastics, about recycling and even about what we eat and how this affects our environment.

Greta Thurman recently brought the word **environment** right into our very living rooms; the news channels constantly bringing environment issues to the forefront. An environmental emergency



was recently declared and great work is being done worldwide by NGO's, Charities and individuals but also within our own community to help raise awareness, the ESG and the Nautilus Project immediately spring to mind. People that give up their personal time for what they believe in and for the good of our planet.

MS, I always thought that there was very little that a single person could do for the environment. I also even thought that, compared to large cities and large countries, there was very little that Gibraltar could contribute, but I now believe that I was wrong, because if we do not all row in the same direction we, the developed world will destroy the planet, if we have not done so already. (...and MS, we are NOT rowing in the same direction).

A single person can save between 1 and 2 tons of CO2 per year by simply walking or cycling to work, and this puts things into perspective. MS today I see more people cycling in Gibraltar, the Department installs bicycle racks and bicycles just seem to appear.

But we have a long long way to go as a community and although I am very proud of progress so far but if we do not up our game we will pay the price as a species. MS, lung cancer has now become the leading cause of cancer in Gibraltar. How much of this can be attributed to our environment, smoking, poor diet and lack of activity?

The STTPP

MS, nestled intrinsically within the Sustainable Traffic Transport and Parking Plan is the word ENVIRONMENT. The STTPP is merely nothing more than an environmental plan, a blueprint, a road map. But there are huge challenges along the way.

But MS, change is change, and human nature does not adapt easily to change at first. This will be our collective challenge, we all want a greener, healthier, cleaner, fitter Gibraltar but we just don't want this utopian dream to inconvenience daily life in any way.

The STTPP focuses on this change and gives us the tools to try to harness the great potential there is for change. It must however be a joint effort and must involve us all. We have to make the STTPP our Plan, the people's plan. We have got to want this, all of us, so that it has a truly positive impact on our health and our lives.

Someone close to me recently said, Balban, you are like Yin and Yang, people love or hate you depending on which zone they live in. MS, that is a sad reality, well at least for me it is, so harsh is the sentiment when it comes to personal transport, lifestyle and parking that one can either agree, appreciate and accept the reasoning and message behind the Plan, or violently oppose and criticise it. The strength and dichotomy of feeling is astounding.

Yet just like in Chinese Philosophy, Yin and Yang describes how opposite or contrary forces actually complement each other and are interconnected. In the same way, the STTPP is a puzzle of many pieces, some similar, others opposing and until all these pieces come together, it is impossible, at least for the moment, to see their interaction and what the final result will show.

MS, the Residential Parking Scheme makes parking easier for those that live within a given zone. Yet it gently discourages the same from driving into other residential areas and occupying free



parking there for long periods of time, hence depriving the residents there of their own parking. However, parking is still available by way of free parking within given hours and by way of P&D.

I recently had the opportunity to network with Officials of the Borough of Walthamstow in East London. They have recently embarked upon a scheme creating open spaces in the community, and they work closely with the UK Charity “Living Streets”. Though these schemes are aimed at giving streets back to the community by making them more attractive through tree planting, providing cycling routes and improving pedestrian safety so that people are able to enjoy their surroundings, their experiences have been very similar to ours. Local residents have been strongly and vociferously against these changes at first and it is most comforting to know that Gibraltar is not unique in this respect. Even though, environmental objectives are for the benefit of all, people generally do not take kindly to change, at least, at first.

Furthermore, MS, it is not just CHANGE that is unpopular, but indeed the mere thought of change or even rumour of change can stir unrest. MS, following rumours that have recently been gathering momentum, residents of Varyl Begg Estate can rest assured that there no changes envisaged to their current parking arrangements that will affect them in any way. MS, there are no clandestine plans brewing within this Ministry. Furthermore, this parking arrangement will be administered by the Ministry for Housing and policed by their private agents and not Parking Management Officers.

MS, this past FY has seen Zone 3 come to life. This Zone has been relatively easy to see through simply because this zone is far larger than previous zones.

Sandpits, New Harbours and South Pavilion Car Parks also add to the parking stock available in the area. MS, a further new parking facility has recently been built within the South District in what was a dilapidated and derelict Rosia Lane.

This car-park will provide 47 new parking spaces, with infrastructure for 2 electric vehicles. There will also be some provision to park motorbikes within this facility. This facility will become operational once the final security features are fitted and the allocation process is complete.

MS, Visitor parking is also far easier to provide for non-zone permit holders between 8am and 2am. Further areas will shortly be provided within Zone 3 for this purpose as part of the tweaks planned.

MS, Zone 2, although still spoken about no longer attracts as much attention.

MS, The Ministry has now had time to consider, in part, the effects that the RPS has had on other sectors of the community, not least blue badge holders and the business community who require access to parking to go about their daily work.

MS I am most grateful to the Chamber of Commerce and the Gibraltar Federation of Small Businesses for their support of our initiatives and sharing their views with us. We will shortly be making an announcement that will be welcomed by the business community allowing them to access all Residential Parking Zones except Zone 2, which will continue to be accessed as normal via the loading and unloading areas within the delivery hubs.

Blue badge holders will also be shortly able to access a greater number of parking spaces by way of



the newly introduced Parking Clocks. An announcement to this effect will also be made shortly. Once these few further initiatives have been rolled out and given time to assess, we will be ready to move ahead with the Residential Parking Scheme.

MS, P&D Parking continues to be the preferred and most effective method for sharing public parking space. It prevents cars remaining in parking spaces for weeks and months on end. P&D parking also ensures that those who require to drive may still be able to do so and find parking away of their own residential areas. P&D also provides the necessary turnaround that helps people access businesses for relatively short periods of time, for example restaurants and shops. To this end, extra P&D parking has been recently provided at Europort and outside Atlantic Suites. Last FY, parking spaces were also increased along Waterport Road and a dedicated motorcycle parking area was built in the same area.

MS, in an attempt to improve parking for blue badge holders a new clock system was recently implemented so that parking turnaround could be encouraged. The clock permits parking for up to 3 hours as is the practice adopted in the UK. A small number of blue bays have been designated “timed” bays. This pilot scheme will be assessed and improved upon as necessary.

The Ministry is aware that respectful blue badge users not only have to live with the daily abuse of a system which is very difficult to police, but are also confronted with many issues that affect their ability to carry out their daily activity.

To this end, the Ministry will shortly be announcing a further enhancement to the benefits of the Blue Badge Scheme which will also start on a pilot basis. Holders of a blue badge will be able to park using their time clock in conjunction with a specific parking permit within other residential parking zones. This will hopefully help improve accessibility.

Gibraltar Car Parks

MS, Gibraltar Parking and Management Services Limited is responsible for all the operational functions regarding parking and parking enforcement in Gibraltar.

A full review of the operation, facilities and parking hardware is currently being carried out within all car parking facilities with a view of upgrading equipment and procedures to meet modern day smart technologies.

To this end, older P&D machines and barrier systems are being replaced by modern equipment. Locally our payment platforms have the unenviable task of catering for coins of different currencies. This creates many difficulties. All new machines now accept card payments which support the worldwide trend towards cashless systems. Over time, the aim will be to become predominantly cashless where possible.

A full review of the present CCTV network is also being undertaken with a view of updating the present systems to improve their resilience in tackling vandalism, damage and abuse.

MS, monthly rental parking provides a very critical resource especially in areas where on-street parking is poor. These parking facilities are even more crucial within Zone 2 where there is fierce competition between residents, local visitors and tourists for parking.



The provision of this type of parking is increasing providing residents with that guaranteed parking space which is very much in demand.

MS, Ocean Spa Plaza will be completely operational within the next few months and will be providing over 100 parking spaces available for rent.

MS, we will over time be introducing Smart Parking Technology in Gibraltar offering services in line with all major cities worldwide. These systems will provide valuable data which is so critical in today's digital age. Data and its management are key in trying to understand parking habits and needs within a community. It also provides the means to be able to guide car users, especially visitors to Gibraltar to specific car-park facilities where parking is available. This is crucial to help control and effectively manage traffic and parking stock. Data also provides insight into parking behaviour and the length of stay of cars in a given space. This data can then be used to change permitted maximum parking times to suite the business and personal needs of the population.

Parking stock will then be linked to a Parking app which will allow top ups permitting payment over mobile devices. New Parking Apps will direct drivers to vacant spaces rather than encourage that endless search for parking which results in greater emissions and cost. On-line payment of FPN's will also be made possible via this system. A new Website presently under construction will provide online forms together with information on services and road condition. It will be possible to renew Parking permits online. New policing vehicles fitted with ANPR technology will patrol streets to pick out incorrectly parked vehicles or those with expired Road Worthiness Certificates. This technology will greatly assist policing on the ground.

I would like to thank GPMSL for their hard work over the past year providing this critical role doing a job that is hugely demanding and unpopular.

Cycling

MS Cycling is arguably the front-runner in the race to sustainable personal transport for medium length trips. With this in mind, a number of bicycle related initiatives have been rolled out this past FY.

Cycling along Main Street and Irish Town has now been permitted for almost a year and it has provided an area where anyone wishing to cycle in safety is able to do so while respecting pedestrians. This area has been well received by certain sectors that are open to consider the bicycle as a means of transport. Most of the complaints received however, have been as a result of cyclists disrespecting the natural direction of traffic flow and failing to respect the operational hours. However, children on cycling proficiency courses and charity events have both enjoyed the use of this area during the specified operational hours.

A few tweaks have been made opening up further tributaries along Main Street and Irish Town to increase the value of the scheme. In the coming months, further areas will be opened to bicycles thereby improving connections and providing short-cuts between areas making cycling an even more efficient mode of transport.

Cycle lane infrastructure is presently being considered for Gibraltar as a means of improving safety



and encouraging take-up. Shared spaces will shortly be provided along the Saluting Battery and within Wellington Front to facilitate access to bicycles.

Much needed cycle racks have been fitted around Gibraltar but especially around the Europort area which sees the most bicycles being used for work. Further racks will continue to be provided over the next Financial Year.

MS, the Redibike Scheme was recently extended to Beachview Terraces, Catalan Bay and at Governor's Parade in an attempt to reach out to hotels, their guests and the beaches on the East side. Although the uptake of the bicycle sharing scheme is not as great as one would have hoped for, usage continues to grow and the scheme has been a stepping stone for some to try out a bike, and then eventually perhaps buying one of their own. That in itself is such a positive effect.

MS, the RGP have spearheaded Bicycle Proficiency Courses for many years, I undertook a course with them over 35 year ago. I would like to publicly acknowledge and thank them today for the excellent work that they have done over the many years that these courses have been going on. These courses began in 1978 led by PC's Galia, Field, Gomez and the late PC Felices. These courses provided and still to this day, schoolchildren with the basic skills of balance and cycling awareness within the safety of a playground environment where very useful skills were taught.

This FY, the Ministry have engaged with the RGP and Youth.gi aiming to take these proficiency courses to the next level, empowering children and adults alike to learn how to cycle safely and become road savvy. The urban environment is full of challenges to overcome and a cyclist today needs to have the necessary tools to be confident when cycling. To this end, the Ministry has been working closely with the BikeAbility Trust in UK and their sub-contracted instructors. Gibraltar now has 6 provisionally qualified instructors who will be shortly engaging with schools and the community at large.

These courses will range from teaching someone how to cycle to teaching cyclists how to ride safely on busy roads. I am very excited to see this initiative take-off. Furthermore, there are currently 2 instructors working in Cambridge training to become fully qualified cycling instructors. I would like to thank all of the 6 newly qualified local instructors and wish Martin Graffione and Simon Debono success. I would also like to thank their respective Departmental Heads who have been instrumental in supporting this initiative.

With growing awareness, comes an increased demand for cleaner, more breathable, safer and liveable streets.

Finally, on the matter of bicycles, the Ministry is looking at possible ways of allowing access for cargo bikes and e-cargo bikes for the delivery of goods for extended periods of time within the pedestrian areas of Main Street and Irish Town on a pilot basis. This would mean that businesses would no longer need to enter these roads before the 9.15am curfew.

MS, this year pedestrian improvements have been made at Corral Road and Market Place by way of two much needed pedestrian crossings.

At Chatham Counterguard new and more aesthetically pleasing cannons shaped barriers and



planters have been placed to safeguard pedestrians and clients of restaurants in the area.

Main Street will also be shortly be seeing an uplift of its security barriers to more ornate and decorative ones which are more in-keeping with Gibraltar and the attractiveness Main Street.

Bus Company

MS, Gibraltar's buses are a key and very critical part of transport within the STTPP. Encouraging modal change requires an efficient and reliable bus service and the Gibraltar Bus Company provides exactly this. There is little reason not to consider the bus offering in Gibraltar which is predominantly free for locals with the exception of the night bus services.

The Bus Tracker app has been revolutionary putting the bus service right into the hands of the user.

The recent re-introduction of the Request Bus Stop at certain bus-stops has greatly improved the service timing and made the ride more comfortable for both the user and the bus driver.

MS, new bus stop signs are replacing dated signs throughout Gibraltar. The new signs are designed to be more user friendly, providing clearer information regarding the name and location of the bus stop, the bus routes servicing the bus stop with their respective ending termini and the specific bus routes' direction. The Bus Company will shortly be introducing new bus maps and timetabling information at all of its main bus-stops.

The bus stop signs feature new branding which helps clearly identify the bus stops. The new logo representing Public Transport in Gibraltar.

This year has also seen the introduction of a new school bus route departing from the South District every weekday during school term time.

This new school bus service tackles the issues brought to our attention by users who were concerned that route buses were full at school peak times. MS, this shows that bus use is increasing and this is therefore a good problem to have.

MS, I would like to thank all those down at the Gibraltar Bus Company, the Bus Manager, his Management Team and all the bus drivers who work long hours day, night and into the early morning on the weekend Night Buses. They provide a service so that we may be able to go out and enjoy the nightlife, safely and sustainably.

Technical Services Department

Mr Speaker, turning to Technical Services, the Department continues to provide technical support on construction, engineering and traffic related matters as well as meeting their defined responsibilities of maintaining public infrastructure including coastal engineering works, cliff stabilisation, the repair of retaining walls, highways resurfacing, highways and sewer maintenance.

In addition, TSD also provides support on the implementation of several key projects related to the STTPP.



MS, this past FY, the Highways section has been involved in major resurfacing works along Rodger's Road, St Joseph's Road and Upper Witham's Road.

Furthermore, having taking into careful consideration the timing of major construction projects throughout Gibraltar road resurfacing schemes have now been completed or are ongoing throughout many sections of road network including Queensway, Glacis Road, Laguna Estate. Other sections of road will also be tackled this Financial Year. Some sections have not been resurfaced between stretches of new asphalt as other major road works or developments are due to commence shortly.

In addition, the new mini roundabout at Devil's Tower Road was completed last year and now the provisional, pilot roundabout outside the now completed Ocean Spa Plaza development is about to be made permanent.

MS, this roundabout has been the subject of much criticism by the opposition who have simply not understood that resurfacing and road infrastructural works of this nature need to be carried out at the right time so as not to risk unnecessary damage while construction works are still ongoing. The Highways Section have kept a watchful eye on this area to ensure that the surface, although uneven was still kept to the minimum standard required.

The developer will now be carrying out and funding these works as agreed.

The Department continues to successfully manage road closures and diversions on the Public Highway, which have been challenging of late due to the vast amount of construction projects underway.

MS, I am pleased to announce that the final phase of the project to fill in the paving joints on Main Street was completed last year.

With respect to cliff stabilisation and rock fall protection projects during the 2018/19 Financial Year the department has been involved in numerous schemes within the Upper Rock. This has seen stabilisation works being carried out at O'Hara's Road, Queen's Road, the Apes Den, St Michael's Cave, Spur Battery Road and Green Lodge Battery. These areas are all located in places frequented by locals and visitors to Gibraltar alike and it is important that within the limitations of living in a place like Gibraltar, where rock falls are inevitable, that these areas are kept as safe as possible.

During the past year the Technical Services Department was also involved with works to a number of retaining walls including Willis's Road, Windmill Hill Road, Spur Battery, Line Wall Road, Sir Herbert Miles Road and Castle Steps. During the current year the department will continue to monitor our retaining walls and effect repairs as necessary but will focus their efforts in the area of Blackstrap Cove where movement of the ground has been observed.

MS, Turning to sewers, during the past year the Infrastructure Section of the department have continued to maintain the public sewerage network as part of Governments commitment in this area.



Major desilting and relining works were carried out to the Main Sewer running under part of Line Wall Road extending southwards along Lover's lane. These works are considered essential given the condition of the sewer in this location and the disruption that can be caused in the event of a failure of the sewage network.

Works were also completed along Rosia Bay, Europa Point, Crutchett's Ramp, Cooperage Lane and Queensway to provide additional flood alleviation measures.

The Department will this year continue its major desilting and cleansing works of the sewer network and will be carrying upgrade works where necessary.

Other works will include gully cleansing, manhole repairs and the general upkeep of the public storm and sewage networks.

Given the sharp rise in developments in Gibraltar the department continues to provide advice to both developers and the DPC on the impact that these various developments can have on our existing sewerage network.

Finally, funding is once again being provided 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 provided. They will continue to provide a service to maintain the fleet of Government vehicles, including the refuse collection vehicles, despite suffering from a lack of resources.

MS I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of all the sections within the Technical Services Department for their hard work and commitment during the year.

DVLD

Mr Speaker, I will now turn my attention to the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Department (DVLD). The DVLD has been extremely busy this year preparing for all possibilities not least a no deal BREXIT. Although negotiations are still ongoing, I can confidently say that very good progress has been made and no stone has been left unturned when it has come to Gibraltar's Transport.

I must start by thanking the Chief Examiner who for the past year has been literally living out of his suitcase, not only travelling on Brexit related business but also attending to all his other engagements and commitments within all the European bodies and transport related committees that Gibraltar is part of, while still managing the ever-busier MOT Test Centre. As a person with solid connections and very well respected by our counterparts in the UK, the DVLA and other fora within Europe he will be greatly missed. I wish him and his family all the very best on his retirement later this year and wish to thank him for all of his hard work and support of the Ministry.

PHV's

Mr Speaker, our Transport Inspectors ensure that all users and Undertakings fully abide and conform to all the legal requirements under the Transport Act and allows the Public Transport offering to improve. They also manage the busy morning Main Street delivery window.



I would like to thank them for a difficult job, well done.

Driving Licences

MS, a huge amount of work has been carried out and is still on-going with respect to our Gibraltar Driving Licences in order to ensure that we can continue to drive throughout the EU under any BREXIT scenario.

Although the UK did extend the 1949 Geneva Convention on Road Traffic to Gibraltar, which in a no deal scenario will allow our drivers to be issued with an International Driving Permits (IDP) to enable them to continue to drive throughout all 1949 convention contracting parties, Government has successfully negotiated that upon UK's ratification of the 1968 Vienna Convention, this convention also be extended to Gibraltar.

It follows that the DVLD together with the Government Law Offices have worked extensively to achieve this agreement within very short time scales. Therefore "in the event of a No-deal BREXIT," all is now in place to ensure that local drivers can use an IDP in conjunction with the present driving licence, allowing us to be able to drive throughout the whole of Europe and indeed the world.

Nevertheless, negotiations are still ongoing between the DVLD and the Department for Transport in the UK for Gibraltar's present photo-card licences to be included in all driving licence recognising agreements that the UK signs with other Member States. If successful, this will allow our driving licences to be accepted throughout the EU on their own and without the IDP. Hence, there may not even be a need to apply for IDP's for access to certain Member States.

Moreover, agreements are also in place for registration certificates (log books) and roadworthiness certificates (MOT's), therefore, in the case that the UK leaves the EU without a deal, all the necessary practical procedures and processes are already in place to allow our drivers to continue to drive throughout the EU seamlessly.

Tachograph card

MS, although further delayed because of BREXIT negotiations being undertaken by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) in the UK, the DVLD has now finalised and agreed negotiations and administrative procedures (*application forms, information letters and databases*) regarding the digital tachograph card. Although applications for these cards will be expedited at the DVLD, due to our small demand, the DVLA will be personalising and providing our cards. This will allow our drivers, undertakings and law enforcement agencies to be able to have these cards readily available in the very near future.

These negotiations have been lengthy and extensive; however, I am extremely happy to announce that there will be no cost involved to Government for this process other than the cost of issuing the cards themselves.

CBT

Mr Speaker, the motorcycle CBT continues to be a tremendous success and is a valuable tool for reducing accidents on the road caused by inexperienced drivers. Feedback continues to be extremely positive.



I would like to thank all members of staff down at Eastern Beach for their very hard work and dedication throughout this very tough year, especially those dealing with all the pressures that Brexit has brought upon them especially at the public counter.

Consultation Paper on Regulation of Personal Transporters

HM Government of Gibraltar recently announced the publication of a Consultation Paper on the Regulation of Personal Transporters. This is a subject that appeared to be raising much discussion within Social Media. The greatest problem faced will unfortunately be the lack of respect for other road users. These devices can already be seen undertaking, travelling through pedestrianised areas, along pavements, going against the flow of traffic and being ridden dangerously. Unfortunately, this works against the acceptance of these devices as they would be highly difficult to police. In the end, pedestrian and child safety will be of paramount importance when considering the future of these devices.

Nevertheless, MS, feedback so far has been extremely poor, few have responded to the official consultation paper yet debate continues apace within Social Media groups among limited groups. I actively encourage those with opinions on either camp to make these known to Government via the Consultation Paper so that a final decision will consider the opinions of the public at large.

Town Planning and Building Control

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

The Department continues to deal with large numbers of applications seeking Planning Permission and Building Control approval. In 2018 there were a total of 538 applications. Many of these have related to large scale developments that involve complex planning considerations including the consideration of environmental effects through the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process.

The EIA process involves extensive discussions with applicants, developers and stakeholders with the intention of mitigating environmental impacts and to achieve high standards of architectural design, attractive townscapes and good quality environments for residents and visitors alike.

In 2018, there were 57 planning, building and demolition applications submitted by Government and the MOD, which sought advice and guidance from the Development and Planning Commission.

A total of 13 public meetings of the DPC were held this past Financial Year. Additionally, the DPC's subcommittee met 38 times to determine minor applications which greatly helps to speed up the decision-making process for more minor applications. Agendas and minutes of DPC meetings continue to be made available online.

MS, during the course of this year the Government is aiming to introduce live streaming of all meetings of the DPC. This will greatly enhance the ability of the general public to view the important work of the DPC and adds further to an open and transparent planning system.

The e-Planning service continues to operate successfully allowing easy access to application details for the public and providing a platform through which applicants can submit their applications



online. Mr Speaker, Town Planning staff will continue to develop this e-Planning system. During the course of this year we will also be working towards a solution that will allow applicants to pay application fees online.

Mr Speaker, turning to matters of urban renewal, I am pleased to say that the “Tax Relief on Façade Improvements scheme” continues to operate well with the aim of encouraging property owners to improve the appearance of their buildings. There were 14 applications under this scheme in 2018 with a total value of works of over £500,000.

The Urban Renewal Section has been active in approaching landlords to carry out improvements to facades.

MS, our focus continues to be on identifying specific buildings in need of refurbishment and encouraging owners to undertake improvement works thereby bringing new life into these urban areas.

Additionally, four sites have been embellished with new street art images bringing life to otherwise featureless and uninteresting areas. More sites are currently being considered.

MS, the Building Control section continues to work hard in ensuring that buildings are built to the appropriate standards. During 2018, the section issued approximately 320 Certificates of Fitness or Completion certifying completed works. This figure has increased from last year.

MS, finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff of the Department of Town Planning and Building Control for their dedication and hard work throughout the year, in what can often be a difficult and controversial area of work.

Final Conclusion

MS, finally, I would like to thank all my personal Ministerial Staff, who I share most of my working day with, for all their help, support and very hard work during the past year and always.

I would also like to thank my Traffic Team, namely Dylan Infante for taking on such an immensely complicated and technical brief as is the STTPP.

I also wish to thank all members of the Traffic and Transport Commissions, many of which give up their personal time to attend the many meetings throughout the year.

Finally, I also wish to thank you MS, the Clerk and all Parliamentary Staff for their help and very long hours throughout the year.

I commend the Bill to the House.