



PRESS RELEASE

Date: 30th June 2022

No: 461/2022

Budget Speech 2022 – The Hon Paul Balban

Introduction:

Mr Speaker, it is an honour to rise to this floor once again today, as Minister for Transport to give my Budget Address. I will start, with my Ministerial responsibilities for Technical Services.

Technical Services Department

Mr Speaker, this has been a difficult year for the Technical Services department following the Covid-19 pandemic and the uncertainties raised by the ongoing Brexit negotiations.

This has led to the Technical Services Department concentrating its efforts on operationally critical items in all areas under its responsibility. Notwithstanding these challenges, the department has continued to provide technical support to Government Ministries and Departments on a wide range of construction and traffic related matters, as well as meeting their defined responsibilities of maintaining public infrastructure.

Ministry for Transport

HM Government of Gibraltar • Suite 735, Europort • Gibraltar GX11 1AA

t +350 20077001

e mt@gibraltar.gov.gi w gibraltar.gov.gi

Whilst the department has shown prudence in its spending and concentrated its efforts on essential and critical items, the department has nonetheless been able to meet its core objectives of maintenance. It has been involved in many projects covering a wide range of responsibilities which included cliff and slope stabilisation schemes within the Upper Rock and Little Bay, the repair of a number of retaining walls, highways resurfacing works, highways maintenance as well as general sewer maintenance and improvement works.

In addition, the department has also provided support on the implementation of several projects related to the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan launched in March 2017.

Cliff Stabilisation:

Mr Speaker, with respect to cliff stabilisation and rock fall protection projects during the last Financial Year the department has been involved in numerous schemes which have included stabilisation works at Little Bay, Woodford Battery and Camp Bay.

Highway Maintenance:

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. The department's team of Highways Inspectors carry out regular inspections of all our roads and footpaths and react to reports received from the public.

Highways Resurfacing:

Mr Speaker, this year will see the continuation of our very successful and comprehensive road resurfacing scheme. Over the last few years, a very significant number of our roads have been resurfaced or patch repaired and during the last Financial Year the Technical Services Department once again embarked on a significant road resurfacing scheme which saw South Barracks Ramp, the north sections of South Barracks Parade, South Pavilion Road and Engineer Road and Corral Road was totally resurfaced.

Retaining walls

Mr Speaker, during the past year the Technical Services Department was also involved with works to several retaining walls. These have included works at the old KGV Hospital, Bruce's Farm, Scud Hill, Mount Road, Upper Witham's Road, the American War Memorial, Naval Hospital Hill, Europa Road and Referendum Gates. The continuous monitoring and repair of existing retaining walls is critical as many of these are old and border our Public Highways network. Technical Services will continue to monitor these walls and effect the necessary repairs as and when these are identified.

Traffic lights and crossing points:

Mr Speaker, the replacement, and enhancement of pelican crossing lights and equipment will continue during this year working jointly with the Gibraltar Electricity Authority. Works are currently underway to replace the existing light-controlled crossings by Glacis Kiosk and the

department will continue to review all existing light-controlled crossings and provide further countdown timers in areas where

these are required. The current programme envisages upgrades of our existing light-controlled crossings at Queensway Quay and Line Wall Road by the American Steps. The Government will continue to provide further countdown timers at other crossings and all new traffic light sets purchased to replace existing sets will have count-down timers installed as standard.

It is regrettable that there has been an increase in the number of recent road traffic accidents which have seen several existing traffic lights being damaged. This unfortunately reduces our stock of spare parts and impacts our ability to continue with our upgrade programme in a timely manner.

In addition to the introduction of countdown timers the department is currently working closely with Ministry staff, the Special Needs Coordination and Liaison Officer at No. 6 Convent Place and the Gibraltar Health Authorities Occupational Therapy team to study the possibility of introducing disabled user-friendly information templates at crossing points. This initiative is aimed at making road crossings for people with disabilities.

Coastal Engineering Works:

Mr Speaker, with regards to Coastal Engineering works the department continues to monitor and carry out maintenance and repair works as and when required. The department also continues to

provide advice to developers and the DPC on all aspects of coastal engineering as and when necessary. During this financial year Technical Services will be reviewing the existing coastal defences at Eastern Beach and Sandy Bay with a view of carrying out essential maintenance works.

Sewers Section:

Mr Speaker, moving onto sewers, during the past year the Infrastructure Section of the department have continued to maintain the public sewer network as part of Government's commitment in this area.

As part of the major desilting and relining works of our Main Sewer which commenced several years ago, the department has been working on the preparation of the design and works specification for

the next phase of works. This phase will see the relining of the Main Sewer from the area of Bomb House Lane to the entrance of Lover's Lane. These works are earmarked to be completed during the coming Financial Year and will link up several previously successful relining projects spanning

the worst affected areas within the town area, covering some 570 metres, equating to approximately 60% of the Main Sewer line within the City Walls. These works are considered essential given the age and condition of the sewer and the disruption that can be caused in the event of a failure of the sewage network. The department continuously monitors the condition of the main sewer in order to prioritise the continuation of this essential maintenance work.

The Department will therefore this year; as it has since 2012, 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.

Mr Speaker, Given the sharp rise in developments in Gibraltar the department also 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 allocated for the purchase of equipment to allow the Sewer Infrastructure Section to continue to expand and provide an enhanced service in respect of its inspections of our sewer network.

Garage & Workshop:

Mr Speaker, this also applies to the Garage and 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.

This year, I would once again also like to take this opportunity to thank the Sewers and Highways Infrastructure Sections and the On-Call Officers 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, whilst most of us are at home, that the impact of these storms is not greater impact on both our sewerage and road networks.

Mr Speaker, the Technical Services Department is one of those Government departments who are rarely in the limelight but who work tirelessly and silently 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.

Not only does the department meet its core responsibilities but it is also actively involved in other key projects for HM Government of Gibraltar. During the past year they have been involved in the delivery of improvements of the new container terminal at North Mole. Following the uncertainties of Brexit, the number of shipping containers has shown a marked increase and a need for additional storage capacity, including that for refrigerated containers was identified. Technical Services has been working in preparing the necessary infrastructure and upgrading the existing mole to increase the stacking height for container storage.

Mr Speaker, additionally, Technical Services is also responsible, in conjunction with the Office of the Chief Technical Officer for the delivery of the first phase of the reclamation works at Coaling Island.

Technical services are involved in many projects in order to deliver on the Government's extensive and comprehensive programmes.

Traffic Plan (STTPP):

Mr Speaker, the STTPP was always a document that set out the vision for the future. Published in March 2017, it spoke about Gibraltar's dependency on the car and the way we broke records as having one of the highest vehicle ownership rates in the world. Although one can often be proud of breaking records, this is one record that we surely should not be proud of if we are all serious about our need to look towards a greener and sustainable future for ourselves and our children.

Emissions from vehicles contribute to poor health but especially bronchial and respiratory diseases. Furthermore, our dependency on the car means that we forego active and healthy lifestyles for inactivity and hence the diseases of affluence and lifestyle, obesity, diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers.

The STTPP was the first real Traffic Plan for Gibraltar, the Plan was brave but so too, was it always going to be contentious as it centred around change. As we know, Mr Speaker everything

surrounding change can be extremely difficult to adapt to at first and there have been very few projects that have been well received by all or indeed rejected by all, this is the nature of that beast called change, and

acceptability of initiatives very much depends on whether a person is environmentally conscious or car centric.

Mr Speaker, with regards to initiatives relating to the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan the Ministry for Transport has carried out several projects during the past year.

Mobility Scooter Charging Point at Casemates Square:

Mr. Speaker, a charging point was delivered upon the request of the Gibraltar Senior Citizens Association to be used solely as an emergency electricity topping up station for mobility scooters. The late Manolo Ruiz was a staunch supporter of the needs of the community at large but especially the needs of the elderly and those with disabilities. This charging point was something that Mr Ruiz requested, and it was a pleasure to be able to deliver this worthwhile service to the community before his sad passing. He will be sorely missed.

Launch of ANPR Enforcement Camera Vehicle:

Mr Speaker, as part of the ongoing enhancements to the Sustainable Traffic, Transport & Parking Plan (STTPP), a new Mobile Parking Management tool has been launched that will use Automatic

Number Plate Recognition or ANPR technology to easily verify that cars have permission to park in certain zones and estates. This consists of 2 new and environmentally friendly fully electric vehicles that can process the number plates of parked cars by checking against a real-time parking permit database. They are programmed with Geo-Fencing Technology which recognises the different zones, and which also receive up to date information from the M.O.T. database.

These types of vehicles are commonly used throughout the U.K. and other parts of Europe and have a proven track record when it comes to parking enforcement. When these vehicles drive past, they can quickly and effectively pick up cars which are illegally parked or that may have an expired MOT certificate. Photographic evidence of the infringement is captured digitally, and this can later be used to assist with the processing of Fixed Penalty Notices to the offenders.

EV Charging:

Mr Speaker, the Government has commenced its roll out of EV charging infrastructure, as part of the Government's shift towards decarbonising the transport sector and towards a more sustainable travel model for Gibraltar. This is the way the car industry is moving at present. It is clear that electric vehicles are becoming more widespread even though there is much speculation as to whether they will exclusively be the future form of sustainable transport or simply just a part of it. Many experts firmly believe that electric vehicles may even just be a transition towards other forms of propulsion.

In Gibraltar, logic suggests that it will be very difficult to provide a charging point for each and every one of the vehicles parked on the public highway. Indeed, with the different charging needs of each vehicle and the different charging adaptors available on the market, it would be reasonable to assume that the future is everything but clear in this regard at the moment. Biofuels and hydrogen technology is also starting to carve a path into the growing field of future means of propulsion.

What one does, however, need to question is whether we will be able to defend our huge dependency on the car and continue to keep owning multiple cars per household with the expectation of having these vehicles parked on the public highway and even charged on the public highway. Today it is more often argued that this space should be put to better, more sustainable and recreational community use. Sharing is fast becoming the mainstream concept when it comes to forging a path into a decarbonized future; of this I am also convinced. Shared use of resources, vehicles, mobility devices, indeed street space means an equitable use of resources. Our public realm will need to be looked at very carefully over time if we are to achieve a sustainable future, not only for Gibraltar, but indeed throughout the whole world. If we simply swap our regular diesel and petrol cars for e-vehicles we will bring upon ourselves an ever increasing need to mine heavy metals, cobalt and lithium at a cost to the health of other communities around the world. These practices, have already been pointed out by the world's media to be especially polluting of rivers where even child labour is used to mine these resources in order to provide the chemistry required to produce e-vehicle batteries for the developed world. These processes destroy the fragile ecosystems in developing countries pushing pollution out of the cities through the elimination of

tail pipe emissions but passing on the environmental buck onto those producing the electricity or the batteries that store this energy via other less sustainable means elsewhere.

Indeed, research is showing that the environmental impact of the manufacture of e-cars means that an e-car needs to be driven approximately 80,000km before its carbon footprint equals that of an ICE or internal combustion engine.

Currently, the focus in Gibraltar is on offering charging points within public car parks but charging points will soon also be available at certain on-street parking spaces where possible. Clearly, it will be logistically easier to provide charging infrastructure within private and rental parking facilities than on-street. There will be many challenges to overcome including the need to consider solutions to hide and make safe unsightly cabling on street to provide the necessary power at given locations.

Nevertheless, Gibraltar needs to be nimble footed to be able to adapt to change. It may not be the end of fuel stations yet as biofuel and hydrogen technology continue advancing and even the concept of battery fuel stations may see a proliferation of a different concept where people purchase their car but lease the electric batteries.

Shared car schemes and shared micro-mobility is gaining popularity, saving the user the cost of insurance, maintenance, depreciation, and repairs while allowing the user a choice of vehicle for different needs.

The Ministry of Transport is pleased to announce that following an agreement between Government and Plug-N-Go (Gibraltar) Ltd, Midtown Carpark now has available for use, five electric vehicle chargers. The chargers are located on Level 6 and they are the most recent generation of EV charging devices, including a DC fast charger.

Access to the chargers can be achieved by downloading their application Plug-N-Go, which is available for both iOS and Android devices, payment is on a pay as you go basis.

Further chargers have been ordered for installation at Europa Point carpark and at Devil's Tower Road car park. These chargers are for public use. More areas are being identified as demand increases. Provisions have already been made for availability of EV chargers for government rental stock parking with two chargers installed at Harbour Views Estate parking.

Car Shaped Cycle Rack at Line Wall Road/Cycle parking:

Mr Speaker, the Ministry for Transport installed a second new style car-shaped bicycle rack at Line Wall Road, an area that has seen an increase demand in bicycle parking.

This bicycle parking solution sends a clear message for a more sustainable and environmentally friendly use of our public highway by using the space normally occupied by one single motor vehicle to park up to 10 bicycles.

This adds to the growing stock of bicycle parking in Gibraltar and further encourages alternative and sustainable modes of transport locally.

Residential parking Scheme Zone 4 – Westside:

In January of this year Mr. Speaker, HM Government of Gibraltar was pleased to announce the rollout of the next Residential Parking Scheme (RPS) Zone 4. This new zone surrounds the West District from Marina Court in the North to Ordinance Wharf in the South, bordering with RPS Zone 2 in the East. Residents with households within this zone boundary will be eligible to apply for a Resident Parking Permit.

This follows the successful rollout of RPS Zone 1 in July 2017, Zone 2 in March 2018 and Zone 3 in June 2018 respectively; and more importantly, continues to form part of our commitment to roll out recommendations contained within the Sustainable, Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan (STTPP).

The Ministry will monitor this new zone as well as all other existing zones to ensure that parking take up provides the most efficient use of the existing street space for the benefit of residents and all road users regardless of how they move.

RPS Zone 1 - Change to Allow Zone 2 parking in Grand Parade:

Mr Speaker, I am also pleased to announce changes to the existing parking arrangements within Grand Parade Car Park. The Ministry for Transport and Traffic following an active consultation process with the main stakeholders in Zone 1, namely the Alameda Estate Tenants Association and residents contained within the Zone 2, will be enhancing the parking zones. Consultation and stakeholder engagement plays an important part of the recommendations contained within the Sustainable, Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan (STTPP) and it pleases me to continue to gauge users so as to make STTPP Schemes successful.

The parking stock for permit holders within RPS Zone 1 was increased in July 2020 from 127 to 211, which was well received by residents, increasing their chance to find on-street parking in the area.

Since the release of RPS Zone 2, parking stock within the Town Centre zone has been reduced due to ongoing works and construction, specifically in the southern part of this parking scheme. To

mitigate the impact, the north-eastern section of Grand Parade Car Park was allocated to RPS Zone 2 permit holders only, with line

painting designating 'ZONE 2' on the ground and signs erected to effectively differentiate the different parking arrangements within the car park.

As with the RPS Zones 1, 2, 3 and the newly announced Zone 4, changes of this nature will continue to be monitored and reviewed, with their respective parking take-up continually evaluated with an aim to provide more efficient use to the existing parking stock within the car park and within zones.

Pay and Display Payment App and Website:

Mr Speaker, the Ministry for Transport launched a new Pay & Display online payment function.

The launch of this web-based payment portal currently captures all existing Pay & Display Zones throughout Gibraltar, however further enhancements to this service will be added in future to include online payments of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) and any monthly Government rental car parking spaces, including the launch of a Gibraltar Parking mobile application.

New users are encouraged to create an account where they will be able to store their vehicles' data and personal details for regular use, or alternatively log in as a guest to pay for parking for single one-time use. A reminder email and SMS message will inform the user when the parking session is due to expire, and with the added option to top-up, hence extending the parking time without

having to return to the machine to pay and without having to attach a ticket to the inside dashboard of the vehicle. This allows much more flexibility and makes the system much more user friendly.

Therefore, Parking Management Officers (PMOs) will have access to real time data of all parking payments without the need of this physical ticket. This in turn increases efficiency to enforce more areas within a given working day. An FPN will be issued to any offending vehicles with no record of payment.

South Barrack Ramp – Pedestrian Walkway:

Mr Speaker, some weeks ago a new safe, segregated pedestrian walkway was created along South Barrack Ramp with the aim of providing safe passage for pedestrians, particularly school children, so that

walking may be considered a viable option by residents in this area. This new walkway will improve pedestrian accessibility to and from the nearby schools, bus stops and residential properties.

Works at South Barrack Ramp have recently been completed with the installation of planters and barriers as a temporary measure to protect the walkway. Traditionally, pedestrians would walk along a road without a pavement seeking refuge between parked cars. Mr Speaker, current thinking worldwide is one of moving towards ceding space to pedestrians and raising the importance of the

pedestrian to the very top of the hierarchy of road users. Pedestrians are the most vulnerable of road users and walking is the best way to keep healthy, to help the environment and walking drastically reduces our carbon footprint. Mr Speaker, it is our responsibility to make walking for those who wish to walk, as comfortable and safe as possible, to keep encouraging them to do so whilst at the same time supporting those who feel that walking is dangerous, to be able to consider walking instead of using their car. With this initiative, pedestrians and children now have a safe passageway where previously this was non-existent.

Prince Edward's Road – Proposed Walking Infrastructure:

Mr Speaker, as a continuation of the walking infrastructure improvements seen at South Barracks Ramp the Ministry of Transport will be introducing walking infrastructure improvements all along Prince Edward's Road from Hargraves football pitch to Forty Steps. The western section of this road will be segregated to allow for the safe passage of pedestrians, an area where it is deemed necessary to connect other existing footpaths in the Upper Town, as well as providing safe access to clubs and out of school activities.

The first phase of this project by Hargraves football pitch has already been completed with the remaining to be completed later as soon as construction works at 73 Prince Edward's Road are complete.

The introduction of this new demarcated footpath will result in the removal of 11 Zone 2 parking spaces. However, these have been re-provided within the ex-Queen's Cinema car park. The existing Pay & Display car park will therefore be removed, given the fact that there is ample parking availability within Grand Parade and Ragged Staff car parks nearby and usage was seen to be low.

Traffic Commission:

Mr Speaker, the Ministry continues to convene monthly Traffic Commission meetings, where applications from members of the public are submitted through this statutory forum with responsibility for traffic and parking related matters in Gibraltar. All requests of this nature are brought forward, deliberated and either approved or rejected. The members of the Commission, discuss these applications objectively and collectively and consciously deliberate on the merits of each individual application.

Mobility, Sustainability and Accessibility Policy Initiative

Mr Speaker, further to and in conjunction to the STTPP, the Ministry for Transport is working at developing improvements to mobility and accessibility, and general sustainability in Gibraltar. The aim is to modify and re-design our streetscape over time encouraging and making the use of other forms of moving, such as walking, cycling and the use of public transport more attractive with the aim of decarbonizing our transport network, in line with Government's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 42% by 2030, as set out in the Climate Change Act.

We are working closely with other Ministries to be able to improve the accessibility of our footpaths, introduce safe, preferably segregated cycling infrastructure and provide road calming measures on certain roads, that have recently been the site of concerning traffic accidents.

Mr Speaker, The Ministry's Technical Department is working on developing a Cycling Strategy, which will become a useful policy document in future. This will provide Town Planning with a blueprint for the introduction of the required cycle infrastructure specifications, modes of construction and future locations for cycling lanes. We are fully committed in meeting the climate goals set out. The Ministry for Transport is working with the Ministry of the Environment, to provide ways of achieving a more sustainable transport network.

The Ministry of Transport fully understands the perceived needs of the community for vans, lorries, cars and motorcycles on our roads, but also notes the amounts of single user car trips being made, the often unnecessary and extremely short distances being travelled by car, with distances as short as 400m to take children to school for example, instead of walking. Although all these journeys may still be financially possible for families in an affluent society despite the huge increase in fuel costs, these still come at a cost to the environment and to our health.

Mr Speaker, I am approached by many people who wish to cycle for recreation, exercise and even as a way of commuting and I am also approached by cyclists who want better infrastructure so that they can be safer on the road. Many are scared to cycle with their children. There is certain irony in

the fact that most Gibraltarians will buy their children bicycles as a birthday or Christmas present, they will struggle to fit these inside the boots of their car, they will drive them to the lighthouse or find some suitable flat ground, they will teach their child how to balance and ride and then pack the bicycle back into the boot of their car and drive them back home. After a few tedious and bothersome trips of this sort, to use the bicycle during the weekend, the bicycle will simply become a nuisance and it will be left to gather dust on the external corridor of the flat unless one lives in an estate with some common space that permits cycling. Unfortunately, many estates do not.

Almost as if a rite of passage, we seem to teach our children the long-lasting gift of balance which will be critical, come their 17th birthday motorbike gift, their first motorbike. Nevertheless, rarely will anyone have forgotten that day we rode our bicycles for the first time, unsupported and suddenly we extended the frontiers of our neighborhood. We were free.

Mr. Speaker, I do remember, but it was a different world back then, definitely worse kept roads then, yet they were safer and quieter with very few vehicles. Unfortunately, modern child simply cannot enjoy this basic pleasure on roads loaded to the hilt with vehicles chugging dangerous fumes, stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic, and then during the less congested hours, having to face the noise of those turbos firing as cars and motorbikes speed between speed cameras and traffic light junctions.

The child on his bicycle in Gibraltar simply does not stand a chance in the jungle that is the road, and neither is there the space provided today within our urban environment. Unfortunately, cycling is

one of the most dangerous ways of moving in Gibraltar and this is something that we need to urgently address if we are to provide true equality within our streetscape for all user needs.

Mr Speaker, Gibraltar boasts of a complete road network, widespread pavements, an airport, and a port, it has a free bus service and a taxi service but the only infrastructure, which is missing, and which is vital in a modern city with green and carbon neutral aspirations, is cycling infrastructure.

In fact, Gibraltar, like most other cities, over time, has improved its offering to the very mode of transport that is the most responsible for a great part of the emissions locally, the car.

But the cars' presence on the road has grown so much that it has even led to cars creeping onto our walkways and pavements, to the detriment of our pedestrians, as vehicles get larger and larger and the need for wider parking spaces greater and greater.

Mr Speaker, this has made the design and planning of bicycle infrastructure difficult and most challenging to say the least. The Ministry's Technical Department has risen to the challenge and through determination and hard work we are developing a proposed cycling network that will span from Bayside Road, south to Waterport Road, Bishop Caruana Road, Saluting Battery, Rosia Road, Little Bay, Keightley Way Tunnel, and finally to Europa Point.

The scheme has set aims to achieve the introduction of bicycle routes via a phased approach, using transitional pop-up bicycle lanes, that can later be adjusted and improved on as necessary, to ensure

that the final construction optimises the new infrastructure. Where space on the road needs to be shared, a reduction in speed limit will be necessary to maintain safety for all road users.

The scheme also aims to create more accessible pedestrian areas and the uniformity of road crossings to respect the needs of the community at large, including those with more specific needs due to medical and mobility issues.

The scheme Mr Speaker, aims to create a modern “15-minute city” in Gibraltar where you can travel and arrive at your primary destinations quickly and safely within 15 minutes via a sustainable network of travel. Many cities are striving to become these 15-minute cities and yet we are already a 15-minute city by definition, as most of us can in fact access our destinations within 15 minutes in Gibraltar by walking, more so by cycling, yet we prefer to have a 30 or 40-minute city by jumping into our cars and getting stuck in traffic, causing detriment to the air quality of our home.

Traffic is not something that exists of its own accord, traffic is not another beast to contend with on the road, **we are traffic**, Mr. Speaker as the Financial Secretary often likes to hear me say, bringing a cheeky smile to his face.

Mr Speaker the team at the Ministry believe that the introduction of this bicycle infrastructure will allow the public to experience this new mode of transport and help reduce the use of the car in our city.

People will immediately associate me with bicycles Mr Speaker. I am passionate about the bicycle as a means to get to places, keep fit and discovering new places but above all, I am passionate about doing my bit to help the environment. Of course, I like cars, I love cars, but I seldom drive if I can avoid it and I feel better and healthier for it. I firmly believe that the bicycle is our means to a better, greener, healthier modern city. Lead researcher Dr Christian Brand, for the University of Oxford said, ***“we found that those who switch just one trip per day from car driving to cycling reduce their carbon footprint by about 0.5 tonnes over a year”***. This Mr Speaker, is a fact we simply cannot consciously ignore.

Mr Speaker, leaving the car at home and walking or cycling means better air quality and better health and collectively we can leave behind a better place for future generations. After all, this is what the Climate Emergency is about, and this is what the Climate Change Strategy is aiming for. Without everyone doing their bit and educating ourselves, our future cannot realistically be rosy.

Mr Speaker, for the first time ever, in 2013 the death of a 9-year-old girl in U.K., thought to have asthma was attributed to air quality and her death certificate stated that air pollution was the cause of her death. This child Mr Speaker lived near the South Circular Road near Lewisham in SE London. This is the severity of the situation most cities face, and Gibraltar is no different. Furthermore, we have to contend with a stuffy and humid microclimate that causes our air to linger, and we are also in proximity of heavy industrial plants within the Bay which add greatly to our problem.

BICYCLES:

Mr Speaker, I now turn to the bicycle and the Ministry's initiatives in this respect.

The bicycle in one form or the other has been around since the early 1800's but the development of the safety bicycle in the 1880's was arguably the most important change in the history of the bicycle. It shifted its use and public perception from being a dangerous toy for sporting young men to being an everyday transport tool for men and women of all ages. It was decades later that the first commercially manufactured car would make an appearance.

At the time the view was that the car would eventually do away with the bicycle but in fact the bicycle has remained very much unchanged, whereas the car has had to evolve to survive, changing its shape and appearance, its use, and its means of propulsion.

With the dawn of the car, roads and streets slowly had to be adapted to the vehicles that would eventually change the way the world moved.

Mr Speaker, I am firmly of the view that the bicycle will outlive the car but regardless of my personal opinion, it is important and right to provide accessible streets for all to be able to choose their own means of travel.

Gibraltar clearly was never built for the car, the Upper Town and city within the walls is testament to that. Yet 'new' Gibraltar if I may call it that, has been planned around the car. Planning policy has

traditionally sought to provide space for car parking in all but a few of the newest developments and unfortunately creating the space for a harmonious co-existence for these different modes of transport never happened. Roads were built, yet no provision was ever made for bicycles.

Today, planning policy is very slowly changing and the Ministry for Transport actively seeks to ensure that all development applications take into consideration modern needs and apply the latest thinking with regards to urban planning. The design of street space is critical if we are to move towards a greener future. No matter how much we enjoy our cars, it is easy to draw the conclusion that ICE vehicles, HGVs, cars and vans all result in noise pollution, air quality deterioration, space challenges and the loss of potential and valuable recreational street space for people, families, and children to enjoy.

Mr Speaker, unfortunately resistance to change is strong and the way ahead potholed and with many obstacles, but this is certainly the direction that we must travel if we believe that there is a climate emergency and that we need to be proactive against climate change. Otherwise, it makes little to no sense.

Cycling is not for everyone, but neither is the bus or the car, the question here **MUST** be choice and to provide that choice, so that people may choose whether they drive, walk or cycle, but everyone must be allowed to do so safely and without fear. The problem is that cyclists often fear, especially for their children and many parents will not allow their children to cycle on the road. Pedestrian

often fear too, the speed of cars, delinquent drivers, the sound of noisy blasting turbo exhausts deliberately made to fire by rapid acceleration. Even those that drive on a Sunday for recreation, often fear cars and motorbikes overtaking them. The key is respect and unfortunately much respect

is being eroded together with road etiquette and this is fast becoming a big policing challenge across the board.

Cargo Bikes:

Mr Speaker, as part of our existing manifesto commitments, the Ministry is engaging with various stakeholders to allow Main Street businesses to make and receive deliveries all day by cargo bicycle and provide fiscal incentives for the use of cargo bikes for deliveries instead of via, often old polluting diesel trucks. Many cities are embracing the cargo-bicycle as a real and serious alternative to ICEs. E-Cargo bicycles are today capable of carrying huge loads and are relatively inexpensive to run and maintain.

RediBikes:

Mr Speaker, the existing bicycle sharing scheme and the concept of bicycle sharing is currently under review. Bicycle sharing technology is constantly advancing and as a result the Redibikes Scheme came to the end of its usable lifespan. It is well accepted that bicycle shared schemes form

a very important part of any cities' active shared mobility plan together with other more novel means

of personal mobility. Mr Speaker, Government will continue to explore ways of introducing shared personal mobility solutions as and when the time is deemed right.

Bicycle racks:

Mr Speaker, new bicycle racks are continuously being rolled out at strategic locations around Gibraltar with the latest additions being at Main Street South, Harbour Views Road, Casemates and John Mackintosh Square. There are, as it stands a total of 327 public cycle parking spaces throughout Gibraltar.

Pedal Ready:

Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Transport is happy to be re-launching Pedal Ready, in partnership with the GSLA, during their summer sports programme this August. The aim of Pedal Ready is to prepare children for cycling by using games to develop their cycle handling and awareness skills. Such a scheme offers our future generation the awareness and skills needed to adopt more sustainable travel options both now and in the future. Pedal Ready will also, over time be offering short courses for adults to teach them the basic skills of safe cycling on the road including road positioning, and the Highway Code. There will also be future opportunities to teach persons who have never cycled before to master the basic skills of balance.

Walking/Cycling Bus:

Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Transport, in conjunction with the Department of Education, will seek to trial walking and cycling 'buses' once the Mobility, Sustainability and Accessibility Scheme has kicked off. This scheme aims to encourage children to walk and cycle to school. This initiative would be beneficial not only for the health of the nation at large, as studies have shown that exercise before school improves concentration as well as providing known positive effects that exercise brings, but will also help to reduce the number of cars on the road during peak school drop off and pick up times as children will be encouraged to walk in a supervised manner with their peers as a sustainable and healthy means to travel to and back from school. This will hopefully lead to less school car trips.

Environmental Measures

No Idling zones:

Mr Speaker, the Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Climate Change in conjunction with the Ministry for Transport, is currently drafting anti-idling legislation. Research shows that an idling vehicle can emit up to 20 times more, of certain pollutants than a same vehicle traveling at 50 km/h. These microscopic pollutants can cause asthma and worsen chronic illness such as bronchial disease, lung cancer and emphysema and can be particularly damaging for children. By introducing this legislation, we hope to raise public awareness about the damage that can be caused to health by leaving vehicles idling unnecessarily. The powers under this legislation will mean that anybody

who leaves their engine running unnecessarily, while not in use, can be issued a fixed penalty notice if they do not turn off their engine when told to do so. The introduction of this legislation is just one measure the Government is looking at to improve local air quality. Clearly, this initiative is only possible when the whole population works together and understands the importance of reducing emissions in this way. Most modern cars already prevent unnecessary idling by cutting their engines out automatically when stopped, but this is a function that can be overridden manually by the driver. Idling is an even worse problem in older vehicles especially when some drivers refuse to switch engines off in order to keep their air conditioning running and their cabins cool.

LEZ:

Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Transport, in partnership with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Climate Change, is currently investigating the possibility of introducing a low emission zone or LEZ in the heart of our town, Main Street, in a bid to improve air quality in an area which sees many old diesel trucks delivering goods during the delivery times. Such a scheme could introduce a permit fee to discourage the use of these highly polluting vehicles to drive through Main Street and bring about a transition to newer and less polluting delivery vehicles such as electric vehicles or plug-in hybrids.

The Ministry has already met with the Chamber of Commerce to discuss the introduction of a Low Emissions Zone (LEZ) along Main Street. The proposed policy of this LEZ is currently being drafted and we have engaged with various stakeholders to allow Main Street businesses to make and

receive deliveries all day by cargo bikes. A fee would be considered, by way of an access permit which will be incrementally raised annually for delivery vehicles within this LEZ which are not environmentally friendly. The proposed scheme has been well received in principle and we look forward in working closely with our local businesses to see how we may be able to make this a reality in partnership. Permit fees would depend on the emissions of each vehicle and certain sustainable modes of transport would enjoy longer delivery times.

Speed camera:

Mr Speaker, the purchase of two, latest technology, handheld speed camera guns with photographic capabilities for the Royal Gibraltar Police was approved by Cabinet following a request by the Commissioner of Police in order to improve the policing of speeding offences. This system does not require a police officer to stop a vehicle as the photographic evidence means that these handheld devices work similarly to a static pole mounted speed camera.

PLET Legislation:

Mr Speaker, the Personal Light Electric Transporters Bill is now drafted and will be brought to Parliament very shortly. The legislation will provide these devices a sound legal framework which will allow these vehicles to operate legally and safely within Gibraltar. It will define the personal light electric transporters that fall within this special framework and will focus on safety; and for example, make it a requirement that an operator of a transporter wears appropriate protective

headgear further setting a minimum age and speed limits. The Bill will also amend the Traffic Act, to ensure for example that the offences which can be committed by cyclists are replicated for operators of

personal light electric transporters. The amendments to the Act will allow amendment of existing subsidiary legislation to ensure that it is clear that operators of these personal mobility devices are required to comply with the rules of road safety that apply to the users of other vehicles.

Highway Code:

Mr Speaker, the updated Gibraltar Highway Code is now completed and should be available online shortly. There will also be a printed version available to the general public. The new Gibraltar Highway Code which follows from the new UK code and standards, takes into account relevant changes made in the UK Highway Code. This new code which reinforces new rules and most significantly provides increased priority to the most vulnerable, the pedestrian and the cyclist within the modern streetscape. The Ministry has been working very closely with the Royal Gibraltar Police and the Chief Examiner at the DVLD, who are the principal stakeholders in this document.

Cycle Lane Legislation:

Mr Speaker, in preparation for the introduction of cycle lanes in Gibraltar, the Government Law Offices are currently in the process of drafting out regulations concerning the use of, as well as the

exclusions on the use of cycle lanes. This legislation will also include the introduction of an offence of “Dangerous overtaking of a cyclist”.

Penalty Points system:

Mr Speaker, the draft bill for the implementation of a Penalty Points System is now complete and ready to go before Parliament. The software back-office solution is nearing its final stages and should be ready ahead of the Bill being brought before Parliament. All ancillary documentation and processes have now been prepared. We aim for the system to be up and running very shortly after the Bill is enacted.

ASL – Advanced Stop Lines:

Mr Speaker, the Ministry is finalising plans for the introduction of Advanced Stop Lines for cyclists at certain specific strategic locations. New legislation would need to be published for these new road improvements so that they are enforceable and used as intended.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department

Mr Speaker, I now turn my attention to the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Department. The DVLD has had an extremely challenging two years due to all the necessary amendments to legislations and additional requirements when driving in Europe. This has proven challenging at times with the DVLD team working closely with the Government Law Offices, DVLA (UK) and HM Government of Gibraltar Office in Brussels in order to meet the imposed deadlines.

Mr Speaker, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department have embraced and used information technology as a tool to achieve a better and more efficient service to our customers. To date, it offers a total of 13 online services and applications via the e-Government portal. The department is in the process of providing further services in the coming months.

The DVLD continues to see a considerable demand from its service users and also offers its services through its public facing counters, which includes a dedicated Business Counter.

The department has managed to maintain very reasonable waiting times and expedite tests for students and those requiring driving licences for work related matters despite an increased workload.

The introduction of the express service is providing our local dealers a next day service for new vehicle registrations, duplicate certificate of registration, change of ownership and motor vehicle particulars. We are looking forward to introducing an express service for driving licences in the near future.

With regards to special driving licenses such as categories for buses and Heavy goods vehicles, the department arranged for a Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) trainer from the UK to come to Gibraltar as soon as the COVID restrictions were lifted. This allowed all existing

licence holders to undertake their respective refresher update courses and new applicants were able to meet the stringent requirements of these licence categories. The courses were delivered by an approved UK instructor.

Mr Speaker, the Compulsory Basic Training or CBT, continues to be a huge success and continues to receive very good feedback, especially from parents. I am very proud to have introduced the Compulsory Basic Training for Motorbikes back in 2013 which has improved road safety, mainly for teenagers driving on our busy roads. The Government of Gibraltar is pleased with the success of the Compulsory Motorcycle Basic Training Course, almost ten years after its introduction.

This important course continues to ensure that every person demonstrates a minimum level of skill and competence before being permitted to drive on our roads. I cannot emphasize the importance of this training that is delivered by qualified motorcycle instructors, and I am confident that this compulsory procedure will continue to help prevent serious injuries and accidents on the roads of Gibraltar.

I am proud to announce that following the successful MOT booking system developed by ITLD, the Department is now working to introduce a full online booking service for the CBT to include theory and practical motorcycle riding test components that will allow service users to choose their own bookings online, providing a quicker and more efficient service to the public.

Continuing with road safety, the Government has invested in new brake rollers for the Certificate of Roadworthiness tests (otherwise known as MOT tests) within the Test Centre. These will help vehicle testers when examining vehicles. Continuous investment and improvements are the best way to ensure further road safety and the Government is fully committed to this.

Mr Speaker, environmental matters are also of importance and the Motor Vehicle Test Centre boasts of the latest equipment to test vehicle emissions. The equipment fully complies with the EU testing legislation and is in line with the Manifesto commitment for a Greener Gibraltar. By conducting these tests, our vehicle testers can establish if any part of the emission system of a motor vehicle has been tampered with, removed, or otherwise illegally modified.

Mr Speaker, The DVLD have also come a long way in establishing a database link with other Member States in accordance with EU directives. The DVLD shares vehicle information via the "European Register of Road Transport Undertakings" - known as ERRU, via the Driver and Vehicle Services Agency.

EUCARIS (the European CAR and driving license Information System) is another example of the information exchange software system that the DVLD uses to provide the necessary framework to other countries in order to share, their car and driving licence registration information.

Taxi City Service:

Mr Speaker, after a brief stop due to the pandemic the Taxi city service has been fully restored and with the help of our transport inspectors the provision of the City Service will be monitored. The Government works closely with the Gibraltar Taxi Association to try to improve the service being provided. I am also pleased to announce that Gibraltar now has its first Electric Taxi within its fleet.

Transport Commission

Mr Speaker, the Transport Commission meets on a regular basis to consider applications for a wide range of transport licences. The Commission also considers all transport-based complaints received from users of our Public Services. I must thank all members of the Commission who give their time regularly to provide and deliver the statutory responsibilities of this forum, to all.

Transport Inspectors:

Mr Speaker, the Transport Inspector team provide cover on the ground to police transport related activities throughout Gibraltar. Their duties include the overseeing of our Taxi and Bus services and the inspection of the taxi provision service at the Airport. Furthermore, the Transport Inspectors oversee the provision of the Taxi city service throughout the year and ensure that all permits to access pedestrianised areas, particularly those accessed by commercial vehicles, are adhered to.

New Driving Licence:

Mr Speaker, with Brexit came the requirement to make changes to our present driving licence format which included the removal of the EU stars from our licence cards. As from the 3rd May,

Gibraltar has been printing and issuing the latest model of driving licence, as currently used in the UK with our Gibraltar issuing authority label. These cards have been printed within our Test Centre's newly refurbished facilities reducing the costs of production. A new MOU has been signed with UK reducing further the cost of our blank cards.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the entire DVLD team for their hard work, who have managed to ensure a continuity of service and introduce substantial improvements throughout the entire department during somewhat challenging and uncertain times.

Gibraltar Bus Company Limited:

Mr Speaker, Gibraltar's buses are a key and very critical part of transport within the STTPP.

Encouraging modal change also 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 except for the night bus services.

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

The Request Bus Stops at certain bus-stops has greatly improved the service timing and made the ride more comfortable for both the user and the bus driver. Nevertheless, we would like to see greater take-up of the bus service throughout the whole community. At present the bus service is used predominantly by school children and the over 60's group. This results in a massive take up during the morning and at school times and very low usage during the day and weekends.

Mr Speaker, the school bus routes operating every weekday during school term, continue to be a success. This service tackles the issues brought to our attention by users who were concerned that route buses were full at school peak times.

The Bus Company shares a hopper ticket with Calypso Transport. The hopper ticket or “hop on – hop off”, enables visitors to Gibraltar and make the most of Gibraltar’s attractions within the city centre and other areas located within the lower reaches of the Rock, at their own pace throughout the day. The hopper ticket can be used on all of Gibraltar’s public buses.

Mr Speaker, we will continue to explore ways to improve the current service.

Mr Speaker, 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.

Gibraltar Parking Management Services Limited:

Mr Speaker, Parking enforcement continues being a massive challenge in a town with one of the largest vehicle ownership rates in the world. The sheer volume of cars means that there is a constant and daily battle to find a place to park these cars. Often cars park illegally on pavements

and abuse the zone parking rules. This provides a massive challenge to provide all year-round enforcement. To this end, parking enforcement has had to evolve to rise to the challenge.

During lock-down, with very quiet streets, GPMSL took the opportunity to install all the required Smart Parking Sensors within the Pay & Display areas. This technology would prove essential with the development of other projects which followed.

2022 saw the soft launch of a mobile phone app and website branded simply "Gibraltar Parking". This is our local implementation of SmartParking technology. Using a sensor placed under each parking space, the online map shows drivers which bays are available for use. Before the introduction of this system, drivers would need to drive around looking for a parking space but this new technology directs users to the empty spaces in the area. This helps reduce the need of driving aimless and speculatively and therefore provides an environmental benefit.

Further investment has been made in the Operator Control Room. Operating around the clock, the control room team watches live CCTV feeds from all of our car parks and other relevant sites. Through secure website portals the Controller and his assistants can see the status of the pay and display machines, the SmartParking sensors and other systems including the bollards at Casemate's Square. These open and close automatically on a daily basis for cleaning and deliveries. They are also programmed in advance of special events such as the recent visit of Prince Edward and the

Countess of Wessex where maximum security is achieved whilst allowing remote opening from the control room in the event of an emergency.

Mr. Speaker, the Pandemic saw a move from people willing to queue in public areas and wait in line to be attended to, in the traditional counter environment to opting for smarter, on-line services. Gibraltar Car Parks did not have a website before the Pandemic. As local restrictions were imposed, a website was developed in-house. Important documents were converted from paper format to online, tested, and then made available to the public. Now, all forms which were previously only available in paper format at the public counter were added to the website and can now all be accessed online.

Mr Speaker, Post Covid and with the introduction of alternatives to cash payment systems at Pay & Display machines, we have seen a reduction in cash payments generally and these are seen to continue to drop over time. Over the past 3 months cash payments have dropped further to 35% from 46%. This makes for a more effective service as via the app, paying for parking can be done remotely if a person needs to extend their parking time within the limits set within each parking area. It is the hope and aim to be moving to cashless systems in the near future.

Conclusion

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, I would once again like to thank all those working within my respective departments, most of which I have got to know personally throughout the years and whom I enjoy

and share an invaluable professional relationship with. I would like to thank all management, technical and administrative staff at Technical Services, the Sewer Section, Highways Division, the garage and workshop personnel, the Gibraltar Bus Company staff, its drivers, and mechanical staff, and those involved with parking management and enforcement.

Mr Speaker, I would also like to thank Management and all the staff down at the DVLD.

Mr Speaker, finally, I would like to thank my Ministry and technical team for their efforts throughout the past year.

I also wish to thank all Parliamentary Staff for their hard work and assistance.

Mr Speaker, this has been the toughest Budget Speech ever, for me to prepare. When one's body and mind was elsewhere for weeks on end and at a time when I needed the most support, much welcomed support came from an unexpected source.

Mr Speaker, I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to someone, a public servant, who I got to know very well over the years I have been in Government, a person who I have worked closely with and travelled with on Government business in the past and who kindly offered to assist me, during the latter stages of the preparation of my speech giving up of his family time after working hours and during 2 weekends, even while overseeing the children at the pool.

You know who you are, and I am most grateful.

This one is for you dad.