



PRESS RELEASE

No: 184/2018

Date: 23rd March 2018

Heritage and Antiquities Bill

Yesterday, Thursday, the Government published the new Heritage and Antiquities Bill, whose primary aim is to protect and manage Gibraltar's heritage, applying not only to land but also to heritage within British Gibraltar Territorial Waters.

One of the major steps proposed in the Bill is the creation of the Heritage and Antiquities Advisory Council, which will advise the Minister on all matters relating to Heritage and Antiquities. The Council is required to provide the Minister with an annual report, which will be laid before Parliament.

The Protection of Monuments and Buildings operates on the basis of listing in a schedule those monuments or buildings that will benefit from a regime of protection from damage or alteration through works. Damage, including damage by demolition through to depositing any refuse, rubbish or litter is made an offence. Works to a scheduled building or monument may, however be undertaken where these have been authorised. Where urgent preservation is required the Minister may order remedial works to be undertaken and the costs be recovered from the owner.

A total of 235 sites are included in the Schedule, approximately 80 more than in the existing Act, and which now for the first time ever 12 submerged sites are included.

The Bill provides for certain areas to be listed as scheduled historical conservation areas, although none have been included for the time being. This, together with the possibility of including further sites, such as those on private property, will now be one of the first tasks for the new Heritage and Antiquities Council to consider and advise.

The Bill also provides for renaming the Gibraltar Museum the Gibraltar National Museum and provides for the appointment and functions of a Curator. The property of the Museum vests in the Crown and is held for the benefit and enjoyment of the public.

It also establishes the Gibraltar National Archives and provides for the appointment of an Archivist.



This Part also makes it a duty of every public officer or employee who holds public records to select records for preservation and their eventual transfer to the Archive.

The Bill defines the Gibraltar Heritage Trust. The Gibraltar Heritage Trust Act 1989 is repealed by this Bill, but notwithstanding, the Trust will continue to exist and operate as if it had been established under this Bill instead.

There are also miscellaneous provisions including the creation of a register of scheduled monuments or buildings, historical conservation and archaeological areas. It also contains provisions on restrictions on the removal of antiquities or objects of interest from Gibraltar and restrictions on the use of equipment.

The Ministry for Heritage, the Gibraltar Heritage Trust and the Gibraltar Museum have all been involved as stakeholders in the process, both before and after the original Command Paper was published.

Commenting on the Bill, which will be read in Parliament after the statutory six week period, Minister for Heritage John Cortes commented, "A lot of hard work has gone into this, and I am grateful to all of those who have given their time and expertise in the process. The Bill sets out a new way and better of dealing with Heritage, and reflects Gibraltar's interest in the subject, and its sense of responsibility. It sets out a robust framework for consultation and further progress in protection of our heritage assets on land and under the sea. I am very much looking forward to working with all the stakeholders in continuing on this journey."