55th British Islands and Mediterranean Region Conference (BIMR) Report

Modern Legislatures for Modern Challenges

Dates: Wednesday 17 – Friday 19 June 2026
Location: Gibraltar

Wednesday 17 June

Arrival and Registration

Delegates officially arrived and registered for the conference.

Evening welcome reception hosted by the Hon. Judge Karen Ramagge Phillips GMH MP, Speaker of the Gibraltar Parliament

At this gathering I met Baroness Sugg, who was also a delegate at the conference. Baroness Sugg was the Minister for the Overseas Territories in 2019 when COVID-19 struck, she was very supportive to the Overseas Territories where she held weekly teleconferences with lead representatives. I represented St. Helena at the time, so I was able to thank her in person for the level of support shown and the funding provided to St. Helena. She will be visiting the island in January 2027 and she has agreed to continue to support St Helena in any way she can. She understands the financial challenges we face.

Thursday 18 June

Official opening of the conference by the Speaker of the Gibraltar Parliament, followed by a welcome speech by the Chief Minister the Hon. F R Picardo KC MP

The first Plenary Session

Redefining relationships with the European Union and the Commonwealth, led by the Deputy Chief Minister, The Hon Dr. Joseph Garcia, CMG MP

He shared Gibraltar's situation and the impact it would have had on Gibraltar's economy, since 15000 migrants cross Gibraltar's borders every day for work and other related matters. Through tough negotiations with Spain and other partners the arrangement has been allowed to continue. The Gibraltar Government did all of their own negotiations without support from Britain and the tool they used was that 96% of Gibraltar's population voted to remain in the EU.

I was able to feed in the loss St. Helena faced by Britain exiting the EU, we no longer receive European Development Funding for major type projects which stands to benefit the

community. A battle we must continue to have with the British Government, given the fact we were promised St. Helena would not lose out on such funding.

The second Plenary Session

The afternoon session focused on Future – Ready Economies in Small Mediterranean Jurisdictions

The rationale being how legislatures can equip small Mediterranean economies to meet modern economic challenges through sound credible law making. In St. Helena we are not on our own – many countries have outdated laws no longer fit for purpose.

Evening Official Dinner Hosted by the Chief Minister

Friday 19 June 2026

The third Plenary Session

Youth Parliament and Democratic Continuity in 21st Century Legislatures. Led by the Speaker the Hon. Karen Phillips.

Focus being Youth engagement as a pipeline for future Parliamentary Participation. A platform for Youth to engage, accept challenges and aspire to taking on leadership roles in society.

There was a Youth debate discussion, where they were able to share their experience as being part of the Youth Parliament, which was only established in May 2026. Their Youth Parliament is mainly a government led initiative, led by the Speaker and her Administration Team, although the Youth have a responsibility for their dedication and commitment; the Government of Gibraltar sees their Youth as future ambassadors.

Workshop 1 –

Digital Parliaments, chaired by Phillip Borge McCarthy from the Secretariat of Gibraltar

Phillip explained the importance of the Hansards and having them produced in a quick timeframe, typing is something of the past, there are now digital tools available to do the job for you. Other panel members shared their experience on how safe and efficient the digital tools are. This is an area where I feel St Helena should explore and obtain support from the CPA. From an initial discussion with Jarvis Matiya who is the Deputy Secretary General of the CPA, they would be happy to assist St. Helena.

Workshop 2 –

Allyship and Representation in Parliament: Advancing inclusion for LGBT+ individuals – Chaired by the Hon. C Santos GMD MP – Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism

The following session was to explore how Parliament as an institution and workplace can foster respect, visibility, fairness and practical inclusion for LGBT individuals while encouraging all colleagues to understand the role of allyship, Panel members shared their experiences where they were not accepted in certain cases.

VOTING

It was agreed that Small Branches should be allowed two votes as opposed to one to elect the regional representative.

Closing Session

Official Dinner hosted by the Speaker, Hon, Judge Karen Phillips

I found the conference to be very beneficial, good contacts were made and sharing of information. There are various sources of funding streams available and I was supplied with the details and hopefully will be able to follow through to benefit our parliament. Most delegates present came to St. Helena on the 2024 conference, where they talked very highly of our island and would welcome the opportunity to visit again. This is good for St. Helena, we should continue to seize opportunities such as this.

Gibraltar has a variety of skilled workers in many cases surplus to requirements, such as teachers and engineers etc, they are willing to help. The Deputy Chief Minister has provided his contact details which I will share with Ministers.

Prepared by:
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