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Contents

News P6

A round up of business news from the Rock

Law P8

Managing conflicts: Avoiding the reality and perception of conflicts of interest



Tourism P12

New attractions, hotel and infrastructure investments

Insurance P16

Brexit: An update of the issues



Property P20

Property outlook & market update 2018/19



Events P26

First Gibraltar Day in Tel Aviv

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HM Government of Gibraltar

Coinfloor secures first DLT license in Gibraltar

The Gibraltar Financial Services Commission (GFSC) has issued its first Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) licence to the U.K.'s oldest cryptocurrency exchange, Coinfloor.

The Regulatory Framework that came into effect in January, primarily to protect consumers and the reputation of Gibraltar is an example of how the jurisdiction has taken the lead when it comes to legislating cryptocurrency and blockchain.

Coinfloor, the London based crypto exchange, is the first offshore company to gain recognition as a regulated entity.

Obi Nwosu, Coinfloors CEO, commented to the Financial Times: "What impressed us was that this (legislation) was in the works for a long time. It's been well thought out, well considered. They are focusing on quality over quantity."



Blockchain giants close to completing DLT licences

eToro and First are in the process of completing their licence applications, which will enable them to operate from Gibraltar.

At a reception hosted by Hassans in Tel Aviv in October, part of the Gibraltar Day events in Israel, the CEOs of both companies said that the licence application process had been an arduous one, but that they counted this in

Gibraltar's favour as a serious place to do business.

eToro, the world's largest social trading platform with over 10m registered users and 500 employees worldwide met with the Chief Minister, Fabian Picardo and Minister for Commerce, Albert Isola, earlier this year for advanced talks to establish a presence for the company in Gibraltar.

Chief Minister remains optimistic about EU exit talks

An agreement which provides for Gibraltar's orderly withdrawal from the European Union is almost complete, Gibraltar's Chief Minister, Fabian Picardo announced in October.

Following intensive Brexit meetings in London and Brussels, Mr Picardo said that there are a few issues that remain to be ironed out, but that he remained confident that the terms of a protocol to include Gibraltar would be agreed between the United Kingdom and European Union.

The meetings centred on the details of a specific protocol to the Withdrawal Agreement for Gibraltar, similar to protocols for Northern Ireland and the UK sovereign base areas in Cyprus.

It is important to note that the discussions on Gibraltar are part of the wider Brexit negotiations, for the United Kingdom to exit the European Union.

In the meantime the Government of Gibraltar continues to prepare for all eventualities, including the possibility of a no deal Brexit.

Isolas contributes to Blockchain and Crypto regulation publication

Gibraltar's longest established law firm, Isolas LLP, contributed a chapter to the Global Legal Insights Blockchain and Cryptocurrency Regulation 2019.

Joey Garcia, one of only 12 global blockchain legal experts recognised by Chambers & Partners commented: "Blockchain & Cryptocurrency Regulation 2019 covers government attitude and definition, cryptocurrency regulation, sales regulation, taxation, money transmission laws and anti-money laundering requirements, promotion and testing, ownership and licensing requirement, mining, border restrictions and more.

In my view, it is critical to Gibraltar's success as a jurisdiction with such a strong focus in this area of business to continue to engage in these initiatives. It is important for Gibraltar that those of us who are leading the charge in this space should be taking the time to fully understand and engage in the debate relating to all the very complex and emerging issues relevant to the blockchain and cryptocurrency business."



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Managing conflicts



Avoiding the reality and perception of conflicts of interest

By Marcus Killick,
Chief Executive Officer,
Isolas LLP

Recently the UK media have debated, at some length, the appointment of Sir David Green, former director of the Serious Fraud Office, to a new job at the law firm Slaughter and May, given that Slaughter and May represented some of the biggest companies that Sir David prosecuted during his six years as head of the Fraud Office.

Sir David had to wait six months (which is common practice) from leaving his role in the public service. He also had to wait for approval from the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments which vets the suitability of new jobs for former senior civil

servants and ministers.

Despite all the above Slaughter and May still announced that Sir David effectively had been ring-fenced at the law firm, which he is joining as a consultant, after concerns were raised over his new role, namely, that there was a risk that his new job could lead to conflicts of interest.

The process now followed in the UK is designed as much to prevent the perception of conflict, as the reality. It came about as a result of a perceived "revolving door" where senior public figures left their role to turn up on the boards of the very firms they had been negotiating with, taking action against or giving contracts to. Few seriously believed that these people may have acted in an inappropriate way to secure their new appointment but anything that left a perception that they might have done debased both the individual and the organization they previously worked for.

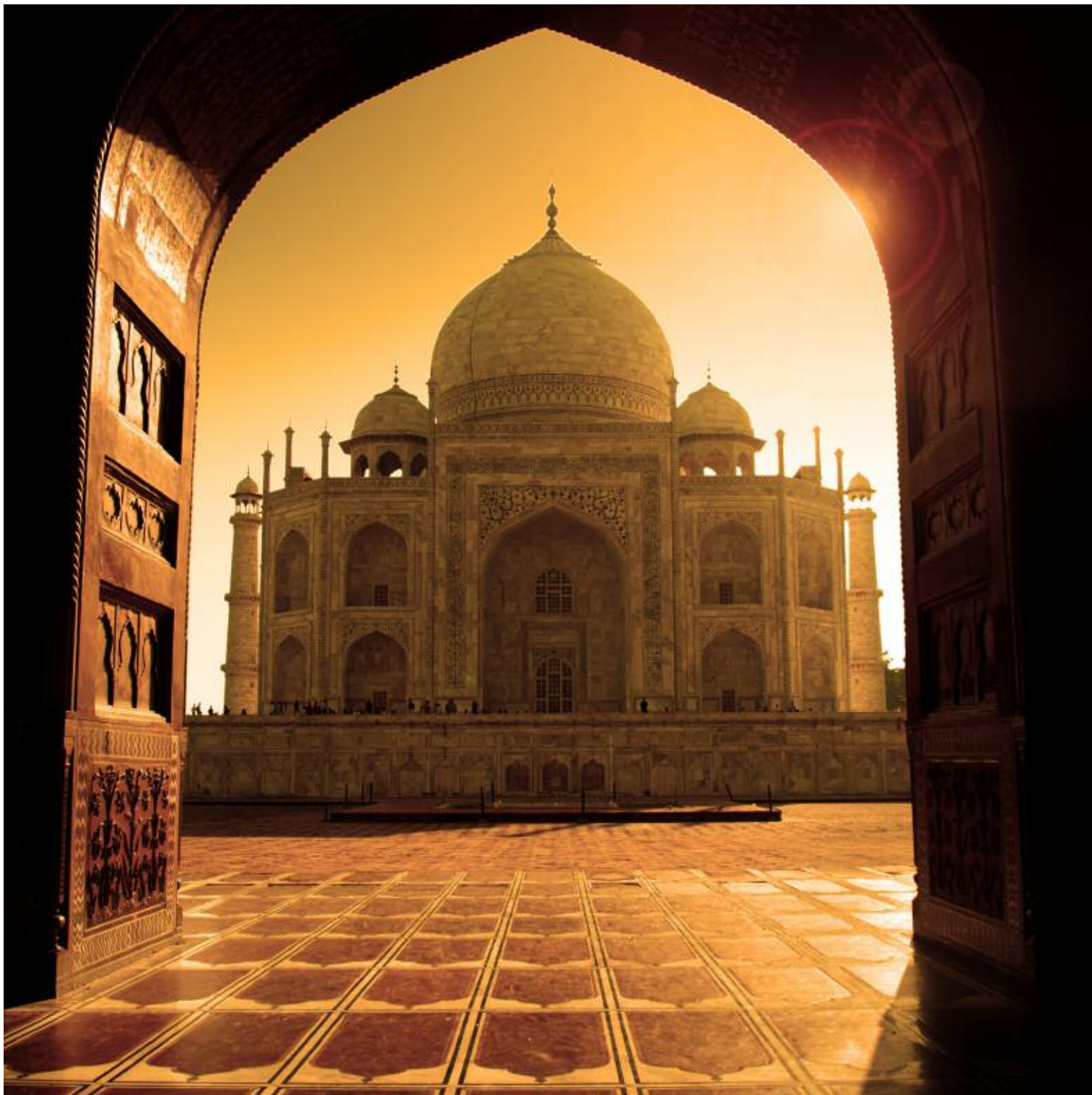
Six months time period

Having the requirement for independent approval removes that risk as does the imposition of a six month gap.

Six months is, by itself a compromise. It is wrong to deny an individual the right to continue to work after they leave (and it is logical that their future employment will be linked to the skills they have built up during their working life, including in their previous role). However it does allow their knowledge of specific ongoing matters to become dated. I was subject to this six month rule when I left the FSC although this was reduced to four and a half as I was asked to stay six weeks after my agreed leave date because my successor was unable to start then. My predecessor had been subject to a 12 month prohibition. The work restriction during this period is, by necessity, wide, as conflicts are not always apparent on day 1.

Conflicts of interest are not simply an issue for former public servants, Non-Executive Directors (NEDs), given their

Continued p10



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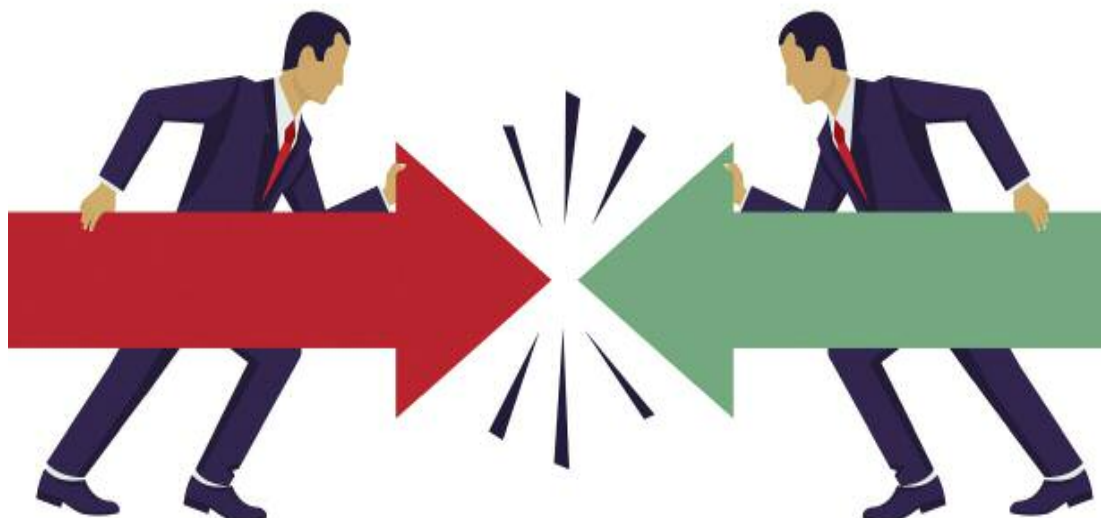
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Continued from p8

enhanced role in recent years, are increasing having to consider the possibility of such conflicts and how to deal with them. NED contracts for services now normally contain clauses prohibiting an NED taking a similar role with a competing firm and often require approval of subsequent board appointments.



Overboarding

Conflict must also be seen far wider than simply the risk that an individual may learn something on one board which would be commercially advantageous to another board they sit on. Two key conflict issues are time and the ability to properly perform all your expected duties.

In respect of time, regulators have become increasingly concerned about the

The ability to perform your full range of duties is another matter an NED must consider. Traditionally, one way for an NED to manage a conflict is to stand aside from the matter over which the conflict exists. For example, not participating in a credit decision where the potential borrower is linked. Recusing on a case by case basis is effective

to perform their duties renders them unsuitable to continue and the need for them to be replaced by someone who can. Such an impairment is inconceivable for an executive director, it should be no more acceptable for an NED.

The above two matters are vital but are not the only considerations. They are however unique as they defy the standard approach of disclosing an interest and managing it accordingly with board support. Furthermore they are not covered by standard confidentiality clauses, as confidentiality is not the issue.

As such, and particularly for NEDs on the boards of licensed entities, they must now be material considerations. Regulators have become increasingly focused on the role of NEDs who have never been more vulnerable to sanction if something goes wrong. It is difficult seeing a large level of sympathy resulting from an excuse from the NED that they didn't have time or had precluded themselves from playing their full fiduciary role because of their other activities.

If an NED has to recuse themselves from a material part of the board's considerations on an ongoing basis then it has to be questioned whether they can truly perform their role properly

concept of "overboarding". This is where an NED assumes too many roles with the resultant risk that they cannot devote sufficient time to each to enable them to conduct their fiduciary role properly. Indeed MiFID II has specific requirements and restrictions over this. These requirements are even stricter where an individual is already the CEO of a licensed entity. Whilst such a proscriptive approach is less than ideal as no account is taken of the size of the entities or their activities, the message is clear, such possible conflicts of time interest must be considered by all NEDs. Furthermore, as the level of an NEDS work is not consistent, the time available must allow for peaks and not just a steady state.

and is vital in a small jurisdiction such as Gibraltar where such situations are not uncommon.

Chronic conflict

Of more difficulty is "chronic" conflict. Here the conflict manifests itself on a permanent basis and is not restricted to a single client or counterparty. An NED is a director of the board, the board covers the entire activities of the business. If an NED has to recuse themselves from a material part of the board's considerations on an ongoing basis then it has to be questioned whether they can truly perform their role properly. The company may justifiably question the extent to which such a hampering of the board member in their ability

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New attractions, hotel and infrastructure investments



More flights and multi-million pound investments are set to give Gibraltar's tourist sector a much-needed boost over the next 2-3 years, Ray Spencer reports

The collapse of Monarch Airlines in October 2017 was "catastrophic" for Gibraltar, causing a 40% immediate reduction in flights to the jurisdiction from the UK, high hotel room cancellations and financial loss.

The 5-star Sunborn floating hotel with 186 rooms at Ocean Village "lost £0.5m of bookings overnight and it obviously affected our profits", reports Hans Niemi, group executive director for the Finnish hospitality and development conglomerate.

Within 24 hours, the 4-star Caleta Hotel faced 820 room-night cancellations; "the impact was huge and I think it was similar for every other hotel in Gibraltar", suggests Franco Ostuni, the Caleta's general manager.

Gibraltar's government is seeking over £300,000 in unpaid Monarch departure, landing and parking fees from administrators, KPMG. The estimated income from the airport this financial year at £4.65m is 23% below that

originally estimated for 2017-18.

The two remaining airlines serving Gibraltar are increasing their schedules. In December easyJet will add a fourth flight each week from Bristol using larger aircraft, and will also launches a London Luton service twice a week, while British Airways (BA) will have four extra flights from Heathrow.

The net effect is that there will be 193,300 available seats – 41% more – this winter from five airports compared to 2017, but that still will be a fifth less than the 2016 winter offering. As Gilbert Licudi, minister for tourism, observes: "We clearly are not quite at the level we were before Monarch collapsed...we still have a lot of work to do".

Gibraltar Tourist Board (GTB) is trying to persuade new airlines to commit, but chief executive Nicky Guerrero, points to a lack of hub airport landing slots, suitable uncommitted aircraft to land at the RAF-run airfield (with the sea at either end) and specially-trained pilots.

"I don't think in the short term there is another operator with the ability to serve Gibraltar", he admits, adding: "Airlines have differing operating models; some operate to destinations that have a slightly higher leisure capacity and where they can offer holidays too."

Superbreak, the Leeds-based tour operator, intends offering charter flights from several UK regional airports from Easter, it is

understood, having failed this year to gain sufficient spare aircraft. BA is believed to be again running London Gatwick summer services from end-March; easyJet's Manchester service also is expected to be enhanced from mid-August.

Bump in the road

Niemi sees the drop in flights, coupled with a steep rise in air fares, as "a bump in the road" even though 80% of Sunborn guests fly to Gibraltar. "The market gradually will come back so that by next year, hopefully, we will see growth." With fewer clients, "we have to have a higher rates policy – ours has been going up by double figures. We frequently are selling rooms at €300+", he explains.

This summer the Caleta Hotel reduced its 124 rooms to 66 to replace them with a niche, top-end 44-room 'Suites at Caleta' hotel within 2-3 years at a cost of £15m.

The same firm in late-May opened a 120-bed, 4th generation Holiday Inn Express (HIE) hotel close to the airport, a £12m investment franchised by InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) that was full to capacity within four days of launch and at end-September still had 100+ rooms per night booked on average. Its 3-star+ double rooms at £85-95 a night, including breakfast, provided 24 new hospitality jobs.

Franco Ostuni, who also is responsible for

Continued p14



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Continued from p12

the HIE hotel, declares: "We always thought there were 30 rooms every night in every hotel in Gibraltar, including the Caleta, that would relocate when the Holiday Inn Express opened; our assessment was right, because there was a lack of a limited service hotel, and it's obviously price driven."

40% more hotel rooms

However, a significant 40% rise from the circa 650 present Gibraltar hotel rooms is expected in the period to 2021, the result of fresh investments.

IHG is establishing a second brand – a 120-bedroom Indigo boutique hotel – in Gibraltar, "which we recognize is becoming an increasingly popular destination for both business and leisure travellers", under a franchise arrangement with UK hotel developer Roquebrook, which is converting an office building near the centre for completion at end-2020.

capacity at the current air visitor level. If you disregard Monarch's collapse and say it didn't happen and add 5% growth every year in overnight arrivals, we still wouldn't make it," Niemi insists.

Before Sunborn opened in early 2014 "Gibraltar hotels experienced 50-60% occupancy – it was even below 50% in 2000 – and each was battling for clients", he asserts. "Sunborn was a catalyst for a lot of upgrading and investment in the hotel sector, which has benefited everybody, because everyone is getting a better rate, there's been consolidation in the hotel market and, simultaneously, we have been lucky enough to see the overall market and Gibraltar's GDP growing."

Niemi adds: "The biggest thing we battle when we go around the world selling this yacht hotel is that we first have to tell people where Gibraltar is! It's not about the hotel, it's a lot about the destination." Like other major hotels locally, Sunborn attracts 50:50 business and

the iconic 94-bed Rock Hotel, submits: "Room rates are rising – I don't see too much price cutting generally, but the differentiation between hotels is marked." Although the UK remains predominant, "we have been attracting business from new markets – Spain and Portugal – and cross border custom," he says.

2017 government hotel and air arrival statistics indicate up to a third of 278,000 airport arrivals stayed overnight in Gibraltar hotels for an average of 3.2 nights. Yet the airport terminal arrivals and public areas at present feature little information to attract more visitors, particularly from those crossing the border into Spain.

Minister Licudi concedes: "We may be missing an opportunity; there is no analysis more generally of how many of those going straight to Spain have ever been into Gibraltar. Maybe that is something we should be looking at."

Mind the transport gap

With near 10m day visitors arriving from Spain per annum, industry leaders believe up to 3m are "genuine" tourists open to more than Gibraltar's Duty Free alcohol, cigarettes and jewellery shopping. "We want to convert those visitors into tourists: we have things to show, but we lack the tourist infrastructure to show it off", maintains George Gaggero, chief executive of M H Bland, whose 1966-built Cable Car to the top of The Rock carries 400,000 of the 1m+ annual visitors to the Nature Reserve there.

At end-October, he was seeking planning approval for a £20m+ upgrade to the top attraction Swiss cable car and increase capacity 3½ fold – to reach 1,150 people per hour – but challengingly, that will mean its closure for 18 months from autumn next year!

Gaggero is also promoting a plan to introduce electric rubber wheeled, hop-on, hop-off "trains" in a circuit to link all of the Upper Rock sites and another circuit from the frontier for ground level attractions – "from the entry points into Gibraltar to feed the tourist sites; to join the dots". As a joint public-private venture it would involve all Gibraltar's tourist sector – tour coaches, taxis, buses, site operators and government. "It would enable tourists to go around all of the sights in Gibraltar with minimal impact on the environment," Gaggero enthuses.

His Calypso fleet of 36 coaches ferry 15,000 people a year on Rock Tours, principally for passengers from cruise ships – 250 were expected in 2018, a 6% rise, and eleven calling for the first time. In 2017, only around 41% of the 578,000 passengers and crew went ashore, in part because there were high numbers of repeat

The Windsor Suspension Bridge, part of the thrill seekers walking trail



Lester Hotels, through its City Homes Hospitality business, has planning approval for a 180 room aparthotel also close to the airport and will be a two-year build.

Last year's overall Gibraltar hotel occupancy was at an all-time high – 71% of availability. Sunborn is expecting it to be less in 2018, "but with rates going up by double figure percentile", reports Niemi. "Unfortunately, that is not going to be sustainable, because of the increasing [hotel] capacity.

"If someone is investing into a hotel business here, they must have had a feasibility study, but there is none that supports more

leisure travellers. "We don't rely on anyone else to bring us business. When we opened in this jurisdiction, we weren't expecting to steal everyone else's business, as there simply was no luxury market in Gibraltar – but there is now."

Ostuni emphasises: "The overall growth in the hotel offer is disproportionate to growth in the market. It would be unrealistic to say that HIE has grown the market by 120 rooms in so little time! Eventually in 1-1½ years' time, I am sure the brand will create some awareness of the destination and there will be an element of growth because of that."

Charles Danino, 6 years general manager of

Continued p28



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An update of the issues

By Steve Quinn,
Managing Director,
Artex Risk Solutions
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The biggest danger following the United Kingdom (UK) and Gibraltar's departure from the European Union (EU) for any insurance company or intermediary is a loss of passporting rights. Passporting is the ability, for example, for a UK or Gibraltar insurer or intermediary to conduct business in any EU member state. If a business is licensed in the UK or Gibraltar, under current EU rules and regulations following appropriate notification to its local (Home) regulator it is deemed to be able to operate throughout the EU. This authority exists without the requirement for separate authorisation in each individual (Host) jurisdiction.

The number of insurers and intermediaries enjoying passporting rights from the UK and Gibraltar into the EU runs to thousands in total and the dangers posed by Brexit are that these privileges will be stopped unless

corrective action is taken.

The difficulty that the market is faced with is the complete uncertainty caused by the political machinations in the UK and the seemingly intransigent position being adopted by the European Commission in Brussels.

As a consequence of this wholly confused position regulated entities need to be planning for the worst and then perhaps hoping for something better than this.

Hard Brexit

Transition arrangements have been talked about but these are still not set in stone. UK regulators are offering EU insurers access until the end of 2020 and possibly beyond, but this position has yet to be reciprocated by the EU. Equally it is not apparent (probably extremely unlikely) whether such transitional arrangements would still be allowed to apply if the UK experiences a

Continued p18

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Continued from p16

"Hard" Brexit, i.e. it leaves the EU in March 2019 without a deal.

So in terms of preparing for the worst, insurers and intermediaries need to ensure that they have future-proofed their required market access before 29th March 2019. In the last year or so we have seen some EU insurers looking to set up new entities in the UK or Gibraltar for continued UK operations. The position is further confused, however, by legal uncertainty as to whether insurers will be able to continue servicing existing policies that run beyond March 2019 and indeed whether they will be able to pay claims after that date.

What actions should Brexit-challenged insurers and intermediaries be taking now?

In simple terms intermediaries and insurers need to be located in the correct jurisdiction to ensure that they are not faced with problems following a difficult Brexit.

Therefore, if you are a UK business enjoying European passporting rights you will need to be somewhere in Continental Europe post-Brexit. If you are a European business conducting UK business you will need to be in either the UK or Gibraltar in the future.

Regulators are already actively dealing with applications from businesses faced with these challenges and the clock is ticking rapidly towards potential problem time. The moment to act on these issues is now.

Will Gibraltar be a winner or a loser post-Brexit?

A very difficult question to answer given the uncertainty over the final arrangements but here are some thoughts for consideration.

In Continental Europe, Luxembourg and Dublin have already been apparent winners of significant new entities in the form of, for example, RSA, Tokio Marine,



Liberty, AIG and Hiscox, who need to secure EU access in the future, whilst Lloyd's announced some time ago its plans to set up its EU headquarters in Brussels.

Malta and Gibraltar in their own way are also seeing new opportunities that they are progressing. Both have the facility to accommodate Protected Cell

Gibraltar could be a net winner from EU entities needing to access the UK market – it could be an ideal location for such entities.

However, a greater concern may be the arrangements that are eventually agreed (or not as the case may be) about freedom of movement. The workforce of Gibraltar is largely

Gibraltar could be a net winner from EU entities needing to access the UK market – it could be an ideal location for such entities

Company (PCC) business and third party non-statutory opportunities may well be popular in the future in both jurisdictions.

In my view Gibraltar should not be a loser and could be a net winner of insurance business. As measured by gross premium approximately 90% of Gibraltar's business is passported into the UK – this will continue unaffected. However, a number of Gibraltar insurers do have books of business in both the UK and Continental Europe, and they will need to make some potentially difficult decisions about how to manage the EU position in the future.

supplemented by the thousands of people who cross the border from homes in Spain on a daily basis. It remains to be seen whether the border will be as easy to cross in the future as it has been in the recent past.

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Property outlook & market update 2018/19

2017 was a hugely successful year for high and mid-range end sales in Gibraltar. Louis C. Montegriffo, Managing Director, BMI group, reports on the future property outlook

Gibraltar experienced an unprecedented and unexpected growth in sales after the Brexit referendum result in June 2016. Although some thought the market would see a downturn in 2017 due to the uncertainties of a looming Brexit and the invoking of Article 50 in March, Gibraltar actually had a strong, bullish year for property sales in terms of volume that remained consistent throughout 2017.

Why the confidence?

Investment in Gibraltar is underpinned primarily by the Gibraltar Finance Centre, with the strength in regulating financial services. It is importantly a jurisdiction that is subject to British Law and the English language as the firm basis of Gibraltar's success.

"It is evident that the last ten months

have resulted in a good volume of sales across all the segments in the market. An element of this strength has predominantly been driven by off-plan re-sales in developments nearing completion. Prices over the period have been stable with average growth in some areas of between 3-4%. The rental market has been extremely buoyant over the period with significant increases in rents, particularly in newer developments such as Midtown, where some one beds have rents of £2,000 pcm and two beds reaching £3,000 pcm. This is mainly driven by new business (DLT / Gaming sectors) and the continued growth in HNWIs."

What's in store?

Gibraltar will continue to see increased off-plan stock for re-sale driven by pending developments set to complete in 2019/20.

Continued p22



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Continued from p20

The Sanctuary



This will be primarily influenced by the volume of speculators wanting to flip their investment.

Existing stock may also be influenced by the arrival of new developments, as well as the release of ex-MoD (now GOG) stock.

Prices

In the middle tiers or upper low to mid-end of the market, prices have seen increases of approximately 9% in the 12 months leading into mid 2018. There has been a great deal more movement in the mid-end sector and we believe this is fundamentally due to the continued strength of the economy and a new wave of

purchasers, both local and ex-pat first time buyers.

The upper end has seen a slight lapse and settling compared to previous years, but this is not surprising. High end clients are no doubt keeping a cautious eye on the upper end before committing to the £2 million + market, owing to the uncertainties surrounding Brexit.

New developments

West One, The Arches, Midtown, Ocean Spa, Quay 29, Imperial Ocean and Quay 31 amount to approximately 750 units under construction and coming to market over the coming months and into the next few years.

Most are underpinned by the owner occupier market which usually drives the market – most have apt mixes that are spacious and are balanced between 1-4 bedroom layouts, reducing risk of over-exposure to one segment.

Further new projects have been launched and sold off-plan with more to be released. The Hub, Marina Club and Eurocity, Forbes and E1 have been launched this year and all are geared to the “buy to let / speculative investor” markets. In total there are approximately 800 units being constructed / proposed with completion dates from mid-2020 onwards.

I maintain that a mix of owner

The Cliftons



Tradewinds



Continued p24

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Continued from p22

The Sails



occupiers, seasoned investors and a small measure of speculators is healthy – an overdose of the latter and there runs the risk of exposing the market to an oversupply trend and in turn a property bubble.

Off-plan sales

The first large scale development scheduled for completion before the end of 2018 is Midtown phase 1. Ocean Spa and Quay 29 are both scheduled to be completed by early 2019, and others will follow during 2019/20

Off-plan re-sales

There has been a strong indicator that re-sales in certain developments are seeing

significant growth margins and these continue to be a good indicator of the confidence or lack of on assessing

High end clients are no doubt keeping a cautious eye on the upper end before committing to the £2 million + market

whether the market has over-exposed itself to weak speculators, and which developments may be more adversely affected by this. There is a great deal of importance on the impact of off-plan sales and the quality / profile of buyers, and the

simple logic of this is, "Owner occupiers" will always drive the sector – "let the market drive the market"!

Commercial

The World Trade Centre (WTC) was completed on schedule last year and has been a huge success. The fully occupied building has added a new dimension to Grade A office space in Gibraltar, and there are talks of a possible WTC 2.

Midtown Commercial is already fully subscribed and provides a Grade A office environment in the heart of Gibraltar, with immediate access to Midtown Residential, a high end residential scheme (fully sold out) and Midtown Retail which completes this mixed use development.

The World Trade Centre



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First Gibraltar Day in Tel Aviv

By Eran Shay, President, Gibraltar-Israel Chamber of Commerce (Gibrael)

Gibrael, together with the Gibraltar Finance Centre held an historic first Gibraltar Day event in Tel Aviv in October. Israel is known as the Start-up Nation and the source of many innovative technologies, and Israeli businesses have been instrumental in the evolution of Gibraltar's economy for several decades, be it in online gambling, private clients, funds and more recently in the fintech and blockchain sectors.

B2B meetings.

The evening lavish cocktail reception was hosted by Minister Albert Isola.

Tel Aviv's financial district

The events were held at the prestigious Crowne Plaza Azrieli Centre hotel in the heart of Tel Aviv's financial district. "It seems that the buzz about Gibraltar was all over Israel. Business people were flocking to the event from all corners of the country and we had to put people on waiting lists as the demand completely exceeded capacity" said Gibrael president Eran Shay.

The conference focused on the cryptocurrencies and blockchain sector

plenty of companies present, including some of the sponsors of the event such as Hassans, Isolass, Continent 8, Sovereign, Rockolo, Gibtelecom, Ramparts, Benefit Business Solutions, Sodi-Connect, and the GSX/GBX Group.

HiTech park

The Gibraltar Day events were complemented by a business delegation headed by Gibrael, who visited the cities of Haifa and Jerusalem. In Haifa - home to Israel's largest HiTech park, the delegates visited the offices of one of Israel's leading fintech law firms - Doron Tikotzky Kantor, and then visited MATI - one of the city's key technology accelerators.

This was followed by a lunch at the Haifa City Hall where they met with several city councillors. In Jerusalem, the delegation visited the offices of Yigal Arnon & Co, one of Israel's largest law firms, followed by a tour of the Israeli Parliament (the Knesset) and a meeting with the Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce. They then visited some of the world



The Gibraltar business delegation

Gibrael's chairwoman, Ayelet Mamo commented: "It all started when I presented the idea of doing a Gibraltar Day in Tel Aviv to Minister of Commerce, Albert Isola. Gibraltar Days had already proved successful in London, Zurich, Singapore and Hong Kong, and I thought it is a must to bring this event to Tel Aviv. Mr Isola and his team, including Paul Astengo, were very enthusiastic about the idea and so we put the wheels in motion."

Indeed according to Minister Isola such an event has been "long overdue".

The Gibraltar Day events attracted hundreds of Israeli business people to the busy conference day, with panels featuring no less than 24 top speakers.

This was followed by an exclusive business networking lunch which was completely over-subscribed, and by

which is of particular interest to Israel's many spurring blockchain start-ups, due to Gibraltar's pioneering position in this market given its DLT regulatory framework and upcoming token issuance regulations. Indeed, the first ICO in Gibraltar was done by an Israeli company, and Gibrael estimates that about 25% of total DLT licence applications are by Israeli owned companies; so it was not surprising to see some of the top names in the blockchain sector amongst the speakers, including professionals from Israel's biggest blockchain investment group - Alignment-Singulariteam Group, Israel's biggest crypto exchange - Bit2C, Deloitte, Meitar, Shine, and the Israeli Bitcoin Association, as well as dignitaries from the Israeli Ministry of Economy.

From the Gibraltar side, there were

renown holy sites in the Old City. The delegates were amazed by the Israeli Hi Tech ecosystem and business community and vowed to come back to Israel in the near future.

The Gibraltar Day in Tel Aviv was the biggest ever gathering of Gibraltar businesses in Israel and is set to become a regular fixture in the Gibraltar business annual calendar.

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Continued from p14

passengers who previously had been to Gibraltar, yet as Gaggero emphasises, crucially, few have seen all of the sites – given accessibility and time limitations – and certainly not the newer attractions.

There are also growing numbers of day-trip coaches arriving from nearby Spanish coastal holiday areas, with people also wanting Rock tours. “We are almost victims of our success. The Upper Rock will not sustain more road transport; there is simply no more parking space in the Nature Reserve”, Gaggero emphasises.

A different perspective

Guerrero’s £1.2m GTB marketing campaign in 2018 has seen the on-line audience double, while other media targets UK flight catchment areas to focus on ‘Gibraltar Year of Culture’ – a combination of food, music, games, literary and sports events and new attractions – “encouraging a different perspective of the destination”. He explains: “People are looking for new experiences; events and things that will stimulate interest and add to their holiday.”

New and upgraded attractions include a

Skywalk (pictured p12) at the top of the Rock of Gibraltar, perched 340m above sea level – higher than London’s The Shard office block – that was opened in March with glass floor and balustrade panels providing views of three countries and two continents.

Another attraction described as “definitely not for the faint-hearted” is the Windsor Suspension Bridge over a 50-metre wide gorge. Opened in June 2016, it forms part of the Upper Rock ‘Thrill Seekers Trail’ that is “restoring, revitalizing and rebranding” the Nature Reserve. Nature trails with varying degrees of difficulty have been revamped and marked to encourage wider use of the nature reserve by independent walkers and ramblers.

At sea level, Gorham’s Cave, a UNESCO World Heritage site exploring over 120,000 years of cultural traditions and material culture of Neanderthal and early modern human populations, includes a viewing platform opened last year with an interpretation centre, plus boat and walking tours.

STR Global, an international benchmarking organisation, met local industry leaders in early October to consider tourism revenue, property

values and investment prospects as a means of “reducing the perception that Gibraltar’s leisure market is volatile/opaque and high risk” after STR received “requests for credible data on Gibraltar’s leisure and travel market”.

Tourism expenditure in 2017 was estimated at £252m, up by 19% year-on-year, and the sector overall is said to account for a fifth of the territory’s economy. “It’s a widely held view among politicians and business that tourism can make a bigger contribution”, points out Gaggero, “because there is so much more in Gibraltar to offer.

“With a new transport network, we can enfranchise sites and create new ones like the 33 miles of presently inaccessible tunnels within The Rock, many of which have been demilitarised; even the existing Great Siege Tunnels are not part of existing tour offers”.

Next summer Gibraltar hosts the week-long NatWest International Island Games for 2,500 athletes and officials from 24 member islands, plus there will be supporters. Hotels have voluntarily reserved significant space in the peak July period – HIE has said 100 of its 120 rooms can be taken, for example.



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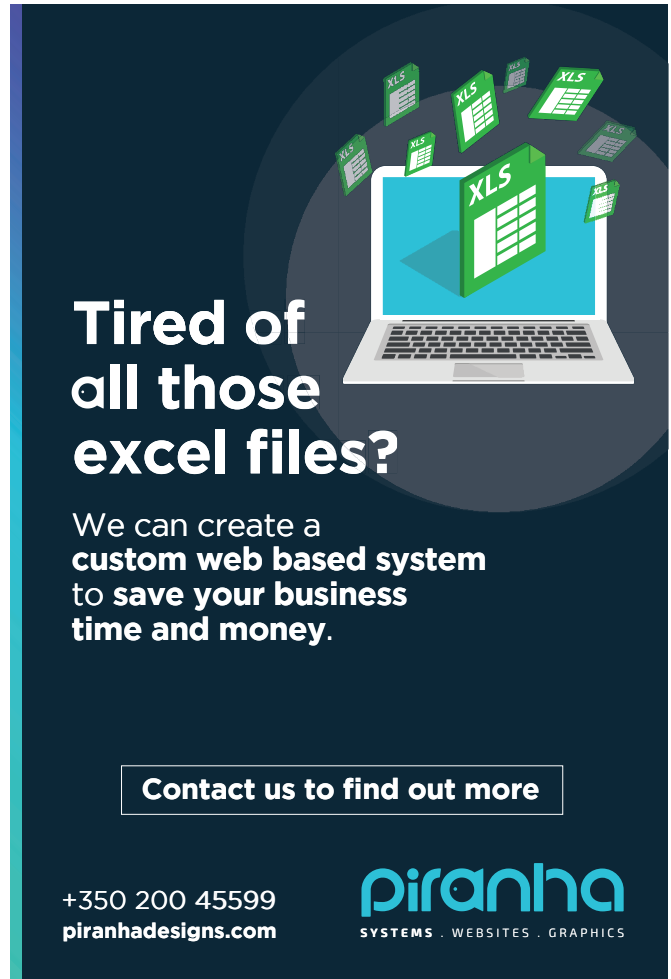
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