

World Environment Day 2007

World Environment Day, commemorated each year on the 5th June, is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates environmental awareness and enhances political attention and action. It was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972 to mark the opening of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment.

Following the success of previous World Environment Days, the Department of the Environment is for a third year running, taking part in the worldwide environmental initiative coordinated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Previous initiatives have focused on contemporary issues such as recycling and the decline in biodiversity. This year's theme is perhaps the most contested environmental issue to date: climate change.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), established in 1988 by UNEP and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) has since taken a lead in developing a broad scientific consensus on the nature and implications of climate change. Research published by the IPCC clearly shows that the earth's climate is changing, and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Changes in our climate will subsequently result in the occurrence of *differential* impacts; some countries will be quickly and adversely affected whereas other countries

may barely notice any impacts. The question of sensitivity and vulnerability is therefore constantly 'heating' up the climate change debate.

The Arctic is precisely one of those areas that is, and will continue to be hard hit by climate change. No wonder the Nordic city of Tromsø - located in the frontline of climate change - has been chosen to host this year's World Environment Day celebrations. Tromsø is intrinsically linked to the Arctic and Antarctic and is in many ways an ideal location. The city boasts the planet's most northerly university and is well known due to its historical links with arctic explorers.

For its part, the Department of the Environment will be involved in stimulating local climate change awareness. A range of activities are envisaged to take place including a series of talks on the implications of climate change at a global and regional level. Local schools will be involved on the day and there are numerous other plans in the pipeline that promise to take environmental awareness to another level. The plans include hosting a trade fair on Saturday 2nd June at Casemates Square. Numerous organisations will be present on the day displaying environmental products or information.

Climate Change Forum

A climate change forum has been set up locally. The forum will act as a technical advisory group (TAG) and consists of local professionals, scientists and Government officials alike. A TAG is a team that provides ongoing technical, scientific and managerial advice to Government on policy development and implementation. It is essentially an independent advisory forum whose recommendations are not obligatory but nevertheless carry substantial weight with decision-makers. The TAG has been appointed because Government recognises a need for ongoing access to independent, special-

ist advice on climate change. Its objective is therefore to provide an exchange of views and information for Government, so that appropriate decisions are made using the relevant technical and scientific underpinning. Making decisions about changes in our climate is however a complicated matter. Decision making in this case has to deal with uncertainties and entails balancing the risk of either insufficient or excessive action. It also involves due consideration being given to the consequences, their likelihood and society's attitude towards risk. It is precisely these issues that the TAG will tackle in Gibraltar in the years to come.

UNEP World Environment Day Themes

- 2006 - Deserts and Desertification – Don't Desert Drylands!
- 2005 - Green Cities – Plan for the Planet!
- 2004 - Wanted! Seas and Oceans – Dead or Alive?
- 2003 - Water – Two Billion People are Dying for It!
- 2002 - Give Earth a Chance
- 2001 - Connect with the World Wide Web of Life
- 2000 - The Environment Millennium - Time to Act
- 1999 - Our Earth - Our Future - Just Save It!
- 1998 - For Life on Earth - Save Our Seas
- 1997 - For Life on Earth
- 1996 - Our Earth, Our Habitat, Our Home
- 1995 - We the Peoples: United for the Global Environment
- 1994 - One Earth One Family
- 1993 - Poverty and the Environment - Breaking the Vicious Circle
- 1992 - Only One Earth, Care and Share
- 1991 - Climate Change. Need for Global Partnership
- 1990 - Children and the Environment
- 1989 - Global Warming; Global Warning
- 1988 - When People Put the Environment First, Development Will Last
- 1987 - Environment and Shelter: More Than A Roof
- 1986 - A Tree for Peace
- 1985 - Youth: Population and the Environment
- 1984 - Desertification
- 1983 - Managing and Disposing Hazardous Waste: Acid Rain and Energy
- 1982 - Ten Years After Stockholm (Renewal of Environmental Concerns)
- 1981 - Ground Water; Toxic Chemicals in Human Food Chains
- 1980 - A New Challenge for the New Decade: Development Without Destruction
- 1979 - Only One Future for Our Children: Development Without Destruction
- 1978 - Development Without Destruction
- 1977 - Ozone Layer Environmental Concern; Lands Loss & Soil Degradation
- 1976 - Water: Vital Resource for Life
- 1975 - Human Settlements
- 1974 - Only one Earth

What happens to our municipal waste?

Modern, affluent societies are producing an ever increasing amount of municipal waste - an issue that is causing much concern throughout the globe. Its no wonder that you frequently find the issue of waste production and recycling in the media nowadays. The situation in Gibraltar is no different and we face the same problems as other similar conurbations, that is to say, what do we do with our waste?

Almost everything we do creates waste and it is this paradigm that has noticeable implications such as exerting pressure on our natural resources. The best way of managing the waste problem is by avoiding it in the first place - waste prevention. After that we can think about reducing the amount of waste we produce or reusing waste - recycling.

The recent waste strategy in Gibraltar relied principally on incineration. However following the closure of the facility in 2000, the Gibraltar Government reviewed its waste management strategy and temporarily substituted incineration for landfill. Most of our municipal waste therefore ends up in the Complejo Medioambiental Sur de Europa located near Los Barrios. Since 2003, the facility boasts an array of manual and automated sorting processes to recover paper, plastics and metals from the incoming waste stream with the organic component being composted in a covered shed to provide a commercial



compost product. The residual waste is removed and taken to a baling plant before being disposed of into a newly developed landfill adjacent to the facility.

Certain components of our municipal waste, such as tin and glass, comprising 4 and 5 percent respectively of the total waste produced, will soon be collected separately locally following an agreement reached with Master Services. Government is still exploring all the possible options available regarding how other types of municipal waste can be treated so as to make the current waste strategy as cost-effective and environmentally friendly as possible.

Minister's column



Ensuring a better quality of life now and for future generations is one of the key challenges facing Government. It therefore gives me great pleasure in seeing that the Department of the Environment is standing up to the challenge of sustainable development as highlighted in the publication of the department's first newsletter *Enviro-watch*.

Providing the public with accountable and transparent information on contemporary environmental issues lies at the heart of Government's commitment to the environment. The signing of the Environment Charter in May 2006 along with the transposition of the Public Access to Environmental Information Directive further reiterates this commitment.

This last year has undoubtedly seen much progress in the delivery of government policies. I am particularly pleased to see the amount of work that has gone into the production of not only the departmental annual report but also on the forthcoming climate change programme, amongst numerous other issues. It is my intention to further pursue such initiatives since the idea of sustainability ultimately depends on informed individuals acting collectively.

Summary of other items being treated and/or recycled include:

Waste Oil - Partially recycled at North Mole Sullage Plant.

Batteries - Car batteries are collected by scrap metal dealers and sent to Spain to join a recycling stream.

- Small batteries such as those containing Nickel and Cadmium are collected by the Environmental Agency from fixed points for storage and future recycling abroad.

Cardboard - Limited amounts sent to Spain to join a recycling stream.

End of life Vehicles - Sent to Spain to join recycling stream.

Metals - Sent as sorted scrap to Spain to join a recycling stream.

Refrigerators - Sent to Spain to join recycling stream.

Wooden Pallets - Generally returned to suppliers for re-use.

Cartridges - Collected by local dealers for storage and future recycling abroad. For further information contact 50294.

Waste Collection Points

Batteries - Small batteries; Morrisons Supermarket, Environment Agency -Town Range, Westside School, Sacred Heart School, Bayside School & South District Post Office.

- Car batteries; Incinerator (Europa Advance Road)

Bulky Municipal waste & Paint - Buena Vista (Gibraltar Community Projects).

Waste Oil - Slop Oil Reception & Treatment (SLOP) North Mole.

Environmental education - geography and the environment

What does geography have to do with the environment and sustainable development? This is a common question put to many environmentalists.

Geography qualifies as one of the most suited disciplines for an understanding of sustainable development. The study of geography has a multidisciplinary nature. Disciplines that cover such a vast array of topics are indeed few and far between, that is to say a subject that includes all the relevant actions and processes that give rise to the global environment of today.

The core issues and necessary conditions for sustainable development as identified by the World Commission on Environment and Development include: population and development, food security, species and ecosystems, energy, industry and urban challenges. These are just some of the different facets encapsulated within the realms of geography.

Sustainable development has undoubtedly become a very popular phrase. It has roots in so many disciplines, but none is so relevant to it as geography. As a notable geographer once said "Where else can the science of the environment be married with an understanding of the economic, political and cultural change that is known as development? What other discipline offers insights into environmental change as well as environmental management, and who but geographers can cope with the diversity of countries and the sheer range of spatial scales, at which it is necessary to work in order to understand the dynamics of the environment?".

Did you know?

Green areas in urban environments like Gibraltar serve many purposes other than providing recreational areas for Sunday afternoons. 'Urban forests' produce oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide, thus enhancing air quality. They also provide storm water control as well as a home for urban wildlife.

Lets all try and keep green areas clean and healthy.

Air quality monitoring in Gibraltar

Setting up the air quality monitoring stations in Gibraltar proved to be a significant step in the ongoing attempt to monitor our surrounding environment. With an estimated cost of around £150,000 the stations were procured in order to comply with relevant EU Directives on air quality namely the Air Quality Framework Directive. The said Directive establishes a framework aimed at setting limits or target values that regulate specific ambient air pollutants.

The monitoring stations have now been collecting valuable information for nearly two years. Some of the many pollutants that are continuously being monitored include sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, oxides of nitrogen, particulate matter, lead, benzene, carbon monoxide and ozone. Up-to-date hourly measurements for these pollutants are available to the public and can be accessed online via the website www.gibraltairquality.gi. Results are clearly displayed using a categorical air pollution index system. The categories used to display air pollution information range from 'low' to 'very high'. The website also provides thorough information regarding the health effects of each of the particular pollutants under investigation along with the local and global impacts resulting from air pollution.

An overview of common air pollutants

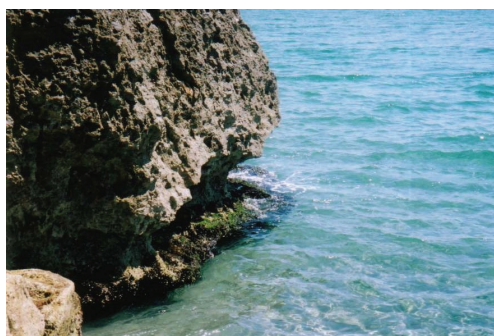
- **Carbon monoxide:** Colourless, odourless gas predominantly produced by the transport sector.
- **Nitrogen oxides:** Collective term used to describe two particular oxides of nitrogen. Produced from road transport and other combustion processes.
- **Ozone:** This air pollutant is not emitted directly from any man-made source in any significant quantities. In the lower atmosphere, ozone is primarily formed by a complicated series of chemical reactions initiated by sunlight.
- **Particulate matter:** Tiny particles suspended in air. Numerous sources including both natural and human processes.



Improving our water quality: A new approach

Water quality testing has long been carried out around Gibraltar's coastal waters in order to ensure that our beaches are safe for our enjoyment. The Environmental Agency regularly takes samples from all our beaches in line with the EU Bathing Waters Directive whose objective is that of protecting public health from water pollution. Recent developments in water policy, namely the EU Water Framework Directive have now resulted in the need for establishing more comprehensive monitoring programmes.

In addition to the existing monitoring carried out by the Environmental Agency, the Department of the Environment is currently developing a monitoring strategy that will address any pressures currently affecting our aquatic environment. Results gathered from this initiative will provide Government



with an accurate picture of our waters. It will also provide a basis for future decision-making in terms of aiding the implementation of any necessary programme of measures. Similar programmes are being developed throughout the European Union in an attempt to improve water quality status by the year 2015.

Green Business Initiative - Update

Following the success of the initial seminar on green business, the Government, in conjunction with the Environmental Agency, is now embarking on a second round of seminars, in an attempt to raise awareness of how to improve the environmental performance of businesses. Government aims to tackle some of the prominent sectors of the economy starting with the tourism and construction sectors. These sectors are developing rapidly and it is Government's aim that sustainable practices be further incorporated into future management strategies.



The growth in tourism and construction is one of the more complex challenges facing sustainability worldwide; Gibraltar is no exception. If we look at traditional developments for example, it is clear that buildings consume large amounts of energy and natural resources. This exerts further pressure on the environment. No wonder there's a swelling interest in designing, building and occupying more environmentally sensitive buildings. Tourism also presents its problems; increasing air travel and the sheer 'mass tourism' phenomena are just some of the issues of concern although the concept of greener travel or eco-tourism is rapidly becoming big business. These are just some of the issues that the proposed seminars will look at in more detail in line with Government's commitment to raise awareness across the entire environmental spectrum.

Top tips! At home or at the office...

Ever wondered what you can do to minimise your footprint on the environment? The following points should help you do your bit while saving money too!

Energy

We all take energy for granted and as a consequence, over-consumption of energy has become embedded in our daily lives. Keeping track of your bills is vital in order to monitor energy usage and assess the cost-effectiveness of energy saving tips.

- Switch off equipment and lighting when not in use - Even leaving equipment on standby consumes energy and wastes money.
- Consider installing timers/sensors in areas that hardly require lighting. Lighting an office overnight wastes enough energy for 1000 cups of tea!
- Minimise heating costs. Close windows/doors, lower thermostat and bundle up!
- Review insulation if possible.

Water

The issue of water efficiency is similar in nature. Again water bills should be recorded and monitored. Water efficiency is perhaps more difficult to achieve since considerable savings tend to be made in relation to freshwater usage in washrooms, urinals, etc. We all know that Gibraltar uses a salt-water flush system so in our case, pumping costs can be avoided instead. This can be achieved by installing water-saving devices such as a dual flush system in bathrooms for example.

Waste

Excess waste production is often due to the inefficient use of resources, and dealing with it has an impact on the environment. In Gibraltar, the average person disposes more than three quarters of a tonne of municipal waste per year. A lot more can be done to minimise waste especially at work. Paper use for example can be minimized if both sides of paper are used when photocopying. Envelopes can be re-used for internal memos, or if possible,

- Install taps that minimise water use.
- Check your water meter regularly.
- Report leaks promptly.
- Try to conserve water when washing, boiling, etc.

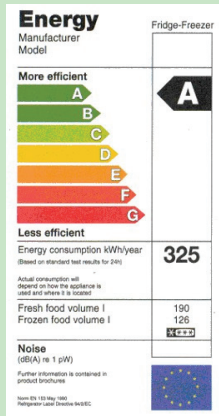
emails should be sent instead. Using the blank side of printed documents for draft material is yet another example of good practice along with the refilling or recycling of ink cartridges which is now a possibility locally. Plastic bag usage in Gibraltar is also very high. This can easily be tackled by promoting their re-usage.

Procurement

There are a wide range of products that should be considered when making purchasing decisions such as computers, domestic appliances, stationary, furniture and even company vehicles. For some of the products mentioned there are specific eco-labels or standards that you should look out for. Computers for example should have the EPA energy star logo indicating

reduced energy consumption. Domestic appliances on the other hand should have the EC Energy Label that identifies the energy efficiency of equipment on a scale of A to G. Other eco-labels include the Mobius Loop that shows whether a product is recyclable or is made of recycled material.

The Forest Stewardship Council Logo is yet another useful label indicating that the paper in question has been made from sustainable forests. There are many other eco-labels verifying the environmental performance of products and it is in the interest of individuals to look out for these labels especially when the products to be purchased are toxic or hazardous.



Useful Telephone Numbers

Department of the Environment	50294
Environmental Agency	70620
Animal Welfare Centre	43352
G.O.N.H.S.	72639
Gibraltar Veterinary Clinic	77334
Wildlife Gibraltar Limited	72639
ESG	58009259
Friends of the Earth	77655 / 41073

For further information including the Department of the Environment Annual Report please visit www.gibraltar.gov.gi