



Waste - It's not just a pile of rubbish!

As European society has grown wealthier it has created more and more rubbish. The situation in Gibraltar is no different and we face the same problems as other similar EU cities, which is, what to do with our waste?

Each year in the European Union alone we throw away 3 billion tonnes of waste, of which some 90 million tonnes is hazardous. This amounts to about 6 tonnes of solid waste for every man, woman and child, according to statistics from the European Environment Agency. This amount of waste is equal to the size of a caravan for each person in the EU. Add to this total a further 700 million tonnes of agricultural waste, and it is clear that treating and disposing of all this material - without harming the environment - can be a major headache.

Traditionally, waste disposal has come at an environmental cost. Most of what we throw away was or is either burnt in incinerators, or deposited into landfill sites (67%). But both these methods can create environmental damage if not monitored and controlled adequately. Landfilling not only takes up more and more valuable land space, it can also cause (if not controlled properly) air, water and soil pollution, discharging carbon dioxide (CO₂) and methane (CH₄) into the atmosphere and chemicals and pesticides into the earth and groundwater. This in turn is harmful to human health, as well as to plants and animals.

As a result of this concern over the environmental effects of our current waste disposal methods, the EU is aiming for a significant cut in the amount of rubbish generated, through new waste prevention initiatives, better use of resources, and encouraging a shift to more sustainable consumption patterns.

The key to sustainable and effective waste management starts with the *sustainable use of resources*. Resources are the backbone of every economy. In using resources and transforming them, capital stocks are built up which add to the wealth of present and future generations. However, the extent of our current resource use is such that the chances of future generations (and the developing countries) having access to their fair share of scarce resources is endangered. Moreover, the consequences of our resource use in terms of impacts on the environment may induce serious damages that go beyond the carrying capacity of the environment.

These effects risk being aggravated once the developing world has taken up growth and resource use similar to the industrialised countries.

The local strategy



The Goal: To develop a holistic waste management strategy

The current waste management strategy is being reviewed and all existing waste streams will be incorporated into a holistic plan that focuses on reducing the environmental impacts arising from waste. The setting up of an Environment Park along with a focused media campaign advising the general public on where and how to dispose of their waste streams will help to ensure that all sources of waste produced locally are properly disposed of. The use of fines as a deterrent to littering is an option under existing laws to discourage offenders from littering, fly tipping and inappropriate waste disposal.

Recycling

Why it Matters

Recycling Conserves Resources

When we recycle, used materials are made into new products, reducing the need to consume natural resources. Making the same products from scratch would require the extraction of fresh, raw material from the Earth, through mining and forestry. Recycling helps conserve important raw materials and protects natural habitats for the future.

Recycling Saves Energy

Using recycled materials in the manufacturing process uses considerably less energy than that required for producing new products from raw materials – even when comparing all associated costs including transport etc. More energy is required to extract, refine, transport and process raw materials compared with providing industry with recycled materials.

Recycling Helps Protect the Environment

Recycling reduces the need for extracting (mining, quarrying and logging), refining and processing raw materials all of which create substantial air and water pollution. As recycling saves energy it also reduces greenhouse gas emissions, which helps to tackle climate change.

Recycling Reduces Landfill

When we recycle, recyclable materials are reprocessed into new products, and as a result the amount of rubbish sent to landfill sites decreases.

The Local Perspective

Distinctly coloured recycling bins have been available on the Rock since May 2008 and can be found at over 40 locations throughout Gibraltar.



Green bins: glass bottles, drinking glasses, tumblers and jars only. Metal lids and metal bottle tops should be deposited separately in the **yellow bins**.

Yellow bins: aluminium and steel drink cans, steel food tins, household aerosols and clean aluminium foil.

No other types of refuse should be deposited in these bins and the public is asked to give items a quick clean before depositing. Leaflets with further information on recycling points and use of the bins can be downloaded from the government website:

www.gibraltar.gov.gi/environment/environment

Recycling Facts



Recycling two glass bottles saves enough energy to boil enough water for five cups of tea.

Despite the huge number of bins around Gibraltar, recycling figures have been disappointingly low. In 2009, the total amount of glass collected was 87,550 kilos, this is only 9.67% of the estimated total waste glass generated in Gibraltar. At the rate at which collection has taken place to date in 2010, we estimate that the percentage for this year will be only slightly higher at 11.29%.

The average amount of cans collected in 2009 was 11,000 kilos, approximately 1.5% of the estimated total of waste cans. At the rate at which collection has taken place this year, we estimate that the percentage for 2010 will be at 2.5%. These figures are well below the targets set by the EU.

The public and catering establishments are therefore once again asked to rise to the occasion and use the recycling points available.

If we are to become a more environmentally aware society in Gibraltar when dealing with our waste it is vital that we make the effort to **REDUCE, REUSE** and **RECYCLE!**

Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment



Rapid advances in technology and an expanding demand for new features accelerate the generation of electronic waste. Every year in Gibraltar a large number of computers, monitors, copiers, fax machines, printers, televisions, and

other electronic items become obsolete and, if not treated appropriately, could potentially harm the environment.

Legislation has been introduced (Environment (Waste) Regulations 2007) which focuses on the management and disposal of waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE). The legislation provides for the creation of collection schemes where consumers return their used WEEE free of charge. The objective of these schemes is to increase the recycling and/or re-use of such products. Despite such rules on collection and recycling only one third of electrical and electronic waste in the European Union is reported as separately collected and appropriately treated. A part of the other two thirds is potentially still going to landfills and to sub-standard treatment sites in or outside the European Union.

Minister's column



I am pleased to present this sixth edition of our Department of the Environment's newsletter which focuses on waste management.

Waste is an issue of concern for the Government and one where community involvement is essential if we are to succeed in reducing our waste volumes.

Littering and fly tipping are serious problems which we are reviewing. There is no excuse for littering, it is not only bad for the environment but presents a bad image for Gibraltar internationally. We must all make the effort to reduce, reuse and recycle our waste. I am optimistic that all Gibraltarians will play their part by recycling glass, cans and waste electrical and electronic equipment.

This newsletter is filled with useful information on our waste management processes and I'm sure you will find it most informative.

Minister for the Environment Ernest Britto

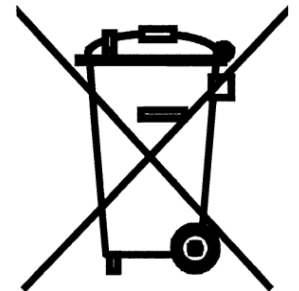
Electronic and electrical equipment (EEE) makes up on average 4% of European municipal waste, and is growing three times faster than any other municipal waste stream.

Local implications of the legislation vary for importers, retailers and users. Locally **importers** of EEE need to complete, in addition to the customs declaration form (CUS 100), an EEE declaration form, which declares how much EEE is being imported into Gibraltar. Forms can be downloaded from the Department of the Environment website:

www.gibraltar.gov.gi/environment/environment

There are ten categories of WEEE in the legislation.

1. Large household appliances
2. Small household appliances
3. IT and telecommunications equipment
4. Consumer equipment
5. Lighting equipment
6. Electrical and electronic tools
7. Toys, leisure and sports equipment
8. Medical devices
9. Monitoring and control equipment
10. Automatic dispensers.



Further information on the types of items which fall under the legislation can be found on the aforementioned website. **Retailers and Users** of EEE need to ensure that such items are disposed of correctly and are taken to the temporary WEEE park at the Gibraltar Community Projects Buena Vista facility. **EEE items can no longer be disposed of with household refuse.**

When supplying a new product, distributors shall be responsible for ensuring that such waste can be returned to the distributor/retailer *at least free of charge* on a one-to-one basis as long as the equipment is of equivalent type and has fulfilled the same functions as the supplied equipment. This means, for example, that when you purchase a DVD player you could return a video player. Businesses must accept it even if it is a different type or brand to those sold by them and even if the product was purchased elsewhere.

Gibraltar has to meet its collection targets under the EU legislation. You are therefore asked to assist by not throwing WEEE in the bin and returning old WEEE to retailers or to the Buena Vista site.



At present, all our municipal (household) waste goes to landfill in the Complejo Medioambiental Sur de Europa located near Los Barrios.

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.

Did you know?

How long waste takes to break down...

- Plastics take 500 years
- Aluminium cans take 500 years
- Organic materials take 6 months
- Cotton, rags, and paper take 6 months

Government is continuously exploring all the possible options available regarding how our municipal waste can be treated so as to make the current waste strategy as environmentally friendly as possible. Generating energy from our waste for potable water and/or electricity is being explored as a possible future option.

Gibraltar hopes to do its bit by reducing and recycling local waste. Apart from glass and cans, Gibraltar also recycles waste oil, end of life vehicles, wooden pallets, cardboard, scrap metal, batteries, and waste electrical and electronic equipment.

For more information on where to deposit your waste items for recycling, please contact the Department of the Environment.



Department of the Environment Government of Gibraltar

Duke of Kent House Tel: 00350 20050294
Line Wall Road Fax: 00350 20059833
Gibraltar Email: info.environment@gibraltar.gov.gi

Watch Your Waste

The following are some examples of simple but effective waste reduction strategies which we can all apply throughout our daily lives (tick the boxes if you are already following some of the points and see how waste friendly you are!):

Plan, to reduce

- A significant percentage of the food we buy ends up being thrown away. Planning meals ahead can help to reduce that as well as saving all those extra trips to the shops.
- With gadgets, move away from the idea that we always need the latest version of everything. If you really think about what you use your electrical items for, could they last another year?
- Remember to take re-usable bags with you when you do your shopping.

Recycle more

- Recycling just one aluminium can saves enough energy to run a television for 3 hours. To make sure you do not forget, keep your recycling bin/bag next to your main bin.

Reduce unwanted mail

- Many organisations now offer secure online billing instead of monthly paper bills.

Ditch the disposables

- Use products with a longer life and you will cut down on what you throw away. For example you can use rechargeable batteries or avoid disposable cutlery and plates at parties and picnics.
- Energy saving light bulbs can last around 10 times longer than standard ones.
- You can also buy more concentrated versions of many products such as washing detergent or washing up liquid.