



HM Government of Gibraltar

Ministry of Health, the Environment,
Energy and Climate Change

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Air Quality is Better than Ever

Trevor Hammond has once again given wide public exposure to his lack of understanding of science, but also - perhaps worse for a politician - to his willingness to rush to make public statements without adequate research or due diligence. The latest Opposition press release on air quality is both poorly researched and scientifically void. In fact, most of the points made were covered over a year ago by the Minister for the Environment, Dr John Cortes, in his response to former Opposition Environment Spokesman Jaime Netto in Parliament on 20th May 2015, an exchange which was also joined by Opposition Leader Danny Feetham. A look at Hansard clearly demonstrates this: something that Mr Hammond and presumably his Leader, Mr Feetham, seem not to have done. This shows the poor calibre of the Opposition and their latest statement is, therefore, irresponsible as it has issued misleading comments regarding questions which have already been fully answered.

Mr Hammond's latest statement dismisses the Government's data on particulates, which in the last press release on the matter showed real improvements over the past few years even though these were the main causes for concern in the WHO report and are among the more dangerous pollutants. Mr Hammond fails to recognise this and instead tries to substantiate his claims using Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂).

Now, in his choice of the data to use to try and support his statement, Trevor has betrayed the fact that he does not understand the processes. The graphs that the Opposition published show results not from the accurate continuous monitoring arrays but from the passive diffusion tubes. These serve to give general information only and have a 20% margin of error. The results that the Opposition rely on involve so much uncertainty that their use for compliance evidence and reporting to the EU is prohibited. They may indicate trends, but they are useless as evidence. Nevertheless, the GSD proffer them as such.

We therefore need to turn to the continuous monitoring stations for the real verifiable evidence, which is what the Government is doing. It is of course true that 2014 was a bad year for air pollution. Whereas levels of NO₂ were decreasing consistently from 2011 thanks to the night-time closing of the South District Power Stations, they went up in 2014

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because in April that year, as Dr Cortes stated in Parliament in May 2015, “Their [the GSD’s] decrepit, old, useless, out-of-date power station blew up.”

This widely-reported fire resulted in the temporary power plants, including the former MOD and OESCO power stations, polluting and close to the monitoring sites, having to be switched on in order to maintain the power supply to the community.

As Graph 1 shows, and as expected, the amount of NO₂ detected by the Rosia monitoring station regrettably rose in 2014 as a result. Interestingly, the NO₂ detected by the Witham’s Road monitoring station did not. However, action by Government and the Gibraltar Electricity Authority (GEA) has resulted in decreasing use of the South District plants since that time to the point that, except on a few occasions for operational reasons, both these plants are now permanently switched off. As the graph clearly shows, this has meant a continuing decrease in NO₂ levels throughout 2015 in both monitoring stations. Data for 2016 up to May, while still provisional, show this trend continuing. And as Table 1 shows, these provisional data are BELOW the EU 40ug limit in 2016 FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER. While it is possible that this may increase as an average at the end of this year, the trend is clear. The Government’s measures to increase energy efficiency awareness and its proactive management of power generation are having real, demonstrable effects despite the significant glitch caused by the old Waterport power station burning up.

Dr John Cortes commented: “I am grateful to Trevor for giving me the opportunity to reveal this good news story. He amusingly asked me in his press release to keep my environmental credibility by demonstrating what actions are in place to reduce pollution. The data we released some weeks ago about particulates (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) were significant – although Trevor seems not have understood them – and our NO₂ figures show precisely why we are the Government to look after the environment. And that is all without the full impact of our traffic plan, nor the opening of the new state-of-the-art clean gas power station next year. Just imagine what Gibraltar would have been like in the hands of the GSD, with Gibraltar defaced and contaminated by a polluting diesel power station and no energy policy whatsoever.”



GRAPH 1 - NO₂ readings at Gibraltar continuous monitoring stations 2006-2016

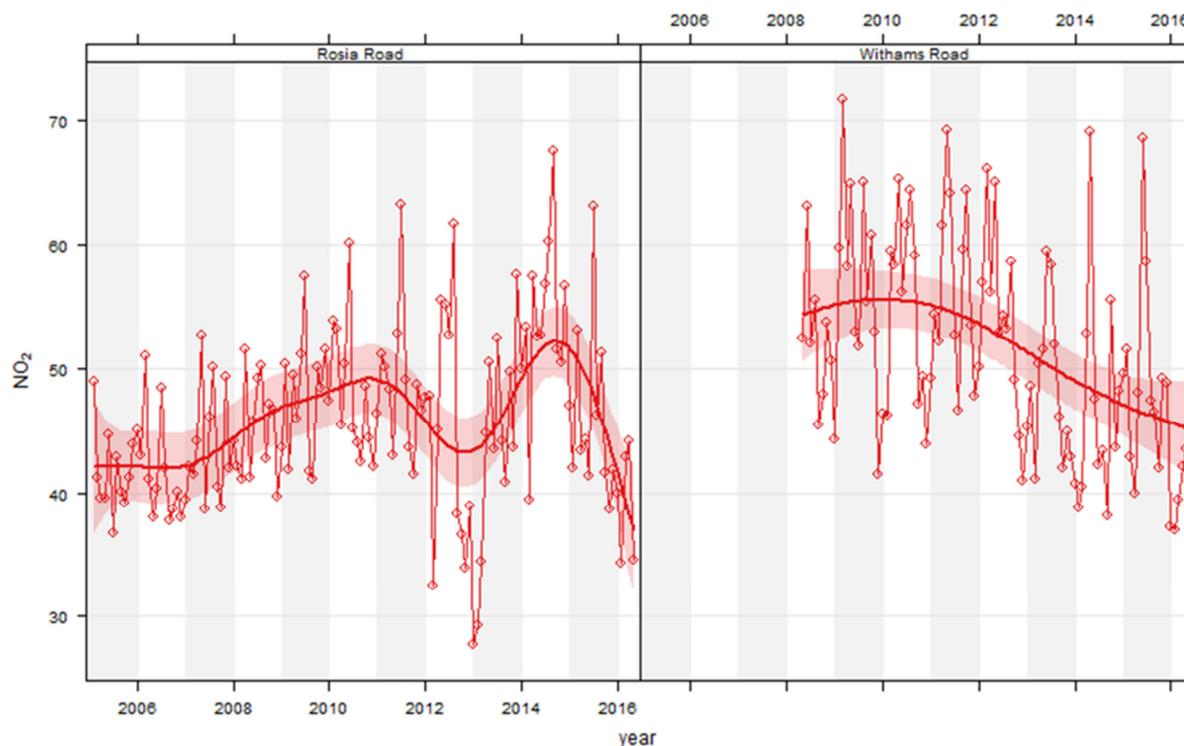


TABLE 1 - NO₂ readings at Gibraltar continuous monitoring stations 2008-2016

Year	Rosia Road		Withams Road	
	Annual Mean ($\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$)	Data Capture (%)	Annual Mean ($\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$)	Data Capture (%)
2008	44.7	91.5	52.6	98.4
2009	47.7	94.5	56.6	99.3
2010	48.1	93.1	54.7	97.3
2011	48.8	81.8	56.2	94.3
2012	45.5	94.6	53.9	98.0
2013	43.5	84.6	48.6	95.0
2014	54.4	94.2	46.9	94.6
2015	46.2	97.9	49.2	98.1
2016*	39.5	98.9	39.6	99.5

*2016 data are provisional