

## WORLD EARTH DAY 2009

In the run up to World Earth Day, Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April, we are reminded that environmental issues, both local and regional, require as much attention today as in past years and that there is no room for complacency. This past weekend the ESG received calls on strong bunkering fumes sweeping residential areas, the CEPSA Oil Refinery flaring again and discharging noxious clouds of chemicals and saw the MoD power station sweeping the south district with thick clouds of smoke as happens frequently. We are reminded that we still have a long way to go to curb harmful practices, never mind rise to the challenge of avoiding the worst effects from climate change **which demands that we look after Mother Earth.**



We are told that the life style enjoyed by much of the west is impossible to sustain given the rise in urbanisation and consumption of earths raw materials- we are told that the subsequent waste from such mindless consumption is resulting in the warming of our planet and potential havoc in an undetermined but not too far off time scale.

On Earth Day as in other days which mark our environment we are asked to examine how we are reacting to these enormous issues? The difficulty of course is that economies today rely on growth in consumption and if this is reduced for all the right reasons, it could destabilise global markets even further- this is already happening due to the banking crisis. Add to this the success of the environmentalist aims to reduce, reuse and recycle and basically waste less and things could get very complicated. World leaders are trying to compromise by investing in green technology and business to provide options to continue our way of life by meeting those needs more sustainably. However many experts believe this is merely tinkering and avoiding the urgent recommendations made by the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change). Nevertheless action is necessary and this is clearly the best way forward right now.

Still, here in Gibraltar we have to get a foot on the ladder for real change and the ESG urges Govt to launch its executable action plan on their Environmental Charter. This would see the “green agenda” take shape in Gibraltar and become central to Government policy and decision-making.

Regarding World Earth Day in particular a commitment made by a previous Environmental Minister for creating a forest on the eastern slopes to both safeguard against rock falls and also help combat climate change seems to be a project that left along with the Minister. Gibraltar cannot and should not race ahead with massive development, both impactful and energy hungry, and not at least meet these needs by launching a renewable energy system and the forest that was promised.

It is time for green action at individual, business and government level.