

ESG on Blow those fumes away!

With the heavy industries chugging away in the hinterland, we Gibraltarians need to do everything we can to protect our environment and our health. Apart from sustaining pressure on the industrial complex on our doorstep we need to look at practical ways of improving our environment **within** our borders.

One of the key areas that needs to be vigorously researched and pursued is power generation. At present we have two civilian power stations. Both burn tonnes of marine-grade diesel fuel, both produce carcinogenic emissions and both are alarmingly close to residential areas (Alameda Estate, Jumper's, Sir William Jackson Grove, Harbour Views, Varyl Begg, Montagu Gardens.... You begin to get the picture I'm sure.)

Clearly we must reject this primitive, dodo-like approach in favour of alternatives that power our society rather than poison it.

Amongst the viable alternatives, solar panels and wind turbines are perhaps the most effective and well-developed as commercial products. An imaginative approach that takes into account our energy needs as well as our constraints (mainly lack of space), would envisage a hybrid system that would include an out of town, latest generation, low emission combined cycle gas turbine, complemented by wind turbines at selected sites and by solar panels on roof tops.

Whatever the controversy over wind energy these issues must be publicly debated and the challenges overcome. Wind turbines must be carefully placed to minimise noise pollution and any impact on migratory birds. The detached mole has been suggested in a feasibility study conducted by Sinclair Knight Merz (Europe) Ltd as being a viable location, although it also recommends that more research is needed before embarking on such a scheme.

A renewable energy assessment for Gibraltar to gauge what financial resources would be needed should be carried out without further delay to fund these improvements. European grants do exist to subsidise such green programmes, however, the real question is not whether we can afford to make these changes but whether we can afford not to...

Gibraltar is bursting at the seams and beyond with new developments, all of which will require energy to power the luxury lifestyles of their residents. In the case of the East-Side Development, the Government has negotiated a deal whereby the developer will provide a new power station as well as local housing. Let us be wise at this stage in our choice of power for the future. Let us move away from our reliance on obsolete, toxic and increasingly expensive (today the barrel of oil topped the \$60 mark for the first time) diesel fuel generators towards renewable energy and a healthy legacy that our children can be proud of.

For more details on wind generation and solar energy please contact the ESG on:
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By the Environmental Safety Group