

Start: In our first Environmental Newsletter of the year we would like to cover a few pressing issues which are topical and we hope likely to be of interest;

(Petition)

- I would like to first talk about the petition we have helped co-ordinate in Gibraltar as part of “*La Plataforma por El Estudio Epidemiologico*”. The petition calls upon the Gibraltar and Spanish Governments to initiate independent health studies in the Bay area to explore the possible link between local high rates of cancers and other health disorders and the petrochemical industry which has grown substantively over the years. A few thousand signatures have been collected in Gibraltar so far and the cut-off date is the 15th January - this coming Monday. Gibraltar’s petition forms will be joined to all others collected throughout the Bay and a final count will then be conducted.

The ESG expects to formally submit a full copy of all signatures to the Gibraltar Government who will receive this on behalf of la Comision Mixta. We shall be advising more on this important development soon. For those of you kind enough to have helped collect signatures, please be reminded to contact one of our Committee members to arrange to hand the forms in **before the 15th January.**

(Airport)

- The New Year also brings with it the promise of new flights to new destinations. Exciting stuff, if only it didn’t carry such a heavy environmental price!! You will hopefully have read the lengthy opinion written by one of our Committee members last week on the specific environmental issues which we believe, the expanded use of the airport presents. If you haven’t yet read the document you can find it on our website under “**Key Issues**” – our website is www.esg-gib.net.

Among the main areas of concern are:

- Air and noise pollution and proven effects on health and how this can only increase with more flights
- Raising of the risk threshold
- Increasing traffic
- The need for an **Environmental Impact Assessment** on increased airport activity **and**
- How our continued expansion and development in Gibraltar cannot be defined as sustainable and in keeping with our Environmental Charter

In our lengthy airport paper many reasons are cited as to why a measured approach with rigorous environmental assessments is the positive way forward. It is with keen interest that we await publication of Governments intentions in this regard. The airport and associated activity clearly has major social and environmental implications for all in the immediate vicinity.

It also has a bearing on how Gibraltar fares in meeting its obligations under its Environmental Charter, the Kyoto Protocol, and soon the new “EC Aviation Emissions Trading Scheme”. All these set in place to encourage change away from traditional consumptive practices and aimed at reducing our ecological and carbon footprints as quickly as is reasonably possible. This, we strongly believe, can only be done by measuring environmental impacts of **all** major developments and activity.

In 2007, the ESG will be focussing much of its efforts in encouraging debate and raising awareness over Gibraltar’s role in global warming and climate change. We know these are subjects of deep interest to many of you and we look forward to working together to try and make a positive difference both personally and collectively. End.

PAT: Note for GBC person recording you: “for anyone with petition forms to hand in please contact ESG Committee members on 43156/71020 or 74467”.