



HM Government of Gibraltar

Ministry of Health, the Environment,
Energy and Climate Change

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Despite Mr Hammond's Pessimism, Air and Water Quality Continue to Improve

Trevor Hammond has lost his credibility as environment spokesman for the Opposition in record time – before he even had any.

Last week, the Government showed clearly how the WHO's report on air quality was based on figures that largely included the days of the GSD and how air quality has improved significantly since. Indeed, new data presented to the Minister for the Environment and Climate Change only yesterday, which will be published later this year, confirm a downward trend in pollution from all the major chemicals and particulate matter, including NOx, PM10 and PM2.5.

The Government's response to Mr Hammond's statement last week was not aggressive, it was factual. Air quality in Gibraltar is demonstrably at the best levels in many years.

In his latest statement Mr Hammond has clearly made a 360 degree turn. He now welcomes the technology that will come with the new power station, even though the GSD based its whole election campaign just six months ago on spreading fear among the community about this very technology. By clear implication Mr Hammond has today also condemned the GSD's antiquated energy non-policy and their fake election campaign.

With power generation soon reducing its contribution to pollution even further, emissions from traffic remain a target. The Government's traffic plan will bring its benefits, as will other public outreach campaigns that are planned. Already there has been increasing success in the Government's incentives for new technology in vehicles, with the number of hybrid cars sold increasing. Mr Hammond also seems to have overlooked the significance of what much of the global environmental community has praised in the last week – the first wave power generation plant connected to a grid in the whole of Europe. Renewable energy was not even in the GSD's vocabulary before 2011.

Mr Hammond is once again mistaken about water quality around our beaches. He has either not researched the matter or has failed to capture the facts.



Concerns about water quality around our beaches, arising from using long-term information, must be reconsidered in the light of the latest data produced by the Environmental Agency.

In 2012, as the implementation of the revised EU beach classification (Directive 2006/7/EC) approached, the Minister for the Environment Dr John Cortes set up a multi-agency committee to work on improving water quality around all the beaches and other bathing areas in Gibraltar. While no beach had water quality that would require the beach to close (with the exception of Western Beach during episodes caused by the La Linea sewage outlet), the committee nevertheless wanted to ensure that Gibraltar achieved full compliance with the new scheme.

A number of steps were taken to ensure this. These included the blocking or redirection of drainage outlets at both Catalan Bay and Rosia Bay, which had been historic sources of pollution throughout much of the lifetime of the previous administration. They also included the introduction of a more stringent monitoring regime to ensure that the quality of the data exceeded that required by the EU. This allows for clearer identification of problems should they arise, and enhanced ability to take remedial action.

As a result of this initiative, the water quality around all our beaches has improved, as can be seen in the table below, where, with the known exception of Western Beach, the water quality around all our beaches had a better classification in 2015 than the accumulated average figure used in the EU report. For example, in 2015 both Eastern Beach and Camp Bay were 'excellent', Catalan Bay and Little Bay were 'good'. Moreover, the readings at Sandy Bay continue to be even better in 2016. The acceptable level of *E. coli* is 500 (cfu/100 ml) and of intestinal enterococci is 185(cfu/100 ml). These levels were never exceeded in 2015 (average 63.9 and 31 respectively) and the levels are even better for 2016 (33 and 7.78).

Again, with the exception of Western Beach where a protocol is already in place to ensure early notification of any pollution incidents, bathers can be confident of using all our beaches this year.

Minister for the Environment, Dr John Cortes commented: "The 'double whammy' mentioned by Mr Hammond is in fact a double whammy for the GSD. Scientific data clearly show that both air and water quality are markedly better than they used to be. This is a result of solid work by the different agencies, notably the Department of the Environment and Climate Change, the Environmental Agency, and the Gibraltar Electricity Authority. I am hugely encouraged by our progress, but those who know what my own environmental standards are also know that I am still not satisfied. With all my colleagues in the different departments and authorities, we will continue to progress. Mr Hammond says that Gibraltar is not idyllic. Can you imagine what Gibraltar would have been like if the GSD had continued to dictate environmental policy, with the lack of action on beaches, on air quality, on renewable energy and energy efficiency, without incentives for new technology, and with their polluting diesel power station? Dark, dirty, dusty and dangerous. Fortunately, our people were able to see through the GSD and they spoke at the ballot."



Water Quality Classifications

Beach Name	4 Year Data	2015
Eastern Beach	Good	Excellent
Catalan Bay	Sufficient	Good
Sandy Bay	Poor	Sufficient
Little Bay	Good	Good
Camp Bay	Good	Excellent