



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **AIR QUALITY STILL SHOWING SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT**

The Department of Environment & Climate Change, working with the Environmental Agency and UK air quality experts Ricardo, reports that the air quality around Gibraltar has continued to show improvement following the lockdown.

This is evident throughout Gibraltar in respect of the pollutants that have so far been examined, namely Nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), combined oxides of Nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>), and particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>) have decreased. These pollutants are produced in emissions from burning fossil fuels such as in power generation, road traffic, shipping and aviation.

The reduction is seen to be greatest during the week, when the reduction of work-related traffic will be greater than at weekends. It is evident throughout Gibraltar, including the Europort area, Devil's Tower Road, Gibdock and the South District. The exception in that PM<sub>10</sub> in Rosia Road appears to have remained largely the same, even though other pollutant levels have dropped there. This may indicate that traffic, possibly motorcycle traffic, remains at similar levels at Rosia Road.

Other than this, levels are down. For example, for Devil's Tower Road, for example, daily plots show that the average concentration of the most dangerous particles (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) have not been above 8ug per m<sup>3</sup> since lockdown, while they reached as high as 12ug per m<sup>3</sup> in January. The attached plots show similar results for all these pollutants in most of the sites.

This improvement in air quality is most likely the result of reduction in traffic, with reduction in construction and ship repair also contributing. There will have been reductions from neighbouring areas across the Bay too, which could also be contributing to these results.

Minister for the Environment John Cortes commented, "The results are to be expected. They do prove that traffic is now our main source of diminished air quality, which should encourage us to redouble efforts to deal with this after the current crisis when we start to regain a reviewed normality. The fact that poor air quality affects respiratory health is particularly significant as this will be key to good health in later years if COVID-19 becomes endemic. For the moment one consolation of the difficulties we are living through is the fact that we are breathing cleaner air."