

## ESG Radio on WASTE AND RECYCLING AUGUST 2005

Today I would like to talk about why it is important to start recycling in Gibraltar and why the ESG has joined the global clean up campaign taking place in mid-September. It is clear to many of us that we have a big problem with our litter in Gibraltar. This is a problem common to many around the world and many, indeed, are tackling this in a variety of ways.

Reducing the amount of waste we produce is obviously a way to start and this involves rethinking about how we use resources on a day to day basis. Once the waste is produced, however, we then have the issue of what we do with it.

This throws up a complex number of issues but recycling is an option that is being increasingly used in many societies today and a facility that the ESG sincerely hopes will be set up in Gibraltar without further delay. Recycling reduces the amount of waste we either bury in landfills or incinerate, both options inherently polluting. Equally important is the fact that much of our waste is made from non-renewable resources and so are valuable commodities to be reused.

On another point is that much of our waste is not biodegradable, ie ; does not rot and disappear without any problem. To put this into perspective, I would like to offer some information on the biodegradability of many household items commonly termed as waste:-

Orange and banana peel – **up to 2 years**  
Cigarette butts - **1-5 years**  
Wool socks - **1-5 years**  
Plastic coated paper - **5 years**  
Plastic bags can take between **20 and 1000 years!!!**  
Plastic film containers – **20 – 30 years**  
Nylon fabric **30-40 years**  
Leather up to **50 years**  
Tin cans up to **50 years**  
Aluminium cans - **80-100 years**  
Glass bottles – **1 million years!!!**  
Plastic bottles indefinitely!!!!

So, apart from the ugliness created by wanton littering which can foster similar behaviour in others and increase fire risk, the fact is that the next coca cola tin you walk past in a field or bush, or river, etc. will easily be around long after you yourself are gone! Sobering thought and what a disturbing legacy to leave to future generations to solve.

The ESG is hopeful that its campaign on CUTW-Gibraltar on Sept 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, will promote a change that will have lasting positive effects in our littering practices as a community. We also hope to see more anti-litter campaigns by Govt and govt agencies.

If you haven't yet signed up to the Clean up campaign please do so today on the numbers that will be issued at the end of this bulletin. We expect that at least 150 to 200 people will be helping over the weekend and various groups, clubs, agencies, services represented. A full list of sites and participants will be published in the media this week, and a final reminder that the 2<sup>nd</sup> planning session for the clean up weekend is this Friday 19<sup>th</sup> August at 8.00pm at the ESG temporary premises on John Mackintosh Square, next to Heritage Trust offices.

Thank you for listening.

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