



Għaqda Residenti Sliema

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Subject : SRA expresses concern over delays in the Malta air quality plan required by the EU

The Sliema Residents Association (SRA) expresses its concern that once again the Maltese authorities are falling behind their European Union (EU) commitments and counterparts with regard to environmental matters based on the Government's stated intention to request an extension for meeting air pollution targets. A derogation from EU limits on air pollution for particulate matter (as well as nitrogen oxide and benzene) is expected until the end of June 2011 (and 2015) instead of the stipulated date of 1st January 2010 previously agreed to.

Sliema is a Maltese town subject to high air pollution levels that frequently exceed EU safeguard limits to the detriment of residents' health and general quality of life. Climatic conditions can hardly be blamed for this situation given Malta's isolation and lack of heavy industry.

SRA reiterates its view that the air pollution problems of Sliema are a direct consequence of recent over development which has encouraged increased vehicular traffic without any mitigation or improved capacity.

Ironically such excessive development has, and is, being authorized by the same authority (MEPA) which is responsible to manage air pollution issues in Malta. Regrettably despite its air quality monitoring responsibilities, MEPA continues to ignore these issues and to grant yet further permits for new developments. MEPA expects other entities (such as the ADT) to address the traffic management and pollution problems that have arisen.

ADT has indicated that any more development in Sliema can precipitate traffic gridlock and admits inability to solve the chronic problems caused by poorly co-ordinated and excessive development in the area.

SRA is sceptical of the Malta Government's intent to submit its request for an extension, with regard to compliance to EU air quality norms, given this should include a competent air quality improvement plan. Such doubts arise from the awareness that the long overdue Sliema holistic traffic management plan, aimed at mitigating air pollution caused by traffic in the locality, is still at the stage of conception or infancy at best! The timing of the Government's request appears to be driven by expedience rather than conscience and may indeed be evidence of a deliberate, cynical intention to take the issue "to the wire" knowing that this will buy the maximum time and benefit for interested parties.

The SRA Committee