



# NEWSLETTER

## VALLETTA ALIVE FOUNDATION

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### **Foundation supports Strategy to Reduce Congestion**

The Valletta Alive Foundation has submitted its feedback to Government on the current proposals relating to the reduction of congestion to Valletta and Floriana. The proposals include the provision of a park and ride, reduction of 800 parking spaces, the pedestrianisation of a number of streets, the introduction of payment for vehicle entering Valletta and the relocation of the monti.

A questionnaire, prepared specifically for the proposal, was filled in by the foundation and submitted to the Ministry for Investment, Industry and IT together with a covering letter. In the letter (see addendum), the Foundation expressed support to the proposal particularly because through pedestrianisation and reduction of on-street parking, the urban environment of the City will improve significantly. The Foundation, however, highlighted a few issues that Government will need to look out for, particularly pricing. High prices for the park and ride and for vehicles entering Valletta could be detrimental to accessibility to the city, and this in turn would undermine commercial activity in Valletta. (A copy of the filled-in questionnaire will be forwarded to members upon request).

The feedback was the culmination of a consultation process. Minister Austin Gatt made a detailed powerpoint presentation on the proposals. Subsequently, the Foundation held a Governor's meeting to discuss and derive a stand on what was being proposed.

### **Valletta's priorities discussed with Minister Zammit Dimech**

A meeting was held with Hon. Minister for Tourism and Culture, Dr Francis Zammit Dimech. Mr Alfred Zahra, the Chairman of the Board of Governors, thanked the Malta Tourism Authority for its active involvement in the setting up of the Foundation, and for its contribution through the active involvement of MTA's representatives on the Board of Governors.

The Hon. Minister expressed support for the Foundation and presented a sponsorship cheque of Lm 300.

A number of issues were raised by the Foundation's officials who emphasised the importance of having appropriate accessibility to the city, proper signage and interpretation, effective marketing of Valletta and better co-ordination of initiatives from all parties concerned.



The Minister mentioned the embellishment project at Crucifix Hill. The project is co-ordinated by MTA and is due to start soon.

Present for the meeting were Mr Romwald Lungaro-Mifsud, Executive Chairman of the Malta Tourism Authority and Mr Jeffrey Cutajar, Director Marketing of the Authority. Mr Tonio Camilleri and Mr Paul Fenech were also present on behalf of the Valletta Alive Foundation.

## **VAF meets Minister Jesmond Mugliett**

Foundation officials had a meeting with Hon. Jesmond Mugliett, Minister for Urban Development and Roads, who is also Honorary patron of the Foundation. Mr. Alfred Zahra briefed the Minister on the progress of the Foundation since its inception last February.

Several issues relating to Valletta were discussed including access to Valletta and Freedom Square. VAF emphasised the importance of the shuttle service between the cruise passenger terminal and Valletta centre. VAF was represented by Alfred Zahra, Paul Fenech, and Tonio Camilleri. Perit Vince Cassar, MUDR Permanent Secretary also attended.

## **Congratulations to VISET**

Congratulations to VISET on the inauguration of phase 1 of the cruise passenger terminal and for creating such a fantastic space overlooking the Grand Harbour. This is an excellent example of how Government and the private sector can work together to create projects which generate economic activity, whilst regenerating historic areas.

The Foundation believes that this project will further raise the profile of Valletta as a touristic and cultural city.

## **Valletta Journal**

The Foundation is currently having discussion with a number of pr agencies on the possibility of a Valletta journal. The production of the journal will be in the hands of the agency. It is intended that the journal is produced once every three months and will be distributed with the Times or other paper.

This proposal should be considered as an opportunity for the communications agency to generate profit through advertising, whilst at the same time promoting increased awareness of Valletta. For VAF, the journal will present to a wider audience the many aspects of Valletta (cultural, commercial, social, historic, artistic and economic) and highlight the uniqueness of Malta's capital city. We hope these discussion will be successful.

There are other initiatives in the offing, details of which will be given to members in forthcoming newsletter.

## **Exceptional Classical Concert in Valletta**

An orchestra of top Italian talent led by Mro. Riccardo Muti, a former musical director of La Scala, will be giving a performance of classical music in Valletta on July 9th.

High calibre events are beneficial to Valletta because they strengthen Valletta's image as a cultural venue. An increasing cultural calendar of events is gradually transforming Valletta into lively cultural and entertainment venue which offers a healthy alternative to a growing segment of people who seek quality leisure time in a historic ambience.

Orchestra Giovanile Luigi Cherubini conducted by Mro. Muti will be performing works of Cherubini, Schubert and Beethoven. The concert will be held at the Mediterranean Conference Centre.

Renaissance Productions Ltd are the organisers of this unique cultural event. The Foundation congratulates RPL and its directors Dr. Anton Tabone and Mr. Amabile Zammit for their initiative and wish them every success in this venture. VAF urges members and others to support this event and other cultural events which take place in Valletta.

## **Interim Set-Up for Foundation's First Year**

The Charter of the Foundation sets out the rules and regulations for the running of the Foundation. To allow time for a membership base to be developed, there are interim arrangements for the first year.

For the first year only, the Board of Governors consists of fifteen members namely Mr. Alfred Zahra as Chairman and two governors each nominated by the seven founding members. No later than February 2006, a General Meeting shall be called in which an election to choose four Elected Governors shall be held. Prior to the General Meeting, the Founding Members will be requested to nominate one Governor each. Hence, after the AGM of February 2006, the Board of Governors shall consist of 7 Governors nominated by the Founding Members and a further 4 Governors elected in the Annual General Meeting. A copy of the Charter with all the relevant details is available on request.

We encourage members to consider whether they wish to stand for elections to the board of Governors next February. The Foundation is in constant need of people who are willing to dedicate some of their free time to work in the interests of Valletta.

## **ADDENDUM Feedback on; Valletta and Floriana – Strategy to Reduce Congestion**

*The following is the content of the covering letter which the Foundation submitted to Government with the response to the questionnaire.*

The Valletta Alive Foundation supports Government's initiative in relation to Valletta because;

- Through pedestrianisation and reduction of on-street parking, the urban environment of the City will improve significantly. Provided that the scheme is well managed and the pricing is right, more people (Maltese and tourists) will be encouraged to visit Valletta.
- It will make it easier for people to come to the City for shopping or errands.
- The long standing problem of the market on Merchants Street would be resolved once and for all.

Good access to Valletta is today limited to those willing to pay for the V-license. The new system will make Valletta accessible to all Maltese and tourists, with payment being according to the time vehicle spends within Valletta.

We agree with Government's approach whereby the park and ride is seen as part of an overall strategy aimed at improving accessibility to Valletta including lifts/escalators, parking provision etc.

The Foundation would, however, like to make these observations (over and above those made in the questionnaire(attached)).

1. There needs to be a no-nonsense approach in the implementation of the scheme on matters relating to, for example, the removal of all reserved parking, the dimension of monti stalls and the validation of genuine Valletta residents.
2. The pricing (of the park and ride and for time spent by car within Valletta and Floriana) is crucial. We understand that the costs of running the system have to be recouped. On the other hand there is the risk, that if the pricing is too high, less people are likely to come to Valletta and some offices might actually relocate elsewhere.
3. For this reason, the pricing levels cannot be left in the hands of the private operators of the park and ride and the vehicle entry control system. All pricing has to be set by Government following consultation with a monitoring board (refer to point 5 below).
4. Over insistence by Government to recoup all the costs may result in the failure of the system. There has to be on the part of Government, a willingness to cover part of the running cost at least for the first few years. The economic, social and cultural value of Valletta is significant. It would be unwise to undermine such important improvements for want of a few tens of thousands of liri per year.
5. Implementation of the project is crucial. There has to be careful monitoring of the scheme especially during the first few months and years. We therefore propose the setting up of a monitoring board and we ask that the Foundation would have a representative sitting on this board.
6. VAF recommends that, prior to implementation, there will be an intensive communications campaign. Apart from the technicalities of the system, the benefits should be highlighted, including improvements to Valletta's urban environment.
7. The project has to be seen as the precursor to further improvements to be carried out over a number of the years including
  - The provision of more off-street parking. Possible sites for underground car parks include Freedom Square, in front of Evans building and various locations around the periphery of Valletta.
  - Freedom square, St. George's square and other secondary urban spaces in Valletta should be pedestrianised sooner rather than later.
  - There needs to be investment in paving for newly pedestrianised areas. Streets and pavements in the more residential parts of Valletta need to be improved.
  - The redevelopment of the opera house site and the rehabilitation of Fort St. Elmo.