



NEWSLETTER

VALLETTA ALIVE FOUNDATION

December 2007 – Issue No 9

1 New Governor for VAF

The Foundation welcomes Ms. Elisabeth Aquilina as a new Governor on the VAF's Board of Governors. She replaces Mr. Claude Zammit Trevisan as the Governor representing the Malta Tourism Authority (one of the seven founding members who are entitled to nominate a governor on the board). Mr. Zammit Trevisan has taken up a post in MTA's London office. He was very active in the Foundation as Assistant Secretary and was instrumental in many of its initiatives, including the BOV Streets Alive. The Foundation greatly appreciates his contribution and wish him the best of luck in his new posting. Ms. Aquilina has already attended some meetings of the VAF and has already shown herself committed to the objectives of the Foundation. Apart from working with MTA on issues related to Valletta, amongst others, she is also a resident of the City.

2 The Extension of Pedestrian Areas in Valletta

The paving of Valletta's new pedestrian areas is now almost complete. The extension of pedestrianisation, Merchants Street in particular will revitalize the City as a commercial and social hub. This is an important development for Valletta, together with the introduction of the park and ride and the CVA. VAF also welcomes the relocation of the *monti*. This together with the pedestrianisation will allow people to appreciate the architectural and historic value of this important Valletta street. Congratulations to the Ministry for Resources and Infrastructure for the works carried out.

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3 VAF writes to Prime Minister

The placing of tables and chairs is a positive aspect of urban life, not least in Valletta. If over done, however, the urban space could be taken over completely by tables and chairs to the detriment of the pedestrian and the enjoyment of the urban space by the pedestrian. Urban spaces in Valletta are at a crossroad (excuse the pun!). The areas for pedestrians have increased substantially. At this crucial stage, it is vital to ensure that pedestrian areas are truly safeguarded for pedestrians. We need to avoid situations where these spaces are “colonized” by tables and chairs in a manner which detracts their full appreciation by the pedestrian.

The Foundation wrote to the Prime Minister. On the one hand, VAF congratulated government for the pedestrianisation programme in Valletta. On the other hand, the Foundation urged government to safeguard these pedestrian spaces by appropriate decisions and effective enforcement by the responsible agencies.

4 VAF website online

The Foundation's website is now online. The address of the website is: <http://www.vallettaalivefoundation.org>. The website includes news of the foundation, past editions of the newsletters, photos and numerous other items. A linked website with information on services available in the City (retail, catering etc) is being compiled. Those interested in being featured in <http://www.vallettaalive.com> are to contact Mr. Daniel Frendo of Multi-Services International Ltd. at dfrendo@msi.com.mt or tel. no. 21373222.

While on the subject of websites, please note that in recent months the Valletta Local Council has established a new website at <http://www.cityofvalletta.org> giving historic and other information about the city.

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5 Feedback on A Vision for the Grand Harbour

The Foundation has reviewed the proposed twenty projects for the Grand harbour and submitted its thoughts as part of the public consultation process. An article by VAF Chairman Mr. Alfred Zahra was feature in the Times in October.

It is worth noting that in April 2007 VAF had submitted a Memorandum to the Hon. Prime Minister in April 2007 with detailed proposal for projects and initiatives for Valletta.

VAF welcomes the new focus that is being given to the Grand Harbour and Marsamxett Harbour by both government and the Opposition.

The most relevant comments submitted to Government were:

- With the new cruise liner quay, the role of Ta' Liesse and Victoria Gate as an entry point into Valletta will become more important. For this reason, the Foundation proposes the regeneration of Ta' Liesse/ Victoria gate area as a project in its own right. This entails relocating incompatible uses, such as warehousing. Vacant properties should be brought back into use, possibly in leisure related uses. Regeneration will give new life to this otherwise interesting and scenic area and it will enhance the experience of those walking from the water front into Valletta through Victoria Gate.
- The Foundation suggests that Fort St. Elmo becomes a complex of museums combined with catering outlets, specialized retail, a small hotel, a venue for open air concerts and limited leisure activities. An appropriate mix of uses will transform the Fort into a major pole of attraction and a hub of activity and this will in turn be a catalyst for the regeneration of lower Valletta.
- Whilst commending Government's vision for the Grand Harbour, VAF is concerned that some of the projects being proposed could divert attention away from what the real priorities are, the rehabilitation of Fort St. Elmo and the redevelopment of the opera house site.

As far as tourism attractiveness is concerned, Valletta is like a jigsaw puzzle; a jigsaw which is almost complete except for a few missing pieces. The two most important jigsaw pieces which are still missing are the rehabilitation of Fort St. Elmo and the redevelopment of the opera house site.

On 7th December 2007, Government announced twenty two projects for Marsamxett harbour. VAF officials were invited to the presentation together with other stakeholders. As for the Grand Harbour, VAF is reviewing the proposal and will give its feedback. Any feedback from members to be included on the VAF submission will be welcome.

6 Versatile Valletta - BOV Streets Alive

Valletta never fails to disappoint. For six consecutive Fridays, the streets of Valletta provided a unique back drop to the 2nd edition of BOV Streets Alive this summer. A theme was selected for each Friday to further highlight the different aspects of the City. The event kicked-off on the 20th July with Valletta Kreattiva followed by Valletta Kulinarja, Valletta Storika, Valletta Eleganti and Valletta Romantika. The event ended on the 24th August with Valletta b'Differenza.

What was particular about this year's event is the diversity of the activities organised. For example, a total of 2,300 candles forming St Paul's emblem shone out of the 141 steps of St Ursula Street in Valletta, giving the street a warm touch as part of the Valletta Romantika evening.

The Lower Barracca gardens provided the perfect setting for an international hair where hairstylists and fashion designers came together to fuse original garments and hairstyle into one show. Another highlight of Valletta Eleganti, was the top level ballroom dancing that was offered to a very appreciative audience at the Casino Maltese.

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Valletta Storika featured a re-enactment of wartime Malta coupled with a display of military vehicles from World War II. Suggestive war tunes like Glenn Miller's Swing the Mood as well as Elgar's Land of Hope and Glory were played by the Armed Forces of Malta Band. The Malta Police Precision Drill Team gave a performance in a 21-man formation.

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An interesting item in Valletta b' Differenza evening was a martial arts exhibition of Ninjistu and Kendo which was followed by a demonstration of Tai Chi. Music was not lacking in BOV Streets Alive with each of the six evening featuring musical performances in most cases within Republic Street. Exhibitions of classic cars and Ferrari cars were also featured as part of the programme.

Shoppers, diners and retail outlets were also winners with the BOV Streets Alive Shopping lottery organised by Bank of Valletta. Bank of Valletta cardholders, who shopped or dined in Valletta and paid by credit card won attractive prizes as did three Valletta businesses.

The funds spent on such events (public funds and funds from sponsorships) are an investment in Valletta and the retail and catering businesses which operate within it. They are also an investment in the regeneration and rediscovery of Valetta as a cultural, historical and recreational capital of Europe.

Valletta Alive Foundation thanks Bank of Valletta who for a second year has shown confidence in the Valletta's potential. Thanks also to the Ministry for Tourism and Culture and the Malta Tourism Authority who provided logistical and organizational support. Thanks also to Allied Newspapers for their support.

7 BOV Streets Alive – what next?

Over the years, more and more people have come to realize Valletta's potential for evening leisure. The number of catering outlets and bars has increased substantially. Most weekends many of the restaurants are full. The revitalization of Valletta in the evening is a process which has started and which will continue in the coming years. Events such as BOV Streets Alive, as well as Notte Bianca and Notte Magica, are catalysts which raise awareness of what our Capital City has to offer.

In this context, VAF is discussing the future of this event. It needs to be complimentary to, rather than compete with, events such as Notte Bianca. For one thing, resources for Streets Alive is substantially less, all derived from sponsors. More importantly, the object of regenerating Valletta in the evening remains. VAF is considering whether to change the dates to September to lead up to Notte Bianca. Suggestions have also been made to have it organised in April/May.



The role of the retail sector needs also to be considered. Admittedly, participation of shops in these events was very limited. Another issue is whether we focus the vent in the core of Valletta or try to spread activities to different parts of the capital. In the latter case, the concern is that resources will be spread so thinly, that the level of activity generated in the core would be limited. Do you have any thoughts about the above? If yes let us know. We would be happy to hear from you.

8 Footnotes

In mid-January, the Foundation's New Year's dinner will be held. Details will be circulated in the coming weeks.

In accordance to the statute, the annual general meeting will be held in mid-February. Members are encouraged to attend. Four posts on the Governors board are up for election. (The other seven governors are nominated by the Founder Members). Anyone wishing to contest the election is kindly asked to contact any official of the Foundation. Information on the AGM will be circulated in the first weeks of January.

Members are kindly reminded to ensure that they pay up their membership for 2008.

Merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year
to all members and their families

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