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# MHRA in the news

## July 2010

### Meeting with Paragon Europe to Revise the Project Malta4Less Project 3-Star Hotels

MHRA CEO Mr George Schembri, 3-star Hotel Committee Chairman and MHRA Membership Officer Mr Vincent Lungaro Mifsud met Dr Nadia Theuma to revise the project MALTA4LESS which had been submitted in October 2009 but had not been successful due to minor deficiencies in the application. It was agreed to revise the various actions envisaged in the project and also revise the budget submitted. It is planned that the project will be submitted when the October 2010 call is issued.

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### Meeting with Malta Qualifications Council CEO Dr James Calleja

MHRA CEO MR George Schembri and Membership Officer Mr Vincent Lungaro Mifsud met Dr James Calleja to explore the possibility of giving a 'certificate of competence' to those who eventually take part in the MHRA EU-funded project 'Culture Awareness for Frontliners' project. The project will see over 400 employees in the hospitality industry taken to visit heritage sites and places of major interest that a tourist can be recommended to visit by frontliners in the industry. Dr James Calleja confirmed that the MQC would be able to give a Level One certificate if the contact hours of the participants reach 50hours. It was agreed to look into this and see whether this would be possible.

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### Walkabout in Marsascala with Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism and Culture Dr Mario DeMarco



A walk was organised by MHRA to take Dr Mario Demarco and MTA CEO Mr Josef Formosa Gauci on a tour of Marsascala to explore areas that can be upgraded in the area. The walkabout started at Triq San Guzepp along the seaside where it was observed that such a picturesque walkway ought to better developed and embellished. It was agreed that one possibility was the proper paving of the area with modern tiling. The group then proceeded to stroll along the Triq Ix- Xatt promenade. The main observation in the area was the possibility of narrowing the pavement by about 100 to 150 cms on the sea side of the promenade, permitting the road to be moved and thus widening the pavement on the opposite side to create more space for outdoor dining. The next stop was at the Tal-Maghluq waterway. The bad state of this area is evident and due to bad circulation the water has become stagnant. Once developed and restored, this area has great potential to become a major attraction in Marsascala. For this purpose it was agreed that MHRA will liaise with the MOT to hold a meeting together with Dr. De Marco, the Mayor and other competent

authorities in order to work out an eventual plan of restoration works to be completed in good time before the start of the 2011 summer season. The group then proceeded to the Torri San Tumas area where the former Jerma Palace Hotel lies. The hotel is in a derelict state and has become an eyesore and a dangerous area. George Micallef observed that once the appropriate legal framework is approved MEPA will have the power to pull the place down. The last area to be visited was Bajja San Tumas. This is a pretty spot, partly spoilt by the shabby summer houses/shacks built unchecked in the area as well as the unkempt surrounding land, most privately owned. It was observed that the construction / extension of the boat jetty were having a harmful effect on the preservation of the small beach. Dr DeMarco suggested that the extension be removed to allow the natural watercourse of the area replenish the sand on this beach. It was also agreed to look into the possibility of having the Local Councils of Marsascala, Marsaxlokk and Birzebbuga work together to promote the three areas as a cluster of the three fishing villages in southern Malta.



## MHRA Meets the Project Coordinators of the MTA 'ADVANCE' Project

MHRA CEO Mr George Schembri met Mr Adrian Mifsud and Sarah Faith Azzopardi to explore how to best create the necessary awareness of the presentation being delivered on the 3rd August for the hospitality sector. The ADVANCE training programme for tourism leaders was launched by the Malta Tourism Authority on the 30th June at the Excelsior Hotel. The programme is a 3 million euro project that is fully funded by the European Union and Government through the European Social Fund. The main focus of the project is to engage senior and middle managers in the tourism and hospitality sector in Malta and Gozo, in the exchange of best practices in management through the assistance of foreign experts in the area of management. Full information is available on our website at [www.advance.com.mt](http://www.advance.com.mt)

## MHRA Attends Two-day Seminar Town Planning Management

A two-day seminar on Town Planning Management was held in Gozo. This was part of an ongoing project in Town Planning Management being led by the Malta Tourism Authority. Mr Simon Quinn from ATCM facilitated the meeting. A model action plan was drawn at the end for the three pilot areas identified under this project.

## MCESD Work Group Meeting on Family Friendly Measures

Constituted bodies within Working Group 3 met to discuss what changes can be introduced to improve the concepts of family-friendly measures. The basis for the discussion were the measures already

applicable in the public sector. The measures covered were mainly paid and unpaid leave for family reasons and work/family balance policies.

## Meeting Mellieha Mayor

MHRA facilitated a meeting during which Mr Twanny Curmi made a small donation to the Local Council to make up for the vandalism perpetrated on furniture in the area of Ghadira bay reserved for barbecues. During the brief meeting several issues were also discussed touching on the operations on Ghadira bay in respect of lido operators and kiosks. Mayor Robert Cutajar reaffirmed his commitment to obtain Blue Flag status for Ghadira Bay but this needed all stakeholders in the area to work within parameters of good quality standards. He also indicated that he was putting forward to all commercial entities in the Mellieha town centre a proposal to turn High Street into one-way traffic and eventually to pedestrianise it too.

## September 2010

### MHRA at GWU Conference at Dolmen Hotel

MHRA CEO Mr George Schembri was invited to sit on a panel to give the MHRA perspective on the social dialogue to ensure responsible management of seasonal migration workers in the tourism sector. The conference, held at the Dolmen Hotel in Qawra, was organised by the General Workers' Union with the support of the European Confederation of Trade unions. Several foreign guest speakers and a number of union members from European countries attended the conference. The main discussion centred round illegal work, equal pay for equal work, lack of work/family balance, lack of training opportunities and identifying opportunities to increase female participation.

## Q2 BOV-MHRA Survey Presented at Corinthia Palace



The results presented for period May to June 2010 reaffirmed that the recovery in tourism was gaining momentum and all key tourism performance indicators were positive. The decisive decisions taken earlier in the year by the authorities to invest further in the tourism sector by increasing seat capacity opportunities and more focused marketing were reaping results. Tourist arrivals improved by 12.6%, guest nights were up by 10.5% and tourist spend was also up by 10.6%. The survey results showed that in Quarter 3 occupancy levels improved across all 3 hotel categories with the best improvements being registered by the 3- and 5-star establishments. Notwithstanding the significant progress registered, it was only the 5-star category which managed to exceed 2008 occupancy levels. All 3 hotel categories showed improved Average Achieved Room Rates for both the quarter and on a year-to-date basis. As regards revenue, albeit better than the previous year, it was still not sufficient to make good for the losses incurred by the sector in 2009. The sharp increase in operating costs in 2010 was eroding all gains and was threatening Malta's competitiveness as a value-for-money destination. Hotel gross operating profit up to June 2010 remained 25% below the average levels of 2006-08 and up to 45% lower than the best year results. Such declining results in profitability would make it increasingly difficult for hoteliers to find

disposable capital badly needed for re-investment. In his closing address MHRA President Mr George Micallef highlighted that one needed to see how the sector can sustain the numbers registered so far and how these can be improved in order to secure a healthy occupancy during the winter season. The industry was concerned about the economic scenario and austerity measures affecting major source markets, in particular the UK. He argued that the months ahead will be crucial to all stakeholders in the industry since difficult decisions will have to be taken to retain the momentum of growth in arrivals and called for a sensible approach by all concerned to overcome the challenging time ahead for Malta and Gozo.



### MHRA Meets Members re Thomas Cook 5% Deduction

Following the Q2 BOV-MHRA Hotel Survey results Mr Micallef addressed those members who featured in this summer's Thomas Cook programme, regarding Thomas Cook's unilateral decision to deduct 5% from sums owing to hoteliers. Thomas Cook representatives had informed hoteliers that the company had decided to deduct 5% off invoices since the operator claimed to have had a bad season. Mr Micallef outlined the actions taken to date by MHRA and he asked members what line MHRA was to take on their behalf. Some members indicated that although they operate with Thomas Cook they had not been contacted

and informed of such a deduction. It was agreed that each member obtains further clarification on the issue and a decision will be taken at a later stage when the situation is clearer. Mr Micallef indicated that MHRA had already made it publicly clear in both local and foreign media that such action by Thomas Cook was unethical and unacceptable without prior proper consultation with those concerned.

### Dr Jason Azzopardi Requests Meeting with MHRA Restaurants Committee

Dr Azzopardi informed MHRA members present for the meeting that Government had drawn up a Master Plan for Marsaxlokk to upgrade the area, especially along the promenade of the fishing village. Now that the first phase of the embellishment was complete the second phase was to start in early October to re-pave the square opposite the parish church and pave the promenade extending towards the car park. Government was also considering pedestrianising the promenade and, in order to facilitate the traffic management in the area, government needed to expropriate a piece of land two streets above the promenade at a cost of €300,000. He indicated that he had met GRTU and these had indicated that they were willing to ask their members in the area to support this initiative with a financial contribution on their part. He asked MHRA to seek similar arrangements with its members as those of the GRTU.

### MHRA & MBB meet Fondazjoni Uljed Qormi



MHRA CEO MR George Schembri and MBB CEO Mr Joe Tanti met Fondazjoni Uljed Qormi led by the chairman, Mr Carmelo Debono, Mrs. Marie Louise Coleiro Preca in the capacity of CEO, George Azzopardi executive Secretary and Lisa Cassar, Dave Shaw, Stanley Cauchi, Joe Borg as members on the committee. During the meeting a programme of activities was formulated to showcase Qormi's social organisation to the guest speakers being invited by MHRA & MBB for the joint seminar held on the morning of Friday 8th October to address 'Regional Development towards a Sustainable Tourism Sector.



The purpose of the activities was to establish a link between Malta and Portugal through the association of Qormi with Grandmaster Pinto de Fonseca. Amongst the guests invited for the conference was Mr Francisco Calheiros who, besides being President of LAG Vale da Lima and President of TURIHAB – Association of Manor Houses in Portugal, is also a Knight of the Order of St John.

**MHRA Restaurant  
Committee Addresses  
Marsaxlokk Restaurant  
Owners**

Following the meeting held with Parliamentary Secretary Dr Jason Azzopardi on Marsaxlokk, MHRA called a meeting of its members in the area and updated them with the proposal put forward by Dr Azzopardi. It was explained to them that the sum of €350,000 was required by Government in order to finance the expropriation

of property needed to implement the pedestrianisation of Triq Is-Sajjeda in Marsaxlokk. Members were informed that the GRTU had informed Dr Azzopardi that their members were ready to raise the sum between them since they were in favour of the total pedestrianisation of the promenade. However those present immediately indicated that they were definitely not ready to support such a proposal and the GRTU had never spoken to them on the subject. Operators were surprised that after com-

pleting the road, government now wanted to turn this into a pedestrian zone! Members were not in favour of pedestrianisation of the area since they fear a drop in business considering that their main source of business is locals. However they were prepared to have an outline brief of the master plan for the area to give their input. It was agreed that a letter should be sent to Dr Azzopardi asking for the brief and a subsequent meeting held to discuss the brief.

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