

# MEPA issues Development Plan for Il-Ghirghien Public Consultation

The MEPA Board has approved for Public Consultation, a Development Brief for the area known as Il-Ghirghien in Birzebbugia, as required by the Development Planning Act (1992), in order to encourage integrated planning of future development in this area.

This Brief is generally based on provisions contained in a number of policies in the Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan (approved in 1995), in particular, Policy MB 18 and MB 22. The recommended development direction in this document is:

- residential;
- social and community facilities;
- open spaces and recreational land.

Policy MB18 encourages a degree of mixed development, taking into

account the provision of public/community-related facilities in this area. The various new open spaces/green areas, including sports facilities, recommended in this Brief, are to remain accessible

to the public in order to strengthen community identity and perhaps contribute to a greater integration of Tal-Papa housing area and residential areas flanking Wied il-Qoton. A Pastoral Centre, located

on a site flanking Triq ie-Gief and Triq il-Port Hieles, is being planned together with other community facilities (elderly centre, childcare and facilities for social organisations). The protection of historic-cultural features on the area as well as the creation of recreational walkways/jogging paths, and soft landscaping (particularly in the vicinity of Triq il-Port Hieles) are also envisaged by this Brief.

An assessment of any identified structures/buildings, having cultural importance and of land which may contain agricultural and ecological value, is a requirement prior to any development commencing around or within the respective sites included within this Brief.

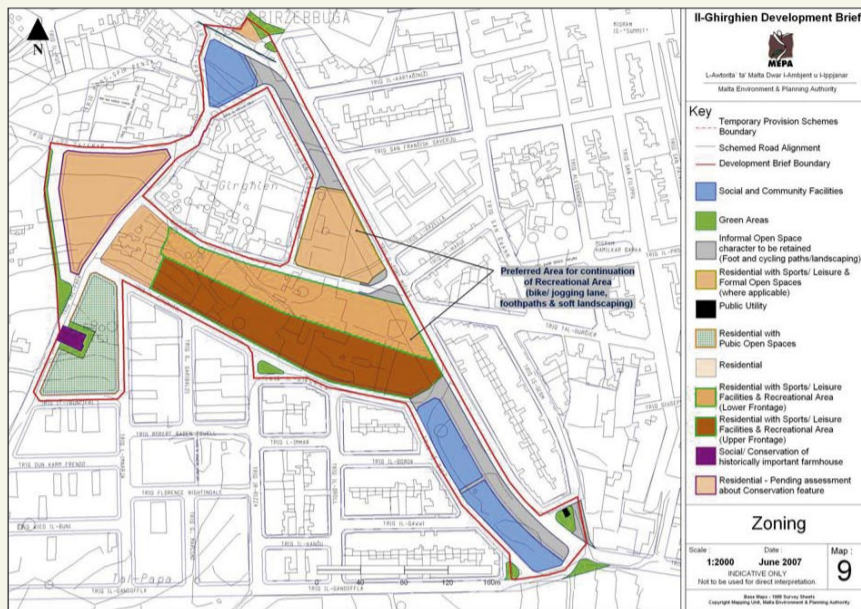
Traffic management is also seen as an important component of this Brief in view of the recommended contextual setup outlined above. To this effect, a re-definition of the current street classification system in the area

(where appropriate) and a series of junction improvements, are required. In particular, these measures entail the downgrading of Triq il-Port Hieles as well as improvements on a number of junctions affecting the area.

In addition, this Development Brief addresses flooding problems in the area by making provision for improved structures within the context of development planned for the area.

The period for public consultation for this document is six weeks. Comments and suggestions by the public will be received at MEPA until Friday 9th November 2007. These may be sent to:

Director of Planning  
Il-Ghirghien Development Brief  
Malta Environment Planning Authority  
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Or  
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## Internal Migration – a case of concern for the Grand Harbour

### Saviour Formosa

A state's strategic planning remit always gravitates towards the study of populations, better known as demography. MEPA employs intensive studies in population analysis to build up its research resources for Structure Plan Review, Local Plan preparation as well as area-specific action plans and development briefs. The basic demographic data is injected into thematic studies as are housing, employment, tourism, coastal, urban regeneration, utilities, retail, recreation as well as social-community facilities and public attitudes.

A major component of these demographic aspects involve migration issues or better still where people choose to live once they move house. The internal migration phenomenon provides one of the fundamental pivots around which urban development rotates. Together with population density, land availability and affluence, internal migration identifies those areas that serve as the future targets for potential development. It also serves as a gauge for monitoring depopulation in such areas as the old village cores, resultant of a plethora of causes: attractiveness of the new areas, dilapidation of the old dwelling stock, loss of social cohesion and networks, and increase in disorganization and such negative activities as crime. 50-year study at sub-national (district level) depicts a situation where the 7 MEPA local plans

and the 6 NSO Districts registered growth except for the Grand Harbour area (Valletta, Floriana, Birgu, Bormla, Isla and Kalkara) which has registered a steady decline since the late 1940s. The population in that area decreased from 55,000 in the 1950s to 22,900 in 2005 (NSO Census 2005) and was projected to decrease to less than 6700 in 2020 should the historical trends be sustained (MEPA Demographic Topic Paper, 2001) or 13,800 should policy measures be implemented. This situation has resulted in a pattern of loss from the Grand Harbour area to quieter and less dense areas such as Attard, Mosta, and Marsascala. In effect, such a migration trend resulted in deterioration of the stock as well as the establishment of a low-income status household structure (Ellul, 2003). Figure 1 depicts these changes at two extremes: chronic depopulation in Valletta and rapid increases in Marsascala from 1957 to 2005 with the population pyramids getting thinner over the decades for Valletta and the inverse is evidenced in Marsascala. These result in an elderly and unsustainable population in the old areas and a highly active and young population in the new areas. Census 2005 figures are not yet available to date and will certainly enable the updating of the figures under study, particularly with regards to the migration of new households, increase in single-person households and breakdown of established household structure.

A series of in-depth studies on individuals' migration patterns have been carried out over a number of years initiated in the late 1990s and now updated with the latest Census figures. Results identified out-migration as one component that still plagues the Grand Harbour Area. People prefer to move out of this area and into neighbouring areas. Internal migration occurs based on three preferential steps: the first choice would naturally be to reside in the same locality, then to an adjacent locality within the same local plan and finally to other areas. Though Malta is very small, the social construct tries to sustain itself through family ties, a very strong parochial presence and uniqueness of each town's culture (Boissevain, 1980).

Figure 2 indicates the movements that occur from one region to another both as out-movements and in-movements where the movements to and from the Grand Harbour Local Plan Area are shown in green. Figures shown on arrows pointing away from the green circle indicate number of persons migrating out in 1996 whilst the figures for incoming arrows indicate persons moving into the local plan area. Whilst 167 persons changed residences within the local plan area, others moved out such as 126 persons who migrated to the adjacent South Malta Local Plan Area as against an incoming 38 from that area. *Continued on page 4*

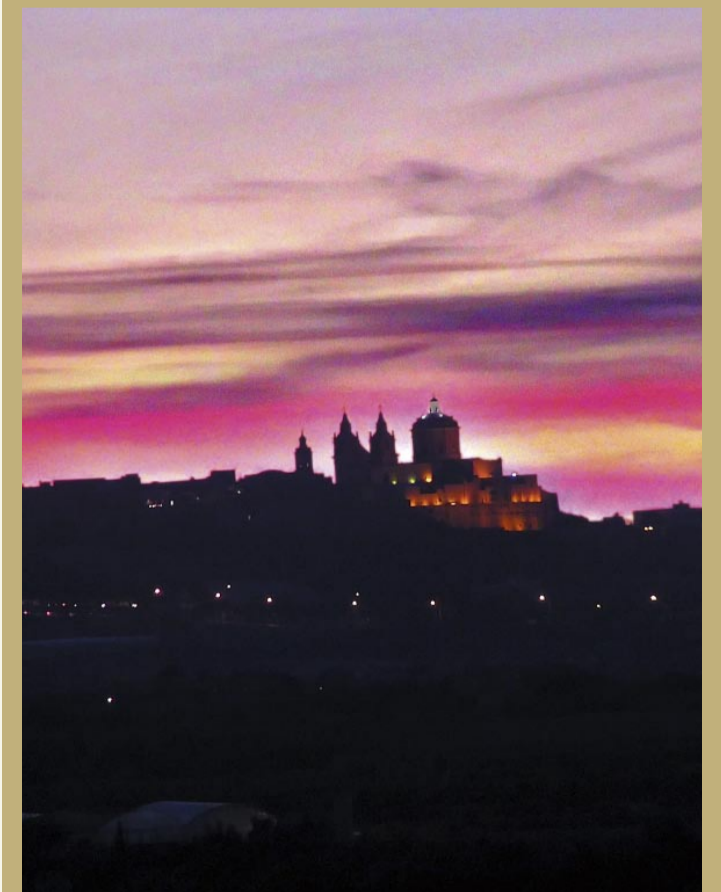
## Waterproofing of Mdina Cathedral discussed

Representatives of the Cathedral Chapter and of the Malta Environment and Planning Authority met to discuss the need to remove the silver paint which was recently applied to waterproof the Mdina Cathedral.

During a very fruitful meeting, both sides agreed that there was no contestation of the fact that the site was scheduled or the fact that an immediate solution was re-

quired. Both sides emphasized that they had always worked well together and that there was no reason for the excellent relations not to continue.

It was decided in the meeting that the Restoration Unit will be submitting a Restoration Method Statement to MEPA as to the way the silverene may be covered over to retain the waterproofing but removing the eyesore created.





For further information please call MEPA on telephone 2290 2021 or send a fax to 2290 2299

## Malta in a very advanced stage of preparation for Natura 2000 sites

Darrin Stevens & Marie Therese Gambin

Malta is the most advanced of the EU member states that acceded the EU in 2004 in its progress to designate sites under the Habitats Directive. Its preparations, carried out by the Malta Environment & Planning Authority, have reached a sufficiency of 92.6%.

The European Union (EU) Habitats Directive includes provisions for the protection of natural habitats and species of importance to the European Community. Each Member State contributes to the protection of specific natural habitat types and habitats of species through the selection of sites which will form a network across Europe—the Natura 2000 Network. Other sites to form part of this network are designated under the Birds Directive.

Malta proposed sites in 2004 and 2006 for inclusion in the Natura 2000 Network. In view of the Habitats Directive, discussions were held during bilateral meetings between DG Environment and Malta. A biogeographical seminar was also held late last year, for the new Mediterranean Member States, Malta and Cyprus. These seminars are organised by the European Commission (EC) and the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity (ETC/BD).

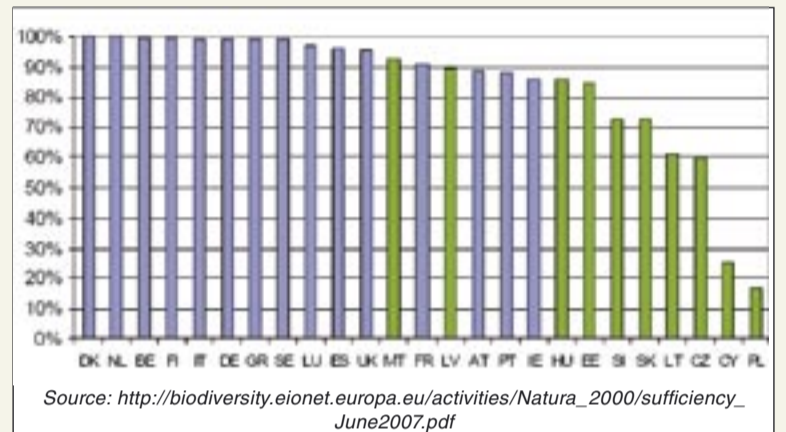
Such discussions lead to an assessment of each habitat and species listed in the Annexes of the Habitats Directive and present in



the particular Member State. Subsequently, an indication is obtained as to whether such habitats and species are sufficiently represented through the proposals forwarded to the Commission.

The ETC/BD published its results in terms of Member States' state of progress up to June 2007.

One can note the state of progress of Malta, with a sufficiency of over 90 per cent, the highest among the States that acceded the EU in 2004 (shown in green). This is pending some further details to be submitted to the Commission of the exact distribution of a few habitats and species,



for which data is being collated.

The Nature Protection Unit within the Malta Environment and Planning Authority is currently collecting more data so as to refine data already available and to propose further sites subject to the provisions of the Habitats Directive;

this particularly when considering the marine environment, with one proposed marine site to date.

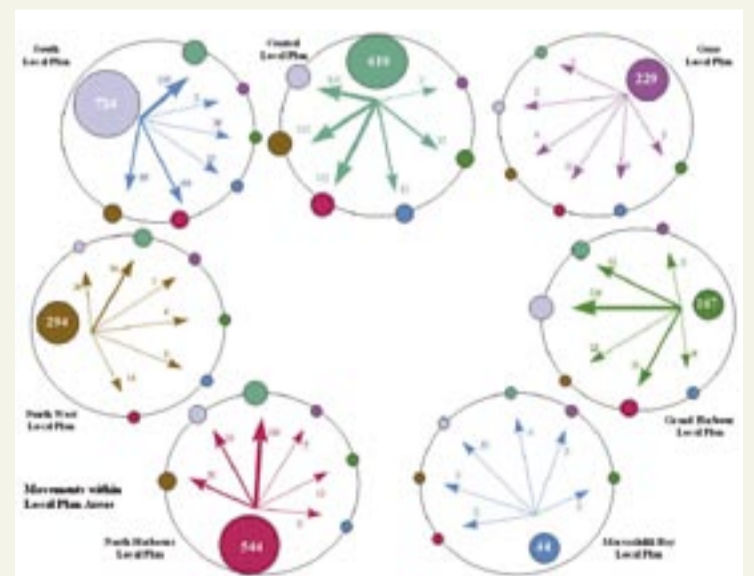
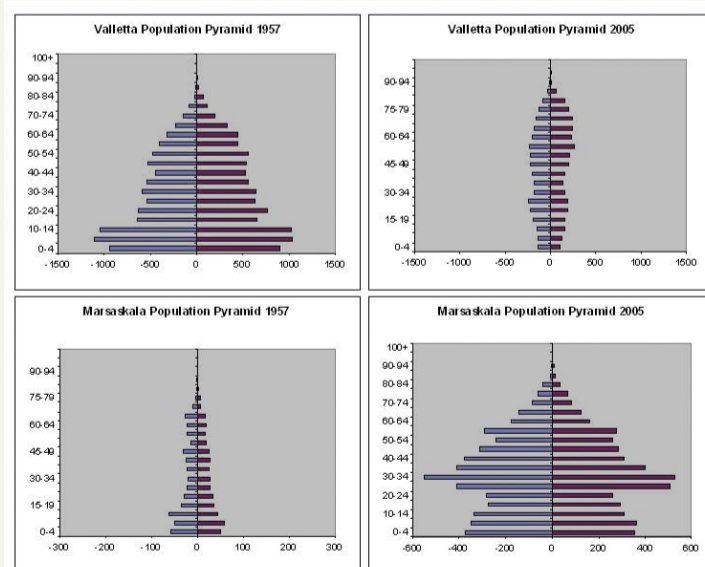
For further information on Natura 2000, kindly refer to MEPA's website, at [www.mepa.org.mt](http://www.mepa.org.mt), or e-mail at [nature.protection@mepa.org.mt](mailto:nature.protection@mepa.org.mt).

## Internal Migration

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The described migration patterns show the need to develop an ongoing study of migration patterns and compare them with dwelling development patterns, vacancies, and other population modeling strategies. The next target is to revisit the above statistics as new data is made available.

Initial analysis of the changes based on Census 2005 data shows that the Districts have experienced major internal migration over the last year prior to Census day (NSO, 2007). Base findings indicate that the Southern Harbour Region (which includes but comprises more towns than the Grand Harbour Local Plan) lost more persons between 2004 and 2005 than any other region. Considering that the main intake towns of Paola, Tarxien, Fgura and Zabbar are included, pointers are all for a continuing sizable annual emigration from the old cities. Such findings call for further research where the availability of Census 2005 internal migration data at locality level will help update these figures and create a trend analysis for the future.



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