

## **Aim to finish Valletta pedestrianisation project by December**

**by Chiara Bonello**

The aim is to finish the Valletta pedestrianisation project involving the paving of a number of streets in Valletta by the end of the year, unless unanticipated problems crop up, Infrastructure Minister Austin Gatt said yesterday.

Speaking in a press conference on the corner between Republic Street and St Christopher Street, where works have been started, Mr Gatt said things had to be taken in context.

Considering everything that was happening in Valletta, the projects for the entry into Malta's capital city, the President's Palace and the applications for projects at St Elmo made it apparent a holistic approach was being taken.

One of the architects working on the project, Daniel Cordina, said the project would even involve the changing of the infrastructure lying beneath these roads. The importance of this infrastructure was not to be underestimated.

Where they were not broken, he said, the old paving stones had been kept, numbered and stored at St Elmo, until the day came when the works were finalised and they could be re-laid in their original place.

The second architect working on the project, Claude Borg, said the work was the result of a carefully thought out plan, not some random impulsive work. There had even been a study of the type of paving there was in the past, as the concept was to give the area that same look, while adapting to the needs of today.

Resources Minister George Pullicino said this was a crucial step towards giving Valletta the importance it deserved as Malta's capital city. This was a holistic plan which should not go forward in starts and fits, but be seen through to the very end, he said.

This project, together with a number of others, including those of St George's Square, Castille, St John's Co-Cathedral and St Barbara Bastions among others, was part of the plan for Valletta.

This project, which is a collaboration between the Resources Ministry, which is responsible for the planning aspect of things, and the Infrastructure Ministry, which is focused on the execution of work, is estimated to cost some e2 million.

The project includes a number of streets such as St Christopher Street, Ordinance Street, Republic Street, South Street and Merchant Street. The first phase involves areas between Old Bakery Street and St Paul's Street, and St Christopher Street and Ordinance Street.

The second phase includes the other end of St Christopher Street, and the area between Republic Street and Merchant Street. It has not yet started, Mr Cordina said, since the works on Republic Street have to be finished first, so traffic may be diverted through it.

Minister Austin Gatt pointed out that parking on the side of these roads was no longer going to be a possibility as bollards would be replacing the slightly raised pavements. The bollards are also to be changed to an electronic system, he said, which is centrally controlled, curbing cases of abuse. There would also be a CCTV system installed.

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