

Barrakka lift back to square one

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Transport Minister Austin Gatt has announced the government's plan to revive the Barrakka lift and shelve the funicular service earmarked for the same area. Addressing a press conference at Lascaris Ditch, Dr Gatt said that the Grand Harbour Regeneration Corporation would be entrusted with the project,



notwithstanding the fact that a consortium made up of the Gasan Group, Tumas group and KDM won a tender awarded by the ADT to link St James ditch to the heart of Valletta. At the time, the project was being handled by then Transport Minister Jesmond Mugliett.

A motion was moved in Parliament by the government to grant the Transport Authority 'rights on a tract of land lying under City Gate and the Upper Barrakka to be eventually passed to the Valletta Connections consortium. But this did not make it through in time for the 2008 general election.

When Dr Gatt took it over, the ministry decided to review the project from scratch, raising the consortium's eyebrows given the fact that the tender was at its final stages.

"Valletta Connections consortium was very understanding that in the national interest they had to withdraw the project without dragging the issue into courts," Dr Gatt said.

Dr Gatt explained that the original project envisaged a number of lifts and a funicular

service linking the parking areas in Valletta's ditches to the heart of the city. However, this was no longer considered to be feasible – apart from which it would clash with Renzo Piano's project for City Gate.

Instead the government decided to re-instate the Valletta lift. The project will cost some €2 million of which €1.5 million will go for the construction of the lift and the rest to embellish the small plaza with commercial outlets at the foot of the lift.

He said that no decision had yet been taken whether commuters would pay to use the lift, although he said that if this were the case, the payment would be minimal. The project is expected to be completed by March. 2011.

Architect David Drago who was entrusted with the design of the new lift said that there would be 3 panoramic lifts placed in the same position as the old one. The new lift will be about 58 metres high and will carry up to 1,000 passengers per hour.

The old lift operated between 1905 and 1973. The project will provide the first vertical connection for Valletta since the Upper Barrakka lift service was discontinued in 1974.

Comments (3)

 **Donald Calleja** / 3/26/2009

Nice to hear that a new lift is going to be rebuilt. I have lots of good memories of the old one. My father was the operating engineer of it.

 **Vicki Azzopardi** / 3/26/2009

I feel that one should charge a minimal charge, proceeds to make sure lifts are in clean & good working order

 **Salvino P Zammit** / 3/26/2009

I am really glad to see Donald's name- what a small world - who wrote from Canada. I remember watching the 8th September regatta from the magnificent small but useful engine room. I only recommend that we should see a photograph of Uncle Carmenu in a prominent spot when the project is completed.

Barrakka lift timeline

1905- Old lift start operating
1974- Lift ceased operating
1983- Structure disassembled
2003- PM Fenech Adami announces projects in the pipeline to revive the Barakka lift
2004- Govt issues an unsuccessful request for proposals but never gets off the ground (excuse the pun)
2005- Cable Car system proposed by Viset rejected by MEPA
2006- Tender documents for the Vertical Connections project re-issued
2007- Two submissions for Vertical Connections project put forward
2008- Parliament discusses transfer of land lying under City Gate