

Carnival organisers set June deadline

Sun shines over carnival

Waylon Johnston



Photo: Chris Sant Fournier.

Carnival 2011 risks being just a shadow of the usual activities unless the government finds float builders an alternative place where to construct their floats by June and this depends on a meeting with Tourism and Culture Parliamentary Secretary Mario de Marco soon.

"We do want to hold carnival but we don't know where to build our floats," Jason Busuttil, chairman of the Għaqda Partecipanti Karnival, said. The carnival organisers have been called to vacate the large stores in Luqa but have not been given an acceptable alternative.

Although the government offered them an alternative site at Ta' Qali, they have turned this down, mainly because it is too far away from Valletta.

The summer months are crucial because they need the hot weather to get the papier-mâché to dry. Mr Busuttil explained it would be impossible to start in one place and then have to move everything elsewhere.

A lot will ride on a meeting they expect to have with Dr de Marco, who was given the responsibility for culture in last week's Cabinet reshuffle. Mr Busuttil sounded cautiously optimistic that a solution will be found.

When contacted, Dr de Marco confirmed he would be meeting carnival organisers and said he was committed to finding a solution. "We will be doing our best to find a solution. We want to be able to sustain carnival," he said.

The carnival organisers had already suggested the old Soldini factory in Marsa but the authorities disagreed. They now have their eyes on another former factory, close to Malta Shipbuilding, Mr Busuttil said.

"It would house us all under one roof and there is even place for a carnival museum and a small cafeteria, which should attract tourists," he said.

Oblivious to the concerns plaguing the organisers, thousands of people thronged Valletta yesterday, soaking the sunshine and admiring the more hilarious floats and costumes.

One man dressed up as a roadside pot plant and another had covered himself from head to toe in different types of belts. Another tied himself - or was tied - to a bench. The dancers in front of one of the floats were dressed up as old carts, street lights and window shutters.

Little ladybirds, princesses, Spanish dancers, pirates and a ninja warrior roamed the streets. But the excitement was all too much for one little prince who fell asleep in his pushchair.

And carnival was also an excuse for some men to bare their midriffs and put on makeup while girls rolled up their skirts and pulled their hair up in pig tails.

A large number of tourists enjoyed the sunny weather, sitting on the steps of Castille and St John's Co. Cathedral to watch the passing floats and their accompanying dancers. For British tourist Carol Bennett, this was her sixth carnival in Malta; she always plans her trip to coincide with the annual event.

One tourist covered his ears as he walked next to one of the floats.

Carnival festivities continue today when the carnival band and children's dance groups parade through Valletta. The parade starts at 10 a.m. from Republic Street, going through Melita Street, Merchants Street, St Lucy Street and ending at City Gate.

The defilé will kick off at 5 p.m. with the King Carnival float leading the way followed by grotesque masks, a band and a number of dance companies. The dance competition will start at Freedom Square at 5.30 p.m.

Carnival ends tomorrow with a grand finale in St Anne Street in Floriana.

Comments

C. Mizzi (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

I appreciate, that some of the Maltese citizens show interest in having our carnival organised again next year - but although all these solutions regarding a good place for the float builders, you can't just say building a float and bring it down all the way from ta qali - It will take ages, dangerous, and another thing which nobody mentioned is that floats have to be build smaller cause of the narrow streets, signs, trees and most of all cables passing over the streets. If we want carnival - we have to

find a place where to build and then carnival takes place in a nearby place so that builders, can build as big as they like and be more creative and I know that that Maltese artist have the will to built double the size of a float.

QUESTION : Dr. De Marco , either you want to turn each corner of Valletta as a 'Playmobile fun park' as per Mr. Piano's designs or else at least leave a decent space for us to enjoy carnival if you are not going to find a solution for another place.

D Zammit (2 weeks, 4 days ago)
@ Antoine Vella

so how can one say there is such? Illuminate me if you have any idea of what these agendas might be

Nadia Sultana (2 weeks, 4 days ago)

WE took our kids for the first time since we came back to settle from Canada, as we are originally from Gozo, it was lovely the only thing that spoiled it for us was the nosy crowds from Malta or rather the famous Maltese that think that without them Gozo cannot survive. but as for the rest we thought it was first class better than most we've seen back home in Canada.

L. Cutajar (2 weeks, 4 days ago)

Ta' Qali is the ideal place for carnival float builders. Valletta is no longer suitable to hold carnival events and an alternative locality (Ta' Qali would be ideal) is to be found.

Antoine Vella (2 weeks, 4 days ago)

D.Zammit "...If you really have prove of any hidden agendas (which I can't see any) .." Well, it wouldn't be hidden if you could see it, would it?

John Carmel Navarro (2 weeks, 4 days ago)

Dialogue has promptly to come into action Dr De Marco hopefully will meet the Float Builders and together a solution can must be found. I just cannot believe the blinkered spoil sport attitude of some people who pass comments like 'be careful of the sharks' and 'hidden agendas' I presume this sad type of person has never been to Valletta for Carnival. I am amazed by the standard of the work that goes into making these wonderful Floats, year after year for the enjoyment of the whole Country and visitors alike. Save our Carnival, save our Culture.

H Galea (2 weeks, 4 days ago)

@N. Calleja. What do you exactly mean by 'sharks' and 'hidden agendas' ???? If you could kindly explain yourself better. Or was it just a silly statement from your end in order to put a dull cloud over these people who work so very hard all year without mentioning their supportive families and the money they take out of their pocket to provide the public with beautiful floats. And if it wasnt for these 'sharks' as you called them there wouldnt be any carnival at all!!!

D Zammit (2 weeks, 4 days ago)
@ N Calleja

By just saying that you're not helping. If you really have prove of any hidden agendas (which I can't see any) just say what they are.

@N Borg

Hope you will not grumble if a huge traffic is caused from Ta Qali towards the south than. Have you ever met with one of these floats being transported?

N.Borg (2 weeks, 4 days ago)

Can these float-builders justify why how they can attract tourists with their in-progress carnival float building at a remote industrial area in Marsa instead of Ta Qali, where tourists flock to the Crafts Village, Aviation Museum or are on the way to Mdina and Rabat?

Is it so a long way from Ta Qali? They can benefit of having a gran parade on their way to the city ... probably from Marsa they can cause a greater traffic congestion then coming from the North!

N.Calleja (2 weeks, 4 days ago)

The Hon Mario DeMarco should beware of the 'sharks' whom he is going to meet. Some people may have hidden agendas!!