

DLH drops out of rally after disagreements on Valletta project

Fiona Galea Debono



Din l-Art Helwa, one of the major environment NGOs, will not be taking part in Saturday's rally because it is "sadly flawed" on an issue of fundamental importance to the entire country.

The rally is being held in protest against environmental abuse and lack of legal enforcement. The NGO's crucial point of departure from the stand of the eight rally organisers has to do with the regeneration project for the entrance to Valletta, which, the rally promoters claim, is in violation of the Structure Plan.

DLH disagrees with this major point, highlighted in its poster, according to its newly-appointed executive president, Petra Bianchi.

The other NGOs maintain that the project violates the Structure Plan in that ministries and Parliament can only be sited in an *auberge* or palace in Valletta.

"But DLH cannot agree, on grounds of common sense and practicality, that Parliament and the ministries must necessarily be sited only in these locations," Dr Bianchi said.

Furthermore, and in seemingly contradictory statements, the idea was being advanced to house Parliament in a new construction over the Main Guard, at Fort St Elmo, or in the Mediterranean Conference Centre, all of which are not *auberges* or palaces of Valletta, she pointed out.

"Even if this interpretation of the Structure Plan were correct, a fact about which the NGO is not convinced, DLH has campaigned incessantly for changes to environmental or heritage legislation that is inadequate or outdated to bring it in line with what the country's interests require.

"This is the action DLH would advise, given the importance of the Valletta plan, and not the abandonment of a project of this magnitude on such spurious grounds," Dr Bianchi continued.

On the other hand, the NGO said it was in full agreement with the need for better enforcement and the urgent challenge of improving the poor state of Malta's environment, points being raised at the environment rally.

DLH stressed that its agreement with the other NGOs was reflected in its four resolutions, focusing on the island's dwindling resources of water, limestone and fish stocks and the toxic state of air pollution, approved at its recent annual general meeting and presented to the government.


The rally is being organised by BirdLife Malta, *Flimkien għal Ambjent Aħjar*, Friends of the Earth, Greenhouse, *Moviment Graffiti*, the Malta Organic and Agricultural Movement, Nature Trust and the Ramblers Association. It starts at 10 a.m. from City Gate.

More stories from The Times in the News section.

See also

<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20100310/local/dlh-was-never-part-of-valletta-environment-protest-ngos-say>

Comments

John O Scerri(4 weeks, 1 day ago) 

@ JC At my age I am not any more surprised at anything nor am I naive thankyou .

The times of dragging people into the streets is over , obsolete, useless, waste of time.

Those who are responsible and should be accountable for their decisions should be monitored by their superiors and immediately suspended or fired from their job if they are found guilty of not doing their work in compliance with existing policies and procedures.


It is time for govt to make a reshuffle in all departments starting from education , employment, mepa , social services etc.

There are people - heads of departments, Education officers who have grown roots in these divisions and when this happens there is nothing which can stop them from doing what they like .

To all cabinet , govt. I say set a definite contract period of not more than two years for all those who are promoted to high ranking positons within these authorities . In this way no one will become a 'God' In his/her own domain.

Joseph Cauchi(on 11/3/10) 


@ John O Scerri, Would you really be surprised if this protest march is already smeared with a political tinge? How can one be so naïve? JC.

John O Scerri(on 11/3/10) 

Next Saturday's rally is already smelling of politics.

I hope we shall not see a repetition of the MLP flag and red flag scenario of a few weeks ago

We'll see !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Muscat Pat(on 10/3/10) 

Mela ghalek beda ilaqlaq ir-rapresentant ta Din-Art helwa, mhux miskin ghax tehllu f'ahhar programm televiziv fuq l-ambjent! Issa gejna sew Din L-Art Helwa saret l-UHM ta l-ambjent!

Helen Caruana Galizia(on 10/3/10) 

It is astonishing that DLH has chosen not to participate in the joint NGOs Saturday rally, though, as has already been pointed out it was not, in any case, a participant in the organisation of the protest.

It is sad that DLH appears to be giving sustenance to a government policy of “divide and rule” a system so beloved of our former colonial rulers.

It is sad too that DLH seems to have chosen to cause division within the environmental movement when, in the interests of our descendants we should all concentrate on what unites us – our concern about the way our land continues to be ravaged by new development. I hope, that this division might be healed.

I do applaud DLH for its restoration work of over the last 50 years and for the dedication of its volunteers who receive very little thanks from the public, still less from DLH's own Council, it is regrettable that during those 50 years DLH neglected to raise its voice about the constant onslaught by the developers, which proceeded with the blessing of successive governments. Perhaps time to acknowledge that despite DLH stewardship Malta has become DIN L'ART KERRAH.

Helen Caruana Galizia

Joseph Cauchi(on 10/3/10) 

Well said, DLH!

However, I have a sneaky suspicion that Din L-Art Helwa might be somehow naïve in not recognizing that some of the NGOs who are organizing this rally might have an ulterior motive rather than the successful implementation of the Renzo Piano's project.


Shall we wait another sixty years to have this project implemented or perhaps sixty years of discussions and deliberations are not enough to decide on this project?

The Government cannot satisfy the wishes of 100% of the population but a decision has to be taken after serious considerations with the right experts in the field have been undertaken.

I am certain that the majority of the Maltese population is in favour of the Renzo Piano's project and this majority is called the SILENT MAJORITY!

So, would the PM kindly get on with this project and respect the SILENT MAJORITY, please!

JC


Caroline Said(on 10/3/10) 

To drop out of a rally, one has to first claim to be participating in a rally, which I don't recall DLH ever claiming it intended to. The DLH unquestionably does some grand work raising funds and fixing damage to our environment while it leaves the work of trying to PREVENT the damage from happening in the first place to other NGOs. Great crisis management skills.

James A. Tyrrell(on 10/3/10) 

This is the first mention I have seen of Din I-Art Helwa in connection with Saturday's rally. Unless I'm mistaken they were never part of the make up of the rally in the first place so how can they declare that they are dropping out?

In my opinion DLH should not be rated in the same way as other NGO's such as FAA for the simple reason that it is a known fact that members of DLH have connections to the present Government. They also receive funding for certain projects from the present Government so they are hardly going to bite the hand that feeds them are they?

Astrid Vella(on 10/3/10) 


The eight environment NGOs organising this rally state that since Din I-Art Helwa was never an organiser nor a participant in next Saturday's rally, there is no issue of it dropping out.

The stand of the environment NGOs and the reasons for the rally need to be clarified. The title of the rally is LEGALITY NOW. The NGOs are calling for Malta's


rules and regulations to be respected in all the issues they are raising, being encroachment of the countryside, demolition of heritage, air pollution, illegal extraction of water, illegal hunting and trapping and the irregularities surrounding the PROCESSING of the Valletta plans.

The NGOs have several times made it clear that they are not against the Valletta Rehab Project and are not trying to stop it. They are, however against the violations of planning procedure in the lack of public consultation, as established by EU Directives. Also against the legally-binding Structure Plan which says "The parliament and ministries are to be concentrated in the palaces and auberges of Valletta"


The NGOs state that they respect DLH's decision not to take part and appreciate its support of the many environmental issues to be raised at the rally.

Adrian Borg Cardona(on 10/3/10) 


I am a member of DLH and have been for many years. Yet I find it disgusting that DLH attacks other environmental NGOs. DLH was never asked to take part in the rally, so why is it peeping up now? Who asked it for its opinion on the aims of the rally? Support for the Govt maybe? DLH is heading down the wrong road. It is already gagged and will end up powerless and discredited.

Jon Vercellono(on 10/3/10) 

@Antoine Vella - And DLH is not???????????? So sad that a spirit of communication and cooperation cannot exist to work out this problem. So yes, Mr. Vella I agree, it is very sad that DLH is "more politicised and partisan as time goes by".


N.Calleja(on 10/3/10) 

This little Malta is infested with thousands of experts and at any moment want to uproot all things in front of them. These NGO's all have their own agenda, whether hidden or exposed!! The government is right in carrying on with its projects. If it had to take heed of all these different opinions, it will go crazy!!

C Cassar(on 10/3/10) 

The majority of Maltese want the new Valletta gate & associated embellishments to happen in the very near future. It's going ahead anyway, so why invent pointless arguments against it? Let's get it done and out of the way so the next great project can be designed and implemented.

Time to move on and look ahead.

J. Borg(on 10/3/10) 

I am surprised!

DLH has in fact shown commendable environmental awareness - and has voiced its concerns - thus acknowledging that our heritage is not solely historical buildings but equally important our scarce natural environment.


Moreover Dr. Bianchi herself was at the forefront of this welcome widening of focus.

It is thus illogical, that DLH would because of divergence in opinion over Piano's

proposals, hamper the joint front to protect the environment and kick the authorities to at least uphold current laws!

Surely disagreement over Piano should not over-ride the critical situation we are facing on environmental basis - the water problem is factual and will have implications beyond the time when any Piano building would have crumbled!


I trust that DLH will evaluate matters objectively and join in a common stand on the crucial issues - whilst qualifying its opinion on Piano's proposal. This will flexibility but nonetheless a common front towards safeguarding what's left of the natural environment.

Victor Laiviera(on 10/3/10) 


Mr Antoine Vella continues to accuse anybody who is not 100% in favour of the Piano project as being politically motivated.

This is proof positive, if any was needed, that Mr Vella's unconditional support for this project is politically motivated.

He is simply using his own yardstick to judge others.


g. scerri(on 10/3/10) 

DLH manages government property. It is influenced by people who are actually on the governm ent's payroll. It cannot bite the hand that feeds it. But at least it should not try to sabotage the endeavours of others.

mark sultana(on 10/3/10) 

I am torn between attending this rally or not. I strongly beleive that thsi government is neglecting its responsibilities towards protecting the natural environment in particular with the issue of spring hunting. On the other hand can't see me walking next to someone with a placard against the valletta project.

still undecided.....

Joe Grech(on 10/3/10) 

This comes as a surprise - Under Dr. Petra Bianchi Din I-Art Helwa seems to have become quite different from the D.L.H.of the past...how sad!


What does Bianchi mean saying that the planned rally is "sadly flawed on an issue of fundamental importance to the entire country" - and D.L.H. won't attend because of that? Was this decision taken by the Din I-Art Helwa Committee or not?

Din I-Art Helwa has every right not to agree that the Valletta entrance project is "in violation of the Structure Plan" and it has in fact declared that much.

But the rally is being held for other IMPORTANT reasons also;

- Abuse of Natura 2000 sites
- Encroachment on ODZ
- Illegal hunting and trapping
- Air pollution
- Unauthorised groundwater extraction
- Destruction of Heritage
- Sham public consultation on Freeport and Valletta Regeneration Plans

D.L.H. can certainly not agree "on grounds of common sense and practicality", that Parliament and the ministries must be sited in Auberges and Palaces. But this point ALONE should not make this NGO refuse to take part in the rally. What about the other issues which D.L.H. itself refers to?
Practicality indeed - has D.L.H. sold its soul?


Antoine Vella (on 10/3/10) 

This kind of hotchpotch activity is not only confusing and ambiguous but counterproductive. I would take part in a protest against hunting, for example, but not against the Valletta project, so why mix the two?

Why do BirdLife and the organic farming movement feel they have to express themselves on the Piano proposals? These organisations are apparently becoming more politicised and partisan as time goes by.

Raymond Camilleri (on 10/3/10) 

well... DLH is made up of a couple of business people with connections to the nationalist party... in fact it is considered as the 'lunga mano' of government and the PN

Joe Cassar (on 10/3/10) 

If Din l-Art Helwa (looks like it is a misnomer) wants to betray the environmentalist movement for partisan political motives, then so be it.

The policy of divide and rule seems to be working once more.

MARK MIFSUD BONNICI (on 10/3/10) 

This rally is a vile excuse for these NGO's to protest against what they collectively term as ILLEGAL spring hunting.

I am convinced that Birdlife and its supporters have perfectly timed this charade to fit in with their petitions against Government's intention to exercise it's right to derogate for spring hunting.

Time will tell whether my prediction is correct.