

Design of Barrakka lift runs into problems



Mepa has expressed surprise at criticism by Transport Minister Austin Gatt over the time it is taking for the Authority to issue a permit for the building of a new Barrakka lift.

A spokesman told *The Sunday Times* that everyone agreed in principle on the transport benefits the lift would bring.

However the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage was concerned about the design. So too was the superintendent for fortifications.

"As Mepa, we are doing our utmost in the best interests of heritage to find the best design. This is a relatively huge structure and it is fundamental that if in 20 years time it has to be removed, this can be done without damaging the bastions of a Unesco World Heritage Site," the spokesman said.


Anthony Pace, Superintendent for Cultural Heritage, said the superintendence was not too sure whether the design was appropriate.

Of particular concern were the huge footprint, volume and impact it would have on the ditch and its high visibility, especially from across the harbour.

He said the parties involved were looking at finding a design that did not jeopardise the value of Valletta.


In March last year, Dr Gatt has said the €2m project would be completed in March 2011.

Comments

Emanuel C. Schembri(1 week, 5 days ago) 

Why has the use of existing connections between the customs and Castille square through existing tunnels and staircases not been considered. There are flights of stairs in place as well as tunnels through the solid rock between the bastions which link the quay to the top of the bastions. The installation of automated stairs and walking floors would probably bring down the capital expenditure, excluding payoffs and/or tangential payments of course.


Alternatively the digging of a lift shaft from the Barracca Gardens right down to sea level would leave the bastions untouched and there will be no aesthetic defacement either. A small entrance building at the top and a neat tunnel from within the ditch would be the only visible parts of the lift/s. The cost will probably be just the same, and the lift could be larger, or, which is even better, more than one cabin can be installed.

Pule' Carmel(1 week, 5 days ago) 


Not a Vertical lift please. A sloping one adhering to the sloped surface of the bastion would fit in better I presume. No need for an external vertical square enclosure. Just simply two glass lined lift cabins placed side by side to counterbalance each other, with the lifts running on special capture rails. The cables would not be seen as they would run on rollers close to the bastion face. You could not get any better than that. All glass surround with no obstruction, what a view all the way up and down. All you need is a couple of AC vector controlled induction motors, appropriate rail attachments , two glass cabins and that is it. You cannot get any cheaper than that as far as value for money with so little effect on the environment.

D Vella(1 week, 5 days ago) 

Pity MEPA didn't think of the view of Tigne across the harbour. What a monstrosity this is turning out to be....as it happens I think that proposed lift looks good and would be something to look at. unlike the concrete jungle of MIDI and soon Fort Cambridge which i have to look at every day

Michael Catania(1 week, 5 days ago) 

What a strange nation this island is. Here we are putting obstacles in the construction of this barraka lift i.e it has to fit with the surroundings even though it is on Valletta's periphery while this government is set on building a monstrosity of a Parliament complemented by a roofless theatre right in the heart of the city, and anyone wonders why we are a joke among most of those who visit this island.

Anthony Pace Gouder(1 week, 5 days ago) 

With to-day's standards and Technology the Travel Time from Lascaris to Barrakka would be a matter of a few seconds (c. min. 8 to15 @ max .) Therefore having a Panoramic Elevator , described here as a huge structure, creating an undesired Aesthetic Problem is extravagant ! The practical solution ,in my opinion ,are lifts concealed within the Bastions .

N.B. What is the reason that the two visual impressions shown represent two totally


differing structures ? Noting the second picture. the Structure CLEARLY PROJECTS OUTWARDS at its Upper Section , while the first shows a constant VERTICAL PROFILE . ??? Seems there's been an alteration there , but who cares !

Apparently the intention of providing passengers with breath-taking views would be catered for most satisfactorily with a CABLE-CAR CONNECTION . This was proposed when the Valletta Waterfront Project was launched .

Travel Time on a diagonal from the Waterfront to the Barrakka Gardens would at least take a few minutes , providing a comfortable ride (seating) and ample time for viewing (possibly with a commentary) the ENTIRE STRETCH of our magnificent Harbour .

patrick grixti(1 week, 5 days ago) 


u ejja! we have been awaiting sone 16 years since there was a proposal to instal a Panoramic at Barrakka, subsequently developed into the 'Connections Project that never materialised and now 10 years down the millenium we are still squabbling over the design. Ara with the Piano project, the Superindendence was meek in its criticism. What was once clear grounds for the defence of the gate not is being built with a monstrosity, but a lift is an eyesore! INCREDULOUS

Joseph Arpa(1 week, 5 days ago) 

This falls under Minister Gatt.....does the World Bank have a black listed company that supplies lifts??? Please come forward, you're sure to get the tender!!!!

H Galea(1 week, 5 days ago) 

Why we in Malta cannot do a job without problems and blaming others for our incompetence, why years long in debates and still end in bigger problems,are these people fit for the job.As from when MEPA is so concerned, go out of your offices,see malta building structures, are we satisfied with them!!!!

Anthony Pace Gouder(1 week, 6 days ago) 

Surely this LIFT can be built concealed within the Bastions , in an EXCAVATED SHAFT ! This would obviously render it more economical FIRSTLY maintenance-wise and SECONDLY the considerable savings on all the thus UNREQUIRED Construction Material of the Superstructure as proposed.

Another proposal is/was the Cable Car Connection to the Barrakka Gardens, that was to be included in the VALLETTA WATERFRONT project . Its either one or the other .

Raymond Sammut(1 week, 6 days ago)

A lift built concealed within the bastions would also be feasible, but hardly a unique experience for people using it. Most people who would use this lift would most likely be tourists, and they would want to experience something different. An external lift would surely leverage a unique positional advantage which would make it attractive. For this reason, a design must consist mostly of glass, with only a lean steel structure that leaves passengers and all moving parts visible from outside, and brightly lit at night. The shape of the structure must also blend with surrounding historical contours. I don't think Austin Gatt should be putting pressure on MEPA. He

should instead be looking closely at the criteria, and how these are being met in the various proposals. Once this thing is put up, it will stay there for years to come, and we do not want to end up with an eyesore like the one that used to be there in the past.

J.Ellul(1 week, 5 days ago)

@ Raymond Sammut, Who would pay for the structure, call it what you like beautiful, artistic, ugly monstrous but some would have to pay and the tourists who use it don't want to spend money. 2 million euros won't start paying for this, so get your sums right ADT

Raymond Sammut(1 week, 5 days ago)


@ J.Ellul

Tourism is Malta's biggest earner. This type of projects will undoubtedly enhance Malta's overall tourism appeal. One cannot go solely by current ADT (average daily trips). A structure by itself may appear to be making a loss, but its true value is realized when the flow-on benefits are also taken into account. For example, there are boat marinas and cruise liners nearby which will continue to increase activity at one end, and there are the Barracca garden and the Piano projects which will create activity at the other end, over the coming years.


No-one asked how much it was going to cost before they started building the Eiffel Tower or the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The priority was how to build them in the best possible way, and today these assets are priceless. Your argument would hold only if MEPA and Austin Gatt were to do it the wrong way. If they can get it right now, Valletta would surely benefit in the long term. This is the reason why Gatt should not be pressuring MEPA unnecessarily.

cbugeja(1 week, 5 days ago)

an "external" lift used to exist, commissioned nearly a century ago. Why do we have to re-invent the wheel every time. Use the same principle as the old lift, of course keeping in tune with modern technology.

Franco J Scicluna(2 weeks ago) 


I too, have seen the escalators at Siena, they blend perfectly with the structures, no unsightly ugly lifts are seen on the outside of the age old fortifications. That would be the ideal answer to the Valletta lifts.

J Galea(2 weeks ago) 

MEPA should consider this matter carefully if efficiently and not bow in to political pressure. Diana Cottis has a very important and valid point, which should be addressed by MEPA. In the chaotic reality that is Valletta, the upper Barakka is the best refuge in the most important part of the city. Integrating the lift mechanism into Renzo Piano's city gate project, perhaps with a conveyor/ escalator going inside the ditch, would serve to hide the lift and resolve most of the problems of the present design (e.g., re skyline and view from 3 cities). It is true that the lift as projected would provide a great view but the great view in the upper Barakka (as well as the great quiet atmosphere) should not be sacrificed for a purely functional transport solution. Keep on thinking MEPA. Sometimes rushing things is not the best solution.

J. Huber(2 weeks ago) 

Has the idea of constructing a series of escalators inside the bastions been taken into consideration? In the Italian city of Siena they have solved a similar problem in a way that is practically completely concealed to make easier the access from the periphery to the centre of the city.

Keith Davis(2 weeks ago) 

MEPA is just too slow. It can bring whatever excuse such as they need to consider the project thoroughly and determine the visual impact and other things...but MEPA needs to do this in a reasonable amount of time, and not take months and months.

Our country can not afford to lie dormant on national strategic and important issues because of its watchdog's slow processes!

Anthony Pace Gouder(1 week, 5 days ago)

I beg to differ , regarding MEPA BEING TOO SLOW .

Probably this is just a smoke-screen strategy , dumping the blame on MEPA , as the Project might still be just a concept without the vital Technical , Architectural , Mechanical Working Drawings , Structural Designs , Specifications and Materials' Quantities for REAL COST calculations, preceding any ACTUAL CONSTRUCTION .

The speedy approval of the Controversial City Gate Project by Renzo Piano & Co. is enough proof of MEPA's efficiency !

After all , I doubt if this project was included in the Current Budget !


Anthony Pace Gouder(1 week, 5 days ago)

Substantiating that the Ministry or Minister + Authorities are as yet not convinced about this project , are the TWO PICTURES. No wonder MEPA cannot "SORT" it out !

Although CLEARLY representing the SAME ELEVATION , the first picture shows a straight vertical Profile while the second curves out in a Cantilever , practically doubling the structure's Perimeter Area at the Top "Barakka" Level .

Noticeable are the white LINES visible on the first picture , SCARS of an ALTERATION ! Which one is it ?


Final Design seems DOUBTFUL , Dr.Gatt !

J Martinelli(2 weeks ago) 


When someone in the know objects to a design they must have something different in mind. So, why does the 'not so sure superintendence', not make the right suggestions to MEPA and get on with it?

The objection is, 'its high visibility, especially from across the harbour'. A surprising reason for the superintendence objection when for almost a hundred years such objections did not exist even if the former lift looked like a Meccano project compared to the new proposed designs.


It's so much easier to dismantle but that much harder to build something practical.

Jesmond Micallef(2 weeks ago) 


Reading through the article here made me remember of an old sign hanging on the sidewall in the tunnel right in front of the "Dwana" Customs building on the Valletta Lascaris waterfront. The sign was advertising the old Lift and still had the price in shilling stated on it. Up to maybe some 5 to 6 years ago, the sign was still there, albeit in a very dirty state and wonder if it is still there. Would make a good small restoration project, I guess !!!

Philip Sultana(2 weeks ago) 

Will it be another 60 years before the country has the next lift?


Chris Calleja(2 weeks ago) 

There might be many discussions as to design of this lift and its location but what intrigues me as to why should it cost 2 million. Three quarters of million maybe but 2 million? Does it supply you with a coffee on the way down or up? The minister should allow the planning process take its time, maybe he does not realise but according to EU directive implemented or adopted by local parliament Mepa has executive power to pass legislation with regards to many matters (not that Mepa would know) and Mepa can take all the time it wants to judge what it wants. Unless a new planning Act is on the way!


Oswald Tanti(2 weeks ago) 

I quite agree with Mr Jimmy Magro and without going into the merits of local capable engineers, who after all have always managed to prove themselves, one wonders if any designs were submitted to have the lift built within the bastion itself.


In my humble opinion this could should be feasible and might be achieved by drilling a wide enough shaft avoiding in so doing ruining the external aesthetic appearance of the the Bastions which are a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

victor pulis(2 weeks ago) 

The problem with this country is that these projects have been lying dormant for decades. Now everyone seems to be in a hurry to implement them. What should have been achieved along so many number of years and in a calm atmosphere is now being done as if in a race against time. And as we say in maltese "Il qattusa ghaggelija frieh ghomja taghmel"

Michael Neville Cassar(2 weeks ago) 

Why does the lift have to be erected at the face of the upper Barrakka? Would it not be in a good position if it was erected by the war room bridge under the inner part of the old war rooms or inside the Bastion? As it is the lift will make the upper Barrakka face look horrible.

Jimmy Magro(2 weeks ago) 

If there are these objections, can one think to make the lift inside the bastions? Like the lift that used to operate from Yellow Garage to Freedom Square.


Are there any parking facilities at the bottom of the proposed lift? Since if people are using this lift they would come by car, no?

Can one think of having a mechanised walkpath from the Floriana Car Park into Freedom Square as those used in big airports? Commuters would find it helpful rather than crossing through the national bus terminus? or waiting for the green taxi?


Can someone investigate the Valletta underground tunnels and open these tunnels to the public as an attraction?

How come we are investing so much into the bastions when St. Elmo has remained in such a bad state? Can someone publish any concrete developments for what the CEO of Valletta Reperation company is being for? just for making more and more plans? The issue if he is able to secure the financing. Even a university student can draw many plans. But for an insider anything goes.


Back to the lift: Malta cannot wait for ever. Hence the authorities have to come a conclusion. life is very short.

Charles Micallef(2 weeks ago) 

One appreciates the well meaning interventions, however all they are doing is delaying this much needed facility unless they will come up with an alternative design themselves. I am also sure that if the Minister, Mepa and the other parties sat around a table they will reach the ultimate compromise and the public will see this facility that stood working for years in action again!

Charles Zammit(2 weeks ago) 


We might be getting the lift installed by the end of this millenium it is hoped!!!

Diana Cottis(2 weeks ago) 

Has anyone considered the impact of all these extra people queueing and passing through the Upper Barracka gardens to use the lift? It is a beautiful little oasis with fantastic views and a cool place to sit in the summer with a drink or a good book. Although even now it periodically it fills with groups of tourists these are just a few compared to the never ending flow that would be using the new lift. Surely Renzo Piano's City Gate lift would fulfill the same need and save the relative tranquility of the Barracka Gardens.


Leonard Brincat(2 weeks ago) 

Dr Gatt must be joking as always. First he said it would be finished by November 2010, then March 2011, Obviously we will be waiting for next date. But why is it, that in Malta anything goes?. It seems like the maltese seem so use to being taken for a ride by the auhtorities, that I do not think that you can blame them for being so passive and not caring anymore.

victor pulis(2 weeks ago) 

We should have learnt the lesson when the monstrous block of apartmens was built next to Fort St. Angelo but it seems that first priority is given to financial gain and propaganda and to hell with heritage. The same will happen with the parliament


building project. Well done to MEPA in this instance. If only it acts like this every time our heritage is at risk.

Edwin Mifsud(2 weeks ago) 


"and it is fundamental that if in 20 years time it has to be removed, this can be done without damaging the bastions of a Unesco World Heritage Site,"

Don't worry Valletta's days as a Unesco Heritage site are numbered.

Just wait for the Phantom Gate, Roofless theater and Parliament on stilts project to be completed.

Reuben Gauci(2 weeks ago) 

Whilst I agree wholeheartedly with the lift project, I agree with the Superintendent for Cultural Heritage, the design is not appropriate...Same as with City Gate.... In my view designs pertaining to historical places should be study -based on past structures, whilst, of course catering for the contemporary exigencies. New creative designs should be left for new buildings!

M. Fenech(2 weeks ago) 

For me, this is not an eye-sore but "in line with modern designs" found everywhere nowadays in modern capital cities. It complements the new up-coming "trends" spearheaded by the LC and Govt ... e.g. Strat Street Toilets, St. George's Square. We need more of these especially cool street furniture, street bronze statues (people love to take pics with them - e.g. LOVE monument is immortalised on every tourist photo album!!)

We need to show that we are moving ahead with times, yet, respecting the past. Defenitely, we are not going to do it the same like it was pre-1983. That would be an eyesore with rusted metal bars.

Imagine a tourist on a cruise liner -

"what is that?"

"that is a panoramic lift that takes you to the heart of Valletta"

"cool - i want to try that"

Instinctly, the structure is made to complement awareness and self-marketing of the service offered to locals and tourists. I think it is of a high-quality engineering project, if done well.

Edwin Mifusd(2 weeks ago)

Imagine a tourist on a cruise liner -

"what is that?"

"that is a panoramic lift that takes you to the heart of Valletta"

"cool - i want to try that"

LOOOOOLLLLL!!!!

Do you really think that anyone who has been anywhere will be so impressed with.... a lift?

I agree that this service should be installed but lets not get carried away and think it is a new modern wonder.