

EU-funded restoration of bastions to start soon

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Fort St Angelo in Vittoriosa. Photo: Jason Borg and Darrin Zammit Lupi

Over six kilometres of fortifications in Valletta, Mdina and Vittoriosa will soon start to receive a long-awaited and promised facelift at a cost of around €9.5 million. Eight contracts have just been awarded after a call for tenders, paving the way for the restoration of centuries-old bastions which have been battered by the elements and let down by neglect.

The work, worth around €9.5 million, is one tranche of a €36 million programme, covered by EU funds, to restore large chunks of the walls around the three fortified towns as well as those that once protected Gozo's Cittadella.

Malta boasts over 60 km of fortifications, of which 25 km are in the Grand Harbour area. The restoration programme, which is expected to last five years, will focus on areas with a strong tourism potential and with high architectural value.

Works will first start on the Vittoriosa bastions in about three weeks' time, followed by Mdina in around two months.

Some of Malta's prized fortifications are in dire need of restoration and repair. Only three weeks ago, the wall of a bastion collapsed beneath the Argotti Gardens, in Floriana, while the bastions at Fort St Elmo, the site of the Great Siege, are also risking collapse. The cave-in at Floriana, which left no one injured, was probably caused by an accumulation of rainwater behind the wall which left it extensively damaged.

The fallen stones, which formed part of Notre Dame Gate before it was demolished early last century to make way for the street between Floriana and Pietà, are being examined to see if they can be restored and reused, a Rural Ministry spokesman said.

Restoration of the wall will be done in two phases and cost around €360,000, the spokesman said. First it will be reconstructed, followed by a structural study of the standing part to make sure it is stable.

Comments

Raymond Sammut (6 days, 5 hours ago)

@ victor pulis

Priorities can only be set within classes of funds available.

The Piano project is to be funded solely from inland revenue. This means that the Maltese government will not have restrictions on how to set priorities in regard to this project. For example, speed of project can be adjusted over time, depending on prevailing economic conditions.

EU-funded projects, on the other hand, will have criteria which the government will have to meet. So here, obviously, priorities are going to have to be ordered differently.

I do not think that priorities are the real issue here. What is at issue is the fact that the onus rests entirely on the incumbent to actually get going with these projects without any further delay, and to ensure that funds are used in the most efficient and effective way without any wastage.

Priorities are only a small part of the task of rebuilding, repositioning and managing Malta's assets. We haven't seen much of this happening over the past four decades, which is saddening.

victor pulis (6 days, 6 hours ago)

Judging from the comments below it is clear that most of our important heritage sites have been abandoned and left to disintegrate over the years and now the chickens are coming home to roost. Now we are at panic stations not knowing where to begin. one thing is certain, euro 9 million is not enough by a long shot. These lplaces can help Malta bring in money if cared for unlike for example the building of a new parliament which will only be enjoyed by the odd sixty representatives and will not attract any visitors to the island. That is what I mean when I mention priorities. Let's get our house in order first then we can purchase the furniture.

Raymond Sammut (6 days, 8 hours ago)

"Malta boasts over 60 km of fortifications..." Compare this with The Great Wall of China which is 6,700 km. That's 1/100th. But is Malta's economy 1/100th that of China? Far from it. The comparison should be an eye-opener. Malta's economy may not be able to sustain Maltese heritage, given the rate of decay we have been witnessing since the British departure. Procrastination will make things harder and harder over time, and these treasures will be lost for ever. As usual, developers will continue to be the high-time winners. I simply cannot see Malta as we know it surviving for much longer. There has been too much idling around. The urgency to turn these national assets into profit making entities cannot be underestimated.

Joseph Meli (6 days, 8 hours ago)

What about the houses that are situated in the lower and upper parts of Inguanez Street Mdina, that have their back sides with the Mdina Bastion, are they going to be protected from the present damages that they are suffering or being faced with.

For example some houses have rain water coming into their back room walls from these bastion. Who is responsible to cover or protect the tenants/owners from these

damages?

What does the Government intend to do, is he going to effect an inspection with those owners/tenants to estimate the damages that is being caused to these buildings.

Why should owners/tenant continue to suffer from these damages being caused through the humidity that is being formed after some rain fallout?

Roderick Cutajar (6 days, 8 hours ago)

I agree with Mr Pulis. Government should do a prioritising exercise before works commence. While I applaud any restoration work however its imperative that those sites most at risk should be given priority over all others. A case in point that priotising is lacking shows in this article.

According to this article "while the bastions at Fort St Elmo, the site of the Great Siege, are also risking collapse." It also says "Works will first start on the Vittoriosa bastions in about three weeks' time, followed by Mdina in around two months." What about the Valletta bastions and in particular Fort St Elmo? Apart from Fort St Angelo, I do not know of any other site more important than Fort St Elmo. Then why all this delay?

victor pulis (6 days, 11 hours ago)

Except for the picture no mention of fort St. Angelo in the article. the euro 9.5 million are not enough to repair this fort let alone the rest of the fortifications. Some may say that it's a start but let us utilize the money wisely. St. Angelo is in dire need of immediate attention. Hospitals use the triage method. How about doing the same on the fortifications? St. Angelo would surely be rushed into ITU if the system is used.

Igalea (6 days, 11 hours ago)

EU-funded restoration of bastions to start soon should continue to read "through our taxes that we pay to the EU" such as the €153,400 we have to sent it daily apart from all customs duties and levies, part of VAT etc while we pay the customs and VAT officers to collect them.