

Government defends its approach to Valletta status



by Vanessa Macdonald - editorial@di-ve.com

A working group chaired by professor Charles Farrugia, set up by the government to report on Valletta's World Heritage Status, has said the Tigne development was outside the boundary of the Area of High Landscape Value.

The 85-page report – which includes a wealth of fabulous historic pictures of Valletta to compare with the modern reality - explains that the government's policies are reflected in legislative, institutional and tangible measures. It also stressed the importance of maintaining the balance between its role as a living and cultural capital.

The report was drawn up after the World Heritage Committee, meeting in Seville last June, asked Malta to report on a number of issues, prompted by complaints from members of the Valletta community about the 16-storey building on the Tigne peninsula. Another project that had been brought to its attention was the underground museum belonging to St John's (now abandoned) as well as underground car parks.



Malta sent a state of conservation report in February 2009 but this was deemed by Unesco to have insufficient information, and requested a clear map showing the boundaries of Valletta, indicating height controls and a "views and vistas" analysis from point within and outside Valletta. It also asked for detailed information on proposed large scale developments within Valletta and a report on the progress made with the establishment a buffer zone and height controls.

In the working group's report the government was quoted as saying that it was committed to protect and rehabilitate Valletta and was honouring its commitment with appropriate funding. For example, it allocated €900,000 over 2009-2010 to the Valletta Rehabilitation Project for the city's restoration. A further €1.5 million were allocated to the Restoration Unit for enhancement works at the Presidential Palace, the Auberge de Castille, and St John's Co-Cathedral. Further substantial investment amounting to €2.3 million through EU funds is being made by Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna, one of Malta's leading NGO's, focused on the rehabilitation of Valletta's historic Second World War Rooms.

With regards to the impact of the Tigne development that prompted Unesco's scrutiny, it points out that this lies just outside the boundary of the Area of High Landscape Value.

The working group was appointed by the Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport in October 2009. The report was sent to Unesco on February 5.



[Read the full report by the WORKING GROUP here](#)



[Read Unesco's request for a report here](#)

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 **James Portelli** / 3/4/2010

I guess an appropriate exclamation would be, "Kemmm ahna bcielaq" (I hope I spelt that correctly!) Why would members of the Valletta Community air what they perceive to be dirty linen with the World Heritage? Committee. There are systems and structures (even if it takes time) to address issues locally without biting off our nose to spite our face.
