

Interactive centre on fortifications



**Biagio Steps will be restored to be used as an interactive centre that will focus on Malta's fortifications.
Photo: Chris Sant Fournier**

The historic but run-down building next to Biagio Steps in Valletta will be transformed into an interactive centre at a cost of €2.5 million.

In two years' time, the building would become the focal point of information about one of Malta's greatest heritage assets - its fortifications, Resources Minister George Pullicino said yesterday.

Formerly used as an exam centre, the structure in Marsamxett Harbour was built by the Knights of the Order of St John in the 16th century. It will be restored and, in some parts, rebuilt to house to a national database on Maltese fortifications.

The government was trying to tap into EU funds to finance part of the project, Mr Pullicino said.

The centre will be split into five areas, which include an interactive area for children, an audiovisual library, museum, a permanent display on British fortifications, offices and a retail area.

Historians, researchers, students and architects will also have access to a library specialising in literature on building techniques of military fortifications.

Little was known about the building, which was probably used as a storage area for merchandise unloaded from ships arriving in the harbour, fortifications superintendent Stephen Spiteri said.

The upper storey, which was probably used as an artillery school by the Knights, was destroyed in World War II and will be rebuilt as part of the restoration project. The plans include a lift connecting the building's two entrances in St Mark Street and Melita Street.

This project complemented the ongoing EU-funded restoration works on six kilometres of fortifications, worth €36 million, in Valletta, Mdina, Vittoriosa and the Cittadella in Gozo, Mr Pullicino said.

Comments

Fleur Brincat (5 days, 7 hours ago)

From what i gather this centre shall be a unique museum dedicated to the art of fortification building and its builders (as the title Fortress Builders implies), a subject well published by local historians. The idea of an interactive centre shall attract children and fortress seekers alike, thus enhancing the importance of this key heritage in our island. Therefore well done to all the restoration unit and those who came up with this idea. Can't wait for its opening!

Eric Gahn (5 days, 8 hours ago)

"one of Malta's greatest heritage assets - its fortifications"

Like the ones crumbling in St Angelo?