

No move yet for carnival float makers as work begins Defilé to be held in St George’s Square, Valletta

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The only place that carnival participants have vacated so far is St Mary Magdalene chapel in Valletta.
Photo: Matthew Mirabelli

Work on the carnival floats for the 2011 festivities has started in the old stores since no agreement has been reached over an alternative space, according to the chairman of the carnival participants’ association.

“It seems as if the Malta Industrial Parks is ignoring us,” said Jason Busuttil. Last February, a dispute erupted between the Għaqda Partecipanti Karnival, the Culture Ministry and Malta Industrial Parks (MIP). The float makers were told they had to vacate their premises in Luqa, Fort St Elmo and St Mary Magdalene chapel in Valletta.

The ministry was planning restoration works on Fort St Elmo and the baroque chapel where the participants held their floats, while MIP ordered their eviction from stores in Luqa since these were needed for investment purposes.

The only place that has been vacated so far, however, is the St Mary Magdalene’s Chapel, whose previous occupants have moved to Fort St Elmo.

Mr Busuttil said they had managed to earmark a site in Kordin together with Culture Minister Mario de Marco but they were still waiting for an answer on whether they could move there or not.

“We have been informed of the progress every step of the way,” Mr Busuttil said, expressing satisfaction at this.

Things with MIP, however, are not so rosy. This entity initially offered them places in Ta’ Qali, Mosta and Kordin which were too small or too far for their needs. Later, a place for storage was offered in Ħal Far but the four Luqa carnival companies have not received the go-ahead to move their materials there.

“We keep calling them to meet but feedback is minimal,” Mr Busuttil said. As a result, the Luqa carnival companies who, according to the participants’ spokesman, were most under pressure to move out, had to start carnival preparations in their old stores.

“Over my dead body will they move out now,” Mr Busuttil said, adding that these companies comprised some of the top participants in the parade.

When contacted, MIP chairman Alan Camilleri said they had offered the Luqa companies a temporary storage solution but were still in talks and denied the company was dragging its feet on the matter.

He said Ħal Far was offered as a temporary solution for storage only, until the larger issue was handled by the ministry.

On a positive note, Mr Busuttil said carnival would not leave the capital city, after rumours that the annual parade would have to move out of Valletta due to works being carried out on Parliament House.

The defilé will be moving to St George’s Square this year, according to Mr Busuttil. However, since works have not yet started on City Gate, the floats will be able to enter from there, probably for the last time.

In spite of the dispute, the jovial carnival spirit has not been dampened. “I’m sure we will have a very enjoyable carnival this year,” Mr Busuttil said.
