

Restoration of Valletta's unique paving

Marielouise Musumeci, chair, Rehabilitation Committees, Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs, Valletta



The following is a clarification of the statements made in Ray Bondin's letter Unique Paving Destroyed (February 6). Over the past year, the Rehabilitation Project Office (former VRP) under the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs, in conjunction with Transport Malta, has embarked on a very important and ambitious project whereby the paving of a large number of streets in Valletta is being repaired and restored utilising traditional materials and designs.

This project started with the preparation of various studies, among which was the historical research to identify and date the existing lava and hardstone paving scattered around Valletta. This research was the basis of the documentation process which evolved into a master plan for the city.

Apart from documenting the existing paving, proposals have also been drawn up for all streets in Valletta such that any entity applying to Mepa to repave a street has to respect this master plan. This will avoid the haphazard array of designs and materials which have evolved over the past years in this World Heritage Site.

The stretch of hardstone at St Christopher Street referred to by Dr Bondin was in a very bad state, with a good number of paving blocks dislodged. In addition, from research established by this office, it transpired that the two pavements on either side were added relatively recently, in a project by the VRP some 16 years ago. In order to respect the integrity of the city as a World Heritage site, the Rehabilitation Project Office believed that, apart from restoring the paving, the pavement, which can be considered as an accretion, had to be removed.

Contrary to what has been alleged, the RPO has, in the last few years, preserved any hardstone that was uplifted in order to be reutilised in such projects. After

cleaning and repairing this original paving, the latter can be relaid in other parts of Valletta where there are missing areas of identical paving.

The hardstone referred to in Dr Bondin's letter has been removed with hand tools, marked row by row, and stored systematically on pallets to be cleaned and relaid in their original location.

Comments

Paul Borg (2 weeks, 5 days ago)

@Alexei Dingli. Dear Alexei well spoken just like a politician. I did not refer to your plan , I don't even know who you are, although we do conduct our business 20 metres from each other. I am referring to what is being done. Your predecessor gave carte blanche to water services contractors to do what may. For your part I will mention 1 section: upper Old Mint street pavement on the left going up before you get into the reserved parkings. Cement and cold tarmac was used. Let's do it fast and let's do it right, before you get replaced if possible.

Alexiei Dingli (2 weeks, 6 days ago)

Dear Paul, what you said is not true. The paving master plan was only finalised recently (last year) thanks to the VRP. The pavements which the Valletta Local Council is planning for the city (about 5 throughout this year) are all in line with the master plan (most of them will be made of hard stone) and in accordance with the VRP. So I cannot really understand how you came up with the statement that all we do is cement pavements. Actually the only one we did in cement was the one near the Evans building. The reason being that the pavement was in a dangerous state and the area will undergo a huge overhaul in a couple of years so it was not worth investing in hard stone.

Paul Borg (2 weeks, 6 days ago)

Well explained all of you. I'm from Valletta, my birthday was on St Paul's holiday, I'm 50, and still people slip and fall, wheelchairs get stuck, rats come out of holes everywhere, tourists tumble down the dangerous steps.....while you people disagree about the stone, You do realise that the Valletta local council paves in concrete , everywhere.

Phil Humphries (2 weeks, 6 days ago)

"Apart from documenting the existing paving, proposals have also been drawn up for all streets in Valletta such that any entity applying to Mepa to repave a street has to respect this master plan. This will avoid the haphazard array of designs and materials which have evolved over the past years in this World Heritage Site"

Has anyone told Dr. Gonzi and Sig. Piano of this 'Master Plan' ?

A. Zahra (2 weeks, 6 days ago)

When the VRP relaid Christopher street they gave it a central hump when it should have had a depression along its centre for rain water to flow along. I remember that originally it had such a depression. I hope that it will be restored to its original state ie before the VRP relaying.