

## Valletta alive!

by Valletta Alive Foundation - editorial@di-ve.com

### Opinion

During a meeting with the Prime Minister, the Valletta Alive Foundation expressed concern about accessibility to Valletta. The social, cultural, commercial and economic life of any city is dependent on access.

Parking in St George's Square, opera house site, Freedom Square, the ditch and other Valletta locations were lost or will be lost in the coming years. In 2 or 3 years time we will come to realise that the cumulative effect of this will be substantial.



Whilst agreeing with the pedestrianisation of Valletta streets and piazzas, the Foundation noted that appropriate alternatives need to be found. Park and Ride, Controlled Vehicle Access and electric taxis provide partial solutions but more needs to be done to compensate for the continued loss of parking.

The Foundation appreciates that providing parking within Valletta itself is problematic but alternatives outside Valletta need to be identified. The reform in public transport could result in improved access to Valletta but this is dependent on many factors.

The Valletta Alive Foundation, led by its chairman Alfred Zahra, noted with satisfaction that government has put Valletta further up its list of priorities. In particular, Mr Zahra noted the transformation of Merchants Street following pedestrianisation in 2007 and the upgrading of Valletta's gardens in recent years.

The Foundation also expressed its satisfaction on government's decisions on the Opera/House City gate and Fort St Elmo projects and augured that government will remain focused to ensure that the Opera House/ City Gate project will be completed within the timeframes set. Care will need to be taken to minimise disruption of Valletta's commercial and other activities during the works.

In the meeting, Mr Zahra noted that one of the difficulties with major projects is that there will always be a group of persons who will vociferously oppose the project. In the heat of the debate, wrong perceptions could be perpetuated because of wrong information. It is vital that for projects of national importance such as the Opera House site and Fort St Elmo, there is a mature debate that would enhance agreement on the right solutions.

In a memorandum submitted in August 2006, the Foundation listed the many needs of Valletta, the Opera house and the Fort St Elmo projects being highlighted as being of the highest priority.

With Valletta being European cultural capital in 2018, the Foundation suggested the setting up of a committee within government to initiate the necessary preparations.

During the meeting, the Foundation presented the Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi with a copy of papers read at a seminar entitled Valletta 450, organised by the Foundation in October 2008. The papers include a wide range of practical proposals relating to the diverse aspects of the city including residents, culture, heritage, tourism, economy, finance, transport and development.

The Prime Minister thanked the Foundation for their contribution. It is positive, he said, that there is an NGO which works for the interests of Valletta in a holistic manner.

[www.vallettaalivefoundation.org](http://www.vallettaalivefoundation.org)

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