

## Valletta organisations insist MPs' parking area be temporary

Claudia Calleja



Workers fixing metal plates marking parking bays for Members of Parliament, in that part of Merchants Street that is taken up by the open-air market during weekday mornings.  
Photo: Jason Borg

Two Valletta organisations are only willing to accept that part of the pedestrianised Merchants Street is used as a car park for parliamentarians if this is a temporary measure, given the parking problem in the capital.

“There is a parking problem in Valletta that has to be solved. If this (the parking for MPs) is a temporary solution and there is a concept for a long-term solution, then I’d say it can be temporarily acceptable,” Claude Borg, Valletta Rehabilitation Project executive coordinator, said.

He said the organisation had not been involved in the decision taken last week following consultation between the whips of the two sides of the House and the Valletta local council.

Works started on Tuesday when stainless steel plates were fitted into the lava paving to mark the 70 parking bays in Merchants Street and Market Square reserved for MPs during Parliamentary sittings. This arrangement is meant to be temporary until the new Parliament building is completed in Freedom Square as part of the Renzo Piano project.

Previously, MPs used to park in reserved spaces along Republic Street, part of Archbishop Street and the lower part of Merchants Street. They will

park there during morning sittings when Merchant Street is taken up by the market stalls.

While agreeing with the government that the steel plates and the cars will not damage the paving laid down two years ago, Mr Borg said a pedestrianised area ideally remained free of cars. On the other hand, he pointed out, having the MPs' cars there meant they were not taking up precious parking spots in the capital.

Alfred Zahra, from the Valletta Alive Foundation, agreed the parking problem in Valletta had to be solved, a concern raised by the capital's business community.

The foundation agreed with pedestrianisation but was concerned that parking spaces were being eliminated and not replaced. As for the parking for MPs, he said: "To a certain point, I agree there is nowhere to put them but this will be discussed by the foundation during a meeting on Wednesday."

Replying to a parliamentary question recently, Transport Minister Austin Gatt said there were almost 2,000 parking spots in Valletta. Of these 1,414 were used by the public all day, 133 were only for residents and 413 could be used by the public between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. and were reserved for residents the rest of the time.

In 2007, Dr Gatt had written an opinion piece in *The Times*, titled *Merchants Street As It Deserves To Be*, where he sang the praises of pedestrianising the widest, oldest street in Valletta. "Till recently you were faced with... cars and dirty, black buildings with people milling in and out of cars parked on pavements," he had written.


He urged readers to imagine a "road with museums, merchants and cafes ending with a refurbished indoor market and fronted with a well organised monti, giving the shopper, the tourist and passer-by a unique experience".

Denise Mulholland, who lives in Market Square, said residing in Valletta had become a nightmare when the yellow boxes for MPs were painted around March. Now that these boxes had been cleared for residents to use the parking spaces, the situation had improved. However, it was a pity to see the pedestrianised area taken up by big cars.

"MPs should lead by example. Does each one of them have to drive to Parliament in their own car? Why don't they use a common transport system like the park and ride or something similar," she asked.

She pointed out that the new signposts, marking the MPs' reserved spots for evening or morning sittings, assumed people knew when Parliament met, which was not the case.

## Comments

P. Busuttil(6 days, 22 hours ago) 


Il-Ministru Austin Gatt qal li hemm 133 parking spaces ghar-residenti..... Possibbli li ma jsthiex dan il Ministru..... Toqghod il Belt u ma ghamilt xejn ta' siewi ghalina il-Beltin.

Kull ma ghamilt huwa li rajt kif ser taghmlina hajjietna infern. Bl'arroganza tieghek il-Partit mar il bahar. Zgur li ahna il Beltin mhux ser ninsew minn x'hiex qed nghaddu minhabba decisjonijiet hziena tieghek. Int tahseb li 133 spazju ghall parking ghar-residenti huma bizzatejded????


Lill minn trid iddahaq??????

Is-soluzjoni tal-parking gol Belt trid tinqata mill iktar fis possibbli. Ma jistax ikun li ahna nibqaw inbghatu. Tal hwienet irridu jipparkjaw barra il Belt. Irridu jsiru arloggi ghall certu numru ta' parking spaces, bhal ma hemm barra minn Malta. Ir-rersidenti ghandhom ikollhom id-dritta li jipparkjaw go belthom u mhux wara li jkunu illhom johorgu u jidhlu gol Belt ghall xi 4/5 darbiet biex issibu jipparkjaw.


Din it-tbattija trid tinqata darba ghall dejjem.

J Galea(6 days, 22 hours ago) 

The authorities digging up this freshly paved road should be ashamed of themselves. The place already looks a mess. Well done. Thanks for the new mess... Just when Valletta was starting to sort itself out.


Joseph Calleja(1 week ago) 

Hello Minister Gatt? Are you listening to the citizens? Probably not. Just take a good look at the comments below. Every Mp, including the PM should be reading below what their citizens are trying to tell them. According to the comments you are nothing but a spoiled bunch and yes we unfortunately voted you in. If as you say Minister Gatt there are 2,000 parking spots in Valletta, how come your drivers are not using any of these? Minister Gatt et al and the rest of you MPs make sure you save a parking spot for us when we go to the voting polls in the next election.


Joseph Calleja(1 week ago) 

First of all, shame on you Denise Mulholland, suggesting that our MPs take the park and ride shuttle. ( I'm being facetious ). It would be beneath their dignity, can you imagine having an MP ride on the same shuttle with common folk? I suggest that since both MP and driver carry a mobile phone, a driver could drop off the MP right in front of the Parliament House and go park the car maybe near the Granaries or maybe close to the Bus Terminal so when the MP is done with his official business he can call this driver to go and pick him up. But again that might work out fine for us common folk but not for his honor. Is a parking garage even mentioned in the Enzo Piano Project? How about it Transport Minister Austin Gatt ? A

parking garage for your car right there next to the parliament building, now how convenient would that be for all MPs? I bet even the driver wouldn't mind that. Another OIM episode.


DVella(1 week ago) 

What gets me (and I suspect most of the Maltese public) is why on earth do our esteemed Members of Parliament need to have their cars just outside the building?? Is it beyond the imagination to conceive a system whereby the drivers will be allocated an APPROPRIATE space elsewhere and will come when called . . . or is the effort of so much positive creative thought too much for our politicians??


Robert Agius(1 week ago) 

Yeah, the whole world is facing a crisis and all but the 'busy' MPs find it difficult to go for a short walk or get a ride from just outside Valletta...

Shame, shame and shame! Especially us citizens who have let these few greedy ingrates trample upon us for way too long.

John Mallia(1 week ago) 

Drilling holes in a street which had become the pride of Valletta, just for short-term convenience, smacks of laziness and arrogance. The beautiful uplighting which illuminates our magnificent Palace, is now being used to light up the undercarriage of MP's cars. Is it possible that no one in this country can make an effort at being creative? All the MP's need to have is a Park and ride system, either from the one we use, which would be 60% vacant during Parliamentary sittings, or the MCP car park, or the car Park above the Public Library. All these sites can very easily be serviced by electric car. This way, parking problems for residents will be eased, Merchants' Street will be pedestrianised once more, and, above all, MP's would be giving a much needed example.

Mrs. Pauline Busuttil(1 week ago) 

Mela hekk nibqaw, il-membri parlamentari jiehdu kollox ghax jilmentaw u mill ewwel. U ahna r-residenti ilna nilmentaw is-snin u hadd ma jati kazna..... Il-Belt qed tinqered u dan qed jaghmlu minn jigverna.

Veru li ahna r-residenti ma jistmawniex. Qed jasruna il hin kollu bil barka tal-Kunsill locali tal-Belt. Il-problemi li ghandna fuq il-parking ilna intambru fuqhom minn meta dahlet CVA imma kollox baqa f'wiccna.

Il-Prim Ministru missu jinzel fit-toroq tal-Belt pero' mhux fejn hemm il-hwienet ta' Strada Merkanti jew Strada Raele imma fejn joqghodu in-nies u jittellem maghhom u jsaqsihom kif inhi il-hajja taghhom gol Belt Kapitali taghna. Hekk missu jaghmel u ikollu il kuragg li jigi wahdu mhux b'xi nofs tuzzana irgiel li biex jippusaw tajbin. Hu jara ahna r-residenti minn xiex qed ikollna naddu ta' kulljum mit-Tnejn sal-Hadd, 24 siegha ghall 7 ti jiem.

Umbad xi nghidu ghall kattiverija tal-wardens jew Pulizija li sahansitra il-Hadd filghodu fis-7.15a.m iwahhallek citazzjoni ghax il-karrozza tkun ipparkjat fejn ta' kull nhar ta' Hadd ikunu ipparkjati karrozzi ohra. Tkun gejt f'nofs il-lejl tal-Hadd filghodu u ma ssibx tipparkja Imma lilna r-residenti iwahhlu ic-citazzjonijiet. Il Beltin irridu iqumu ghall dawn l-ingustizji.

ray azzopardi (6 days, 19 hours ago)

ta min jinfurmak seww li ahna fil kunsill lokali tal belt (jew hafna minnha) ma konniex nafu xser jigri fit triq il-merkanti ..... ta min jghidlek ukoll li nhar il-erbgha is-sindku Dr alexie dingli informa lil kunsill li fit triq merkanti ser jibdew jipparkjaw il-MP u ma kien hemm l-ebda votazzjoni ghal din id-decizjoni . ta min jghidlek ukoll li jien personalment qed inressaq mozzjoni fil-kunsill biex dawn il-parkeggi jergaw jitnehhew imedjetament min hemm ..... mhux gust li tghid "bil-barka tal kunsill lokali kollu" almenu jien le

k farrugia(1 week ago)

i never really understand what is concerning the foundation and the buisness comunity. i think the majority of the maltese people agree that valletta should be as car free as possible. reading the statistic-reply by the minister, visitors should be more than happy. may i also add the other hundeds of parking spaces just outside valletta, in floriana. and lets not forget that all public transport on the island lead you to valletta. so what should residents and buisness owners of sliema and paola say?

R Gatt(1 week ago)

Next project would be...to rent people so that MP's will piggy-back where ever they go. This is ridiculous. Even a 5 minutes walk to the parliament is bothering them.

With this measure we will have to redo the new parliament to fit new and wider seats, cause there already some who are pushing the limits.....

J Farrugia(1 week ago)

MPs should use the park and ride system for their parliamentary work. They dont need parking privileges. They have already enough privileges in pensions and other financial benefits. Parking their own vehicles must be out of these privileges. They are nothing more than ordinary people and so they must act. Otherwise we will remember them the next time they call at our homes for the number one vote. They will regret riding roughshod over the rest of the people with their stupid privileges. Lead by example and not by words only which mean absolutely nothing.

David Grima(1 week ago)

It is such a pity - after all that paving work, to be ruining it all !!!

Darren J. Galea(1 week ago)

It's about time Malta's "Royalty" realised they are simply citizens like the rest of us. Must their bread always be buttered on both sides? They keep awarding themselves exorbitant pay rises, more holidays, plush limousines and now on top of all that they can't afford a taxi from the car park? Unbelievable.

Adrian Borg Cardona(1 week ago)

"This arrangement is meant to be temporary until the new Parliament building is completed in Freedom Square as part of the Renzo Piano

project.." Can someone enlighten me as to where the MPs will be parking once the project is ready? I do not recall seeing any planned parking facilities in the 'great' Piano plans. Perhaps another 'temporary' solution will be found then?

JOHN O SCERRI(1 week ago) 

'.....While agreeing with the government that the steel plates and the cars will not damage the paving laid down two years ago,.....'


Look at the photo Everyone ...what are those ?? Jack hammers ...What are they used for ?.....Drilling holes . Is it dust I see where the others have been fixed ...? What is that white drilling debris??

This is totally outrageous ....Valletta is OUR capital city and not any MP's parking place ....The paving is now damaged..... yes damaged.....Stupid idea by whoever came up with this solution...Can't MPs walk ? Can't MPS board electric cars? Can't MPs be dropped off and call for transport when they are ready to go ? Do they want everything their way ?


Why does anything done on this island have to be defaced?  
Who is in charge of planning and projects?

OUR capital city stinks . Outside city gate is littered with rubbish around each and every Kiosk . card phones are a scare ...so filthy  
Smell of horse urine near city gate the waterfront .


Now this.. so we cannot even have a palce where we can say at last something good is being done ...go ahead..... ruin it. Shame .

F Zammit(1 week ago) 

YES temporary...until parlaiment moves to city gate and they have parking catered for once again! I say make them walk and use park and ride like the rest of us mortals!

julian falzon(1 week ago) 


If 'digging' and 'ruining perfectly good pavements' were a sport, Malta would win 5 gold medals at the Commonwealth Games!

Paul Vella(1 week ago) 


The two organisations are right. The problem is that through time, all these politicians have been put on too high a pedestal. They have pervaded our existance. Their reluctance to work upon and solve the real issues facing society (such as the divorce issue) and their readiness to pass the buck to us mortals under the guise of involvement through a referendum shows their real mettle. So let them use park and ride like the rest of us!!

L Buhagiar(1 week ago) 

Alla jbierek. Fejn iridu jaqblu il-membri tal-kamra. Vera kaz ta 'hemm annimali uqali iktar minn ohrajn". Kemm kellu ragun George Orwell. Ahjar ipparkjaw il-Furjana u jmorru l=parlament bil-mixi ghax hafna membri parlamentari ghandhom bzonn ghax kollha rabbew is-sonza.

Carmel Garcia(1 week ago) 

“MPs should lead by example. Does each one of them have to drive to Parliament in their own car? Why don't they use a common transport system like the park and ride or something similar,” she asked. Inkella jiksru saqajhom imsieken. X,ezempju dak eh... Billi timxu naqra jew tirkbu il-park and ride bhal haddiema l-ohra kollha li jaghmlu hekk. U hekk l-ezempju jibda jkaxkar. Ma tarax, mela tridhom jitilfu xi naqra hin ghal gid tan-nazzjon.

ray azzopardi(1 week ago) 

tal-misthija ....wara dak il-flus kollha li nefaq min but il-poplu .....issa ser issir parking area bmod temporanju ..... (suppost) u halluwna . missskom l-ewwel gejt u quddiem il-kunsill loklai biex tidjalogaw u mhux tiehdu decizjoni umbaghad tersqu quddiem il-kunsill just biex tinfurmawna ..... isthi min ha din id-decizjoni

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