

Valletta square users' thumbs down to regeneration project

Cynthia Busuttil



The "cemetery of cars" at St George's Square, Valletta is finally being transformed into a proper city piazza.

The sound of jackhammers reverberated across the open space in front of the Presidential Palace during the past two days as workers began to remove the paving from the square, which used to double as a car park for MPs during parliamentary sittings and for the public at other times.

The €1 million regeneration project, which should see the square repaved and water jets installed, started on Monday and was expected to be ready by November, Resources Minister George Pullicino said yesterday. The Sette Giugno monument has been dismantled and will be incorporated in the project for the building of a new Parliament when a site for such a purpose is decided upon.

"We are transforming the area from a cemetery of cars to a square for the people," he said.

But the embellishment has not gone down well with everyone. The owner of Malata Restaurant, Verney Carbone, complained that the trees lining the square were being removed.

Mr Pullicino was quick to point out that the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage had ordered the trees' removal because the roots were damaging underground tunnels. The trees will be replanted at the Ta' Qali National Park and will be replaced with a number of potted decorative plants.

"Our wish was to keep the trees but we could not," he said.

He told Ms Carbone she would be benefitting from the project come November but she quickly retorted: "I will be bankrupt by that time".

The owners of horse-drawn cabs, who used the square as their base, were also disgruntled after they were told to clear out by July 10. "We have not been told where we can use as a station afterwards," cabby drivers' representative Neil Fenech said. He said the Malta Transport Authority shot down their suggestion to move the cabs to Archbishop Street or in front of the law courts.

Mr Falzon said St George's Square was a very lucrative spot for cabbies and compared its importance to the airport for taxis: "It is one of the best spots in Valletta".

When asked about this, Mr Pullicino said talks were underway with the transport authority. "The area will be completely pedestrianised and we cannot have cabbies here," he said.

Comments

v.pulis (1 week ago)

Mr Pullicino said talks were underway with the transport authority. "The area will be completely pedestrianised and we cannot have cabbies here,"

All well and good but where are the cabbies to park their horses? I hope it's some place with a bit of shade.

MARK MIFSUD BONNICI (1 week ago) Birdfie Malta ran a feature in the Times about the thousands of Birds that use these trees and those in the Palace garden as a roost for the night.

These trees are being removed and relocated to Ta' Qali. What have Birdfie have to say about this?

jcmicalelf (1 week ago)

Usual bulldozer attitude.

Just because an area that served people so well as a parking space and is now

'pedestrianised (almost makes you think we're getting a local 'Place de la Concorde') does not mean that whoever earned a penny from this area had to be kicked out.. Could not a special, cleaner area have been allocated to the Cabbies? Talks underway....sure, no doubt. But why can't we ever make these arrangements before? And then we wonder why ppl don't go out and vote or make a protest vote. Perhaps Mr. Pullicino has forgotten how many times his Govt car occupied a space there - or did he use walk to the bus terminus???

Is this another 'vision' where a project for the masses has to step on the feet of poor individuals?

T Mifsud (1 week ago)

The project is great for Valletta and for the Maltese people. It's a signal Malta is moving forward while preserving history. Wifi everywhere should be the next step and only then Minister Gatt can call it Smart Malta (instead of a sources scheme for women for which this name was attributed)

francesca vincenti (1 week ago)

I trust that the new piazza shall be one that actually compliments & enhances our UNESCO World Heritage City and not one that is in conflict with the fine architecture. My greatest fear is that we'll all wake up to find some ultra modern setting complete with funky looking steel lamp-posts that would better serve the movie "War of the Worlds" and not the City built by Gentlemen for Gentlemen. Let's hope La Valetta does not turn in his grave!

A.Bonnici (1 week ago)

However, at least surround the area with high chipboard panels or dark green netting as is usually the case in civilised countries.