

Vendors, customers complain about the new Monti venue

Sarah Carabott



Only a handful of commuters ventured to Flagstone Wharf when hawkers yesterday morning set up their stalls for the first time at their allocated spot near the Blata I-Bajda park-and-ride zone. Photo: Matthew Mirabelli

A sense of apathy reigned at Flagstone Wharf yesterday morning when hawkers set up their stalls for the first time following weeks of discussions about the relocation of the Valletta Sunday market because of works going on at St James Ditch, which is to be the new bus terminus.

Despite the drizzle and cloudy sky, hawkers were at their allocated spots around the Blata I-Bajda park-and-ride area.

An imqaret vendor told The Times that although it seemed to be business as usual, it was too early to evaluate the situation. This was echoed by fellow hawkers.

However a clothes vendor, who has been setting up shop at open markets for 37 years, said customers were disheartened at the prospect of finding no shelter from the elements.

Customers, on the other hand were more concerned about the market's accessibility. A couple who commute via public transport said they were not happy about the "long walk" from Valletta.


On the other hand, a regular Sunday market customer said the new location had better parking facilities, while cruise ship tourists said they did not mind the walk from the Pinto Wharf terminal.

Most of the hawkers, however, said they had seen a sharp drop in customers, especially tourists, who used to include a visit to the Sunday market in their Valletta trips.

A couple, who have been in the retail business for over 40 years, said the “Valletta open market” had lost its ties with the city and was now spread over Blata l-Bajda, Floriana and Marsa. The agitated couple invited the authorities to visit the site, assess its feasibility and provide alternatives if they concluded that the place was inadequate.

Vendors said that when they were in Valletta, sales peaked between 10 a.m. and 11.30 a.m. But a souvenir peddler said she had not seen “a single tourist” by midday. Several hawkers were already pulling down their stalls at that time, ahead of a downpour that came some time later. A karozzin driver, trying his luck at Flagstone Wharf, said his trade had suffered another blow as the relocation was “well out of the karozzin operators’ way”.

Comments

J Farrugia(1 day, 21 hours ago) 

it is there own fault if the customers have run away. They must not blame anyone for their own disasters. They had a long holiday through their own stubbornness. Now the clients have flown off to other pastures. They have made their money and now the clients have changed them for other markets. We dont need the valletta flea market and now the floriana one. They have only themselves to blame and not lament about lame excuses. As if the valletta flea market had any cover from the rains. How stupid minded can these idiots be. Serves them right for being arrogant and stubborn.

Adrian Cardona(1 day, 23 hours ago) 

I actually wish all village markets were removed from town centres. They cause a massive inconvenience on a regular basis, leave piles of rotting vegetables and fish lying on the ground, imprison people inside their homes, blocking garages and exits, and cause general traffic chaos. In Birkirkara this happens not once but twice a week, and the local council is always allowing it to expand instead of trying to reach some sort of balance with the residents. All it does is continuously remove parking spaces indiscriminately. Then they tell you to regenerate village cores...

ray borg(1 day, 22 hours ago)

I completely agree with you. The Birkirkara Market is an insult to us residents, a sign of disrespect from the authorities. How come hawkers are allowed to block the accessibility to residents? How come they become the private owners of our residential roads? When is action for their removal coming?