

Victoria Gate area restoration well under way

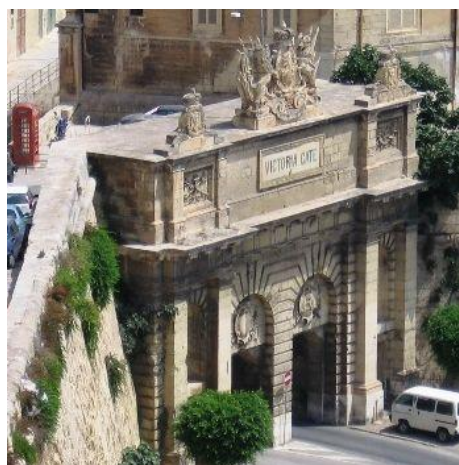
by Marie Claire Grima - editorial@di-ve.com

Valletta's second most important entrance and the area around it are being restored to their former grandeur.

Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi visited the restoration works at Victoria Gate and the Ta' Liesse Area, accompanied by Resources Minister George Pullicino on June 18. Speaking at the press conference, Mr Pullicino said that the first two phases of the restoration works around the Victoria Gate area had been completed.

The first phase included restoration from the gate upwards. The paving that had been worn down and broken was removed and re-laid using stronger materials. The second phase consisted of the restoration of the Ta' Liesse church facade and dome, and of the Victoria Gate. The gate had been damaged by pieces of shrapnel during the war and by gradual erosion. Man-made stone was used in the reconstruction, retaining as much of the original features of the gate as possible.

Mr Pullicino explained how the area surrounding Victoria Gate had once been the hub of business activity in the city, since it was so close to the sea. He said that since nowadays cruise liners were docked near the gate, many of the tourists were using that entrance to reach Valletta, and its commercial value was rising again. He also described plans for the third and fourth phases of the restoration project – renovating the area from Ta' Liesse downwards and restoring the mercantile stalls, as well as the area around the Old Fisheries. The plan was not to make an exact copy of the way everything was in the past, but to evoke a sense of history and authenticity, he said.



Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi spoke next, saying that this project was part of his electoral pledge to restore dignity to the capital city in action, and that his legislation was the one that had invested the most in Valletta since Malta's independence. He said that everywhere in Valletta, restoration works were underway, including maintenance work on the bastions, which were the longest unbroken fortification system in Europe. He stated that apart from preserving Malta's rich heritage without compromising on aesthetics, these projects were providing jobs for Maltese workers. Investing in such a way would attract more tourists, which would make for more commerce and a stronger economy, as well as leaving a valuable legacy behind for future generations.

The Prime Minister expressed his appreciation for the effort carried out so far, and thanked the Valletta local council, the contractor and the workers, and architect Claude Borg who was responsible for the project's design.
