

Underground network studies may lead to review of plans for St George's Square



The Resources Ministry has undertaken to carry out further studies to access and document as much possible of the Valletta underground network and review its plans for St George's Square according to what is found.

The environmental group Flimkien għal Ambjent Aħjar said in a statement this morning that in a recent meeting with Minister George Pullicino, it was shown the positive changes to be undertaken at St George's Square.

These include the elimination of the surface parking and the re-design of the square to incorporate ornamental paving, a large shallow fountain, street furniture and improved lighting as well as the upgrading of the streets in the immediate vicinity.

During the meeting FAA representatives brought to the attention of the authorities the existence of a 50-foot long underground passage, leading from Archbishop Street towards the centre of St George's Square which was thought to be part of a network in the area of the Palace.

FAA said it was delighted that exploratory works have confirmed that the passage is part of a larger network which includes a vaulted area and smaller rooms excavated into the sides of the passages.

It said that while it still had strong reservations about the excavation of the square for the provision of underground parking, it was confident that the changes to this urban

space would not only enhance the prestige of the square facing the Presidents' Palace but would also greatly improve the enjoyment of the square.

The group proposed that part of these passages should be made accessible to the public as an added heritage attraction and an insight into the very old civil engineering works that lay beneath Valletta's streets, national heritage which might have been lost if it were not for this fruitful cooperation between the authorities and civil society.

Comments

Ray Bondin (2 days, 11 hours ago)

The plans that Joe Grima saw were those of the drainage system which are well mapped out and which is part of the incredible underground system in Valletta. But there are many more tunnels which are not mapped or at least not completely. We had cleaned up a large number of them such as under Auberge de Castille and Auberge d'Aragon and the oens next to St Johns Co Cathedral, but there are still many more.\

What is important is no project should be undertaken before the necessary research and documentation is done.

No application should have ever been presented to MEPA for the St George's Sqa project before this research was done.

James Diacono (3 days, 3 hours ago)

whoever said that govt is destroying the tunnels ? yesterday on PBS the minister specifically said that if some heritage is discovered then they will revise the proposal of the project. at the moment tests and excavations are being carried out so let us wait and see

Franco Farrugia (3 days, 6 hours ago)

In various cities abroad, the sewers themselves have been turned into tourist attractions. But in Valletta - Malta, we do the opposite: we destroy the underground passages.

L..Galea (3 days, 6 hours ago)

Damian Cassar

What makes you think that we care about parking comfort when OUR heritage may be destroyed in the process? And do you think that those who come to the retailing and catering businesses cannot walk and enjoy Valletta while doing so? I hope you are not one who would like to even have some form of transport to go to the bathroom. Do you know that exercise will do you good?

Joe Grima (3 days, 7 hours ago)

I fully support the suggestion made by some contributors here that underground Valletta should be turned into a tourist attraction. God only knows what beauty maybe hidden under the surfaces we see in the Capital. Why doesn't some Minister start thinking outside the box and prepare plans for discovering underground Valletta for the Maltese and for the million visitors we get each year instead of the dreary routine plan for a car park?

K Spiteri (3 days, 7 hours ago)

@ Damian Cassar:

I'm sorry but the majority don't agree with you. Or are you one of those types of persons who does not like to walk so you want everything a stone throw away from you? There are various other options which one can consider instead of totally destroying the hidden city that lies beneath our capital city. Why every time one dreams of a 'project' in Valletta, it includes generally excavating? Excavating in the city means only splashing out people's money to accommodate some beloved excavating firms close to the same parliamentarians.

carmen houlton (3 days, 7 hours ago)

It is a good thing that FAA is so active, otherwise these passages would have been bulldozed without anybody else lifting a finger to stop them. Once again thank you FAA.

Damian Cassar (3 days, 7 hours ago)

Whoever mentioned that the parking is for MP's. stop repeating what other people have spread. The parking is very much needed to replace those 80 car spaces that will be lost after the much needed embellishment and landscaping of this beautiful and important square. We all know that the existing car park is an eye sore but really truly services the retail industry as well as the catering establishments. let us not mention the theatre and other cultural happenings.

Charles Abela (3 days, 8 hours ago)

@Joe Grima

..from the little that I could see, could it be the End-Line of the supply of water from Rabat to Valletta ? This was Wignacourt's project...I recall someone telling me that a fountain stood on the same spot..this same fountain can still be seen at Lower Argotti gardens in Floriana....

Gerard Cassar (3 days, 9 hours ago)

A fountain is planned in front of the President's Palace and it is or was planned to remove the monument of Manwel Dimech from in front of the Prime minister's office!

L..Galea (3 days, 9 hours ago)

victor dimech

We have a tourist attraction capable of generating income, built hundreds of years ago by the rulers of the time, and now we have a government obsessed of creating white elephants while destroying this heritage!!!!

Let's hope the government comes to its senses and not have another instance of another case for Only in Malta.

K Spiteri (3 days, 9 hours ago)

Is all this fuss being done to have parking for MPs?

- 1) Didn't they say that Parliament will move away from the Palace?
- 2) Connecting to question 1, didn't Renzo Piano implied indirectly that the new Parliament site is best suited to a new building in Freedom Square?
- 3) Didn't the government say that the bus terminus will be freed from the buses and have only a handful of buses operating from there at any one time?

So summing things up, why don't the parliamentarians use the current Bus Parking / Sunday Market area at St. James' Ditch as their parking?

A) They will be nearer to the New Parliament Site.

B) There won't be any environmental disturbance

C) The Tunnel Network will remain as it is

D) A few minutes walk will serve as an exercise for certain overweight parliamentarians, making up for the food they eat in private parties, dinner, breakfasts, etc etc.

mario mifsud (3 days, 9 hours ago)

IF PARLAMENT IS TO MOVE TO THE OLD THEATRE SITE WHICH WILL INCORPORATE UNDERGROUND PARKING WHAT IS THE NEED FOR THIS PARKING THEN?

IS THIS A PUBLICITY STUNT?

Joe Formosa (3 days, 10 hours ago)

Lead by example... use Park and Ride or the electric cab service

Everyone knows that an underground system exists in Valletta...

What are the VRC and other orgs. there for?

Lets stop fooling our selves and stick to priority projects...

and how long does it take to walk from Floriana car park to parliament... a few minutes..

can be a good campaign for the health programm.... We walk and clear our minds to serve the country better.

v.pulis (3 days, 10 hours ago)

valletta's underground network is as valuable as the buildings above ground, at least from the second floor up. if one wants to see the real Valletta, the one built by gentlemen for gentlemen one has to look higher than the aluminium and glass shop facades. Pity that this part of Valletta is neglected and run down with intricately carved wooden balconies falling to pieces and stonework eroding and disintegrating with the passage of time. perhaps it's because as the saying goes 'Boghod mill ghajn boghod mill qalb'.

Joe Felice Pace (3 days, 10 hours ago)

Eureka! Some has found this network connection! No big news! I remember a relative of my mother, an architect and head of a government department, telling me during and after World War II of this vast network, corridors, vaults, rooms and all spread all under Valletta. Why not create a tourist (and Maltese) attraction out of them!

J.Borg (3 days, 11 hours ago)

As if no one new that there is an underground network beneath Valletta.....

Drop the project now daer Minister before it's too late....there is no need of an underground parking in st.george's square.....

Members of parliament can be easily dropped off for parliamentary sittings and there cars taken to another parking outside valletta.

victor dimech (3 days, 11 hours ago)

It is our duty to protect such heritage finds especially in and around Valletta but it is also our duty to get rid of surface parking as was planned.Can't we go on with the squares project without disturbing anything beneath?

M. Tabone (3 days, 11 hours ago)

This underground heritage must be protected, scheduled by MEPA (if not already done) and open to the Maltese public and tourists alike!

K Spiteri (3 days, 11 hours ago)

Let's Save the tunnel network beneath Valletta. Let's not think of underground projects in Valletta because we would be ruining this magnificent tunnel network.

If one wants to USE this tunnel Network, why don't the authorities refurbish it and maybe convert it into other types of buildings? Just a few ideas that are coming to mind right now are: shopping centre, art galleries, entertainment venues, etc etc

Save Valletta, our National Treasure!!!

Joe Grima (3 days, 12 hours ago)

I remember that on the first day I entered the Prime Minister's office at Castille Mintof f showed me a huge book of plans that outlined the entire underground tunnelling network beneath the Capital as created by the Knights of St John before Valletta was actually built. That huge book of plans must still be in existence and will provide the Ministry with much needed information aboiut Valletta's underground tunneling system.