



Environmental Planning Issues in Gozo

Position Paper by the Gozo Tourism Association

The Gozo Tourism Association believes that the issue of environment on the sister island has to be treated in a two-prong approach:

- One at national level
- One at regional level (Gozo being an island itself)

The environment, its planning and its upkeep plays an important role in tourism. From the outset, the Gozo Tourism Association does not want Gozo to become another smaller Malta. Therefore, planning and environmental policies that are applicable for Malta are not necessarily fitting for Gozo.

It is essential that even in this regard Gozo must remain distinct and retains its unique Island identity. This can only be brought about by having planning and environmental policies that cater for the needs of Gozo. Such policies should reflect as well the input and consultation of a range of Gozitan stakeholders.

The Gozo Tourism Association believes that whilst encouraging investment in sustainable infrastructural projects and developments that add more value to product Gozo, careful attention should be given in order not to commit some of the mistakes experienced in the past on the mainland, and to a lesser extent on Gozo itself.

However, a balance must be struck between the environment and any future touristic development that the tourism industry will for sure need, to keep on upgrading its product and widening its touristic offer.

Furthermore, the Gozo Tourism Association believes that the environmental planning subject is not necessarily connected on land use only, but should encompass also the coast and surrounding seas. Our coastal waters and the marine life therein form part our environment as well, and it needs to be properly protected but not merely on paper.

For the Gozo Tourism Association, the environment and the natural characteristics of Gozo are the primary prepositions in the touristic offer of our little island. Apart from presenting an organised, clean and well-maintained destination, the upkeep and the protection of our environment signify and ensure that Gozo will be an island where islanders live, work and prosper within a strong thriving, healthy community. Thus, in turn it is capable of encouraging and attracting investment and tourism in a sustainable way.

This transformation can be brought about only by action. Although, we believe, that the government is the main defender, promoter, financier and leader in the environment issue, success also hinges on the participation of all those who live, work, invest and visit Gozo. The Authorities, the investors, the public and the non-government organisations have an inherent responsibility to lead in this mission.

Along the years the Gozo Tourism Association has marketed this little beautiful Island through its rural character, and natural beauty. Even the tourism entrepreneurs were wise enough and exploited the rurality of the Island as an opportunity to create a new tourism product.

Way back 40-50 years ago the tourism sector started restoring and converting old derelict buildings in the country side into modern type of accommodation found in the Gozitan farmhouses. Those brave pioneers opted for restoration versus destruction. They set an example how to introduce a new unique type of accommodation which is so typical of the heart of Gozo, without jeopardising the soul of our Island. More recently restoration and conversion of houses of character in boutique hotels in the village cores, enriched the Gozitan touristic offer, and dove tailed perfectly with our island's unique character.

Thus, even the private sector can spearhead an environment friendly mentality. In this regard the tourism establishments can lead in many ways.

The Gozo Tourism Association representing a wide range of tourism operators is in favour of sustainable and well-planned development which respects the characteristics of our Island. These same characteristics unfortunately are not being protected by those who are entrusted to do so. The relevant Authorities are failing Gozo and in the process are killing the goose that lays the golden egg,

In this respect the Gozo Tourism Association is listing hereunder its proposals to be considered by the competent Authorities to be entrenched in the present planning policies.

LIST OF PROPOSALS BY GTA

- Review of the Local Plan for Gozo
- Review of the SPED
- DC Guidelines and supplementary guidelines specifically for Gozo
- The whole of Gozo to be considered as a Design Priority Area
- Rural Policy to be amended to reflect the size of Gozo (ex. Petrol stations, fireworks factory, Agri tourism and outdoor storage spaces)
- A specific Agri Business policy for Gozo
- Planning Policies specifically for Gozo to be drawn in consultation with local council
- The preservation of the green belts to maintain the Gozitan characteristics
- Revoke the Annex 2 of the DC Design Policy governing the Height limitations
- Guidelines for the Restoration and maintenance of privately owned historical buildings
- Incentivise renovation, restoration and maintenance of houses of character
- Incentivise purchase of houses of character
- Introduce and enforce the street scape including colour schemes for the village cores and square in collaboration with local councils.
- Policies should be drawn to encourage the development tourism support service
- Identify areas where theme parks, religious parks and water parks can be developed
- The creation of cycling lanes and walking paths
- Beaches replenishment
- Nature Park in Natura 2000 sites
- Designate suitable area for a professional camping site on Gozo
- Policies to cater for sports facilities including athletics track, tennis courts and kitting up areas for divers

**Gozo Tourism Association
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