

Mr Kristijan Curovic  
Address

Our Ref: NP 0058/18  
Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2018

**Application Number:** NP 0058/18  
**Approved documents** NP 0058/18/12B  
**Location:** Wied iż-Żurrieq  
**Proposal:** Clean-up of the sea-bed

Dear Mr Curovic,

Reference is being made to your application form dated 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018, for permission to hold a clean-up of the sea-bed at Wied iż-Żurrieq with the aim of achieving the White Flag status of the beach.

The Environment and Resources Authority (ERA) is hereby granting you permission in accordance with Regulation 18(2) of the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations, 2006 (S.L. 549.44), hereinafter referred to as the Regulations, for the purpose of exempting the Permit Holder from the prohibitions on operations or activities referred to in Regulation 18(1) of the Regulations for activities that shall be carried out within the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) of Zona fil-Baħar fl-Inħawi ta' Għar Lapsi u ta' Filfla (MT0000102).

The Permit is being issued under the following conditions:-

1. This permit is being issued to Mr Kristijan Curovic (ID:xxx) obo White Flag International, hereinafter referred to as the 'Permit Holder', who is responsible to ensure that all reasonable precautions are taken so that the activity conforms to the conditions in this Permit and the procedures outlined within the Permit application.
2. The activities covered by this permit are restricted to the Permit Holder and divers and participants under his supervision and direction, who shall all be made aware of this permit and the contents within.
3. This Permit is valid for a clean-up of the seabed to be held between Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> March and Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2018 between sunrise and sunset for a team of 4 professional divers.
4. Activities are to be held according to the approved Project Description Statement at NP 0058/18/12B.
5. When divers encounter any abandoned traps, they are only to be collected, removed and disposed of in accordance with conditions of Waste Management.

Any traps that are marked or attached to buoys are to be left in place and not collected.

6. Following the initial dive, a site plan indicating the extent of the clean-up is to be provided to ERA for approval on [nature.permitting@era.org.mt](mailto:nature.permitting@era.org.mt)

This is to be provided and approved prior to commencement of the clean-up.

7. A detailed benthic map of the seabed extending throughout the area marked on the approved site plan as per condition 6 is to be submitted with the report of the activity as per requirements in point 5.2 under the "Reporting" condition in Annex A attached.
8. The GBR conditions attached in Annex A shall be strictly adhered to.
9. This Permit is issued saving any third party rights. The Permit Holder is not excused from obtaining any other permission required by law. The obligations and conditions of this permit are without prejudice to any other regulations, codes of practice, conditions and requirements imposed by other Authorities.
10. This Permit is not transferable.
11. Any aggrieved person may appeal from this decision before the Environment and Review Tribunal within 30 days in terms of Article 63 of the Environment Protection Act.

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F/Director Environment and Resources

## General Binding Rules for Clean Up Activities in Protected Sites



The aim of this guide is to provide a concise list of conditions that shall be observed when carrying out activities in Natura 2000 sites as designated through the Provisions of the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations 2006, S.L. 549.44)

This GBR is applicable for activities involving clean ups in protected Natura 2000 sites on land or at sea.

These GBR conditions are subject to the following:

- The conditions apply during the whole duration of the activity. Failure to do so could result in enforcement action and cessation of any related works or activities. The Environment and Resources Authority (ERA) reserves the right to suspend or revoke the activity in case the Permit Holder does not fulfil or honour any of the conditions or obligations arising from this GBR document.
- These conditions are issued saving third party rights;
- These conditions are without prejudice to any other requirements from other competent authorities or entities.
- ERA reserves the right to inspect and monitor the activity and to send officers and/or other on-site monitors appointed by the Authority, to ensure the safeguarding of the natural assets;
- The conditions are without prejudice to liability for any accidents or injuries which may occur during the activities being permitted through this Permit. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all safety measures are taken.

### Conditions

#### 1. General Requirements

- 1.1. All users of the site have a duty to care and protect the environment. It is the responsibility of the activity organiser and the individual persons to ensure that no harm is caused to the environment as a whole or to individual species, either intentionally or accidentally.
- 1.2. All activities are to be supervised by the activity organizer and/or by the assigned coordinator/s who shall be held responsible for the activities;
- 1.3. Individuals participating in the activities are to be made aware of these conditions and are to strictly adhere to these conditions;
- 1.4. The site shall be maintained in its original condition, free from disturbance.

#### 2. Restrictions

- 2.1 Unnecessary trampling should be avoided. Unless required, all participants are to keep within existing tracks and footpaths.
- 2.2 In order to minimise impacts, large groups of individuals should be divided into small groups; the extent of the groups depends on the site in question and is to follow guidelines provided by the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA).
- 2.3 In both terrestrial clean-ups and underwater clean-ups, all litter should be picked manually and no machinery is to be used, unless otherwise agreed prior to the activity by ERA.
- 2.4 No vegetation, undergrowth, leaf litter, dead branches, and stones are removed and should be left on site. Disturbance to ecological communities within the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in question is to be minimal and restricted to removal of litter.
- 2.5 Pebbles, stones and boulders should not be removed from site.

- 2.6 Removal of invasive/alien species is not permitted without prior consultation and relevant agreements/ permits from the ERA.
- 2.7 Physical modification of the site and/or the surroundings is prohibited;
- 2.8 The proposed activities shall not result in the creation/formation of a new access or any physical modifications whatsoever to any existing access.
- 2.9 No fires are to be lit during the clean-up activity.
- 2.10 Access and parking by motor vehicles shall be restricted to existing surfaced roads and tracks unless permitted specifically by ERA. Access by, and parking of, motor vehicles on any type of beach, natural areas including areas covered by any type of vegetation and/or rocky ground, and arable (agricultural) land is not allowed.
- 2.11 Any structures erected for the clean-up shall be of a temporary nature, necessary for the clean-up activity to take place and of a limited size, and shall be removed immediately at the end of the activity.
- 2.12 Removal of any stones from beaches and rocky shores, as well as sand-sifting activities, is not covered by these Rules and is subject to separate clearances to be obtained from ERA.
- 2.13 The following activities are strictly prohibited:
  - 2.13.1 the deliberate picking, collection, taking, cutting, uprooting, harming, destroying or damaging in any way of any specimen of wild flora;
  - 2.13.2 the deliberate hunting, killing, capturing, taking, harming, of any specimen of wild fauna;
  - 2.13.3 pursuing, taking or attempting to take, deliberately killing or attempting to kill, deliberately destroying, keeping, transporting, selling, buying exchanging, offering for sale or for exchange, importing or exporting any specimen of protected species;
  - 2.13.4 the deliberate disturbance of any species of fauna, particularly during periods of breeding, rearing, hibernation and migration;
  - 2.13.5 the deliberate destruction and deterioration of breeding sites or resting places of any species of fauna;
  - 2.13.6 cutting or damaging of reeds, tree branches etc., or removal of features from any buildings or on-site structures, in any manner;
  - 2.13.7 planting of vegetation, shrubs and/or trees or the introduction of any flora or fauna into the site or its environs;
  - 2.13.8 introduction, removal, significant movement and re-engineering, and/or collection of sand, shingle, stone, soil and/or sediment;
  - 2.13.9 excavation works and any physical modification of the vegetation cover, the ground and landform of the site and its surroundings.

### 3. Noise, Vibrations and Lighting

- 3.1 No generators, loud music and/or noise and equipment which generates noise and vibration shall be made use of;
- 3.2 No lighting shall be used on site unless permitted by ERA.

### 4. Waste Management

- 4.1 Litter should not be removed if it is apparent that its removal may cause harm to the environment. Litter found on the seabed which has become deeply embedded in the seabed should not be removed. Litter items on land should also be left in place if it is apparent that their removal will cause more harm.
- 4.2 Bags filled with litter, and/or other litter, are to be removed immediately from within the protected sites. No bags or any other form of collected debris and litter shall be placed on vegetation.
- 4.3 Any skips hired for the clean-up activity are to be covered by the necessary permits and shall only be placed on surfaced areas. All skips shall be removed within a maximum of 48 hours after the activity. Skips which are left on site overnight should be closed.
- 4.4 All waste generated shall be disposed of accordingly in accordance with the Waste Management (Activity Registration) Regulations 2007 (S.L. 549.45) and the Waste Regulations 2011 (S.L. 549.63).

## 5. Reporting

- 5.1. The Authority is to be informed of any changes in the proposed dates of the activity prior to occurrence of the activity. Such information is to be communicated through email on to [nature.permitting@era.org.mt](mailto:nature.permitting@era.org.mt) and [ceu.nature@era.org.mt](mailto:ceu.nature@era.org.mt). In the case of short-term cancellation of the activity (especially outside office hours), the Authority should be contacted on 99210404.
- 5.2. In accordance with Regulation 46(4) of S.L. 549.44, a brief report with photos of the activities held, including any publications as a result of the activity, is to be provided to ERA by the Permit Holder within one month of the expiry of the permit, and is to be submitted to [ceu.nature@era.org.mt](mailto:ceu.nature@era.org.mt). Information that should be treated as confidential as outlined in Regulation 48 of S.L. 549.44, shall be specified.

A copy of the report template is available at <http://era.org.mt/en/Pages/Nature-Permitting.aspx>

## Contacts

For additional information contact the Environmental Permitting Services through [nature.permitting@era.org.mt](mailto:nature.permitting@era.org.mt) or 2292 3500.

**Report Reference:** *Environment and Resources Authority, 2017. General Binding Rules for Clean-up activities in Protected Sites. 3pp.*

NPO058/17/12B

## The bay of Wied iz-Zurrieq White Flag certification project

### PROJECT AIM

White Flag is the world's only symbol for physically cleaned seabed. After the cleanup done by professional divers, a cleaned location is certified with the white flag, thus proclaimed as a Safe Marine Area, cleaned from all debris found on the seabed (plastic and other non-degradable waste). Whiteflag Int. initiative is of global nature with the aim of expanding safe marine areas, as well as raising awareness about the high-level threat of global ocean pollution, thus the importance of ocean preservation. At Malta, Whiteflag Int. is conducting this project together with the Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change, with the aim of certifying The bay of Wied iz-Zurrieq with the White Flag.

### PROJECT VALUE

Statistic says that 8 million tons of plastic is thrown into the Earth waterbodies each year. And that's plastic only, not including other waste that ends up in the waters as well. That's why Whiteflag initiative has a global value, conducting cleanups all around the world, thus expanding safe marine areas. Cleaning is one goal of the project and further prevention by education of local communities is another goal. After the certification, informational boards are set at locations, explaining the project, its goals, and warning the community about the importance of marine ecology, in order to preserve not just marine life but human life too.

### PROJECT OUTLINE

**Project:** The bay of Wied iz-Zurrieq White Flag certification

**In cooperation with:** Minister Jose Herrera, Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change

**Project mission:** seabed cleanup, removing all debris from seabed (plastic and other non-degradable waste), thus White Flag certification and proclaiming Blue Grotto as the first Safe Marine Area at Malta

**Cleanup:** conducted by Whiteflag Int. professional divers

**Project trajectory:**

- Pre-certification process – initial dive to document the seabed pollution  
This procedure is required in order to establish a concrete and detailed plan for the sanitation of the marine area. During the inspection dive, the inspector is obliged to record visual situation beneath the surface, which is then presented to safe marine area candidates. In the pre-certification phase, the official WhiteFlag inspector can create an operational plan for the



**APPROVED DOCUMENTS**

extraction of non-degradable waste, objects, and plastic from the collected technical information. In order to be able to conduct a safe waste extraction, the team of divers need to use the information collected from the inspection. They establish the necessary list of tools, surface personnel, vessels or boats for support and methods of lifting heavy objects to the surface.

- **The cleanup conducted by professional divers**  
The act of lifting objects from the seabed to surface can be life-threatening if not performed by experienced and qualified divers with proper lifting equipment and correct procedures. Smaller pieces of plastic and non-degradable material make the process of gathering more complicated because it requires longer underwater time and patience. This is one of the most delicate operations for divers as they encounter millions of pieces of plastic which need to be collected into the diver's bag. These actions could only be fulfilled by a human hand as any other solutions like machinery would harm fragile aquatic ecosystem and ocean vegetation organisms. By collecting large pieces of plastic, the divers prevent the accumulation of micro plastic in the ocean which infiltrates into fish and, from there, into human organisms.
- **Final inspection and signing of the official certification document**  
Once the cleanup is finished, a final inspection by the WhiteFlag diving inspector needs to be done before the signing of the official certification document.
- **After certification - inspections of the seabed in the upcoming years:**
  1. Visual surveillance of the surface
  2. Visual surveillance beneath the surface

As well as necessary cleanups after the inspection, in cooperation with a local diving centre, who has been educated and proclaimed local WhiteFlag inspectors and representatives.

#### **PROJECT STARTING DATE AND DURATION**

**Expected starting date:** March 7th 2018

**Duration:** April 10th 2018

**Persons per visit:** max 4 (professional divers)

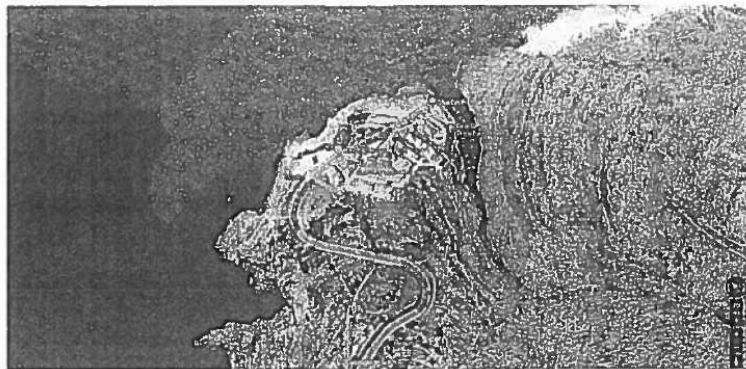
#### **Site access:**

- By car/van
- On foot
- Diving
- By a boat (if necessary)

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#### PROJECT SITE AREA\*



*\*to be supplemented after the initial dive*

#### PROJECT METHODS

Cleaning the seabed is conducted with just hands without using any mechanical equipment in order to protect seabed fauna. All of the litter found on the bottom will be placed in specialized trash bags.

The whole cleanup is divided in three parts:

1. Initial dive documentation – video footage and photos taken with a GoPro in order to estimate the situation of the seabed
2. Cleanup – conducted by professional divers using professional equipment such as:
  - diving suits
  - masks
  - gloves
  - regulators
  - belts&weights
  - 500kg lifting bag (for waste storage)
  - 15 liter scuba tanks
3. The verification of the cleaned area from the official WhiteFlag diving inspector who declares the seabed cleaned to gain a status of 'WhiteFlag Safe Marine Area'

#### SAFETY

Safety procedure includes all of the usual equipment used by divers in occurrence of such cases. The cleanup is closely monitored from the land in case of emergency.

**APPROVED DOCUMENTS**



