



# NATURA 2000 - STANDARD DATA FORM

For Special Protection Areas (SPA),  
Proposed Sites for Community Importance (pSCI),  
Sites of Community Importance (SCI) and  
for Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

SITE **MT0000104**  
SITENAME **Żona fil-Baħar bejn Il-Ponta tal-Ħotba u Tal-Fessej (Għawdex)**

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## 1. SITE IDENTIFICATION

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<b>1.1 Type</b> B	<b>1.2 Site code</b> MT0000104
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### 1.3 Site name

Żona fil-Baħar bejn Il-Ponta tal-Ħotba u Tal-Fessej (Għawdex)

<b>1.4 First Compilation date</b>	<b>1.5 Update date</b>
2010-08	2018-05

### 1.6 Respondent:

<b>Name/Organisation:</b>	Environment and Resources Authority
<b>Address:</b>	Hexagon House, Spencer Hill, Marsa MRS 1441
<b>Email:</b>	natura.2000@era.org.mt

### 1.7 Site indication and designation / classification dates

<b>Date site classified as SPA:</b>	0000-00
<b>National legal reference of SPA designation</b>	No data
<b>Date site proposed as SCI:</b>	2010-08
<b>Date site confirmed as SCI:</b>	2012-11
<b>Date site designated as SAC:</b>	No data
<b>National legal reference of SAC designation:</b>	

## 2. SITE LOCATION

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### 2.1 Site-centre location [decimal degrees]:

**Longitude**

14.2535

**Latitude**

36.0172

### 2.2 Area [ha]:

168.84

### 2.3 Marine area [%]

100.0

### 2.4 Sitelength [km]:

0.0

### 2.5 Administrative region code and name

**NUTS level 2 code****Region Name**

MTZZ	Extra-Regio
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### 2.6 Biogeographical Region(s)

Marine (100.0  
Mediterranean %)

## 3. ECOLOGICAL INFORMATION

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### 3.1 Habitat types present on the site and assessment for them

Annex I Habitat types						Site assessment			
Code	PF	NP	Cover [ha]	Cave [number]	Data quality	A B C D	A B C		
						Representativity	Relative Surface	Conservation	Global
1110 <b>B</b>			0.09		G	C	B	C	C
1120 <b>B</b>			1.89		G	C	C	C	C
1170 <b>B</b>			75.48		G	A	C	B	B
8330 <b>B</b>				28	G			B	B

**PF:** for the habitat types that can have a non-priority as well as a priority form (6210, 7130, 9430) enter "X" in the column PF to indicate the priority form.

**NP:** in case that a habitat type no longer exists in the site enter: x (optional)

**Cover:** decimal values can be entered

**Caves:** for habitat types 8310, 8330 (caves) enter the number of caves if estimated surface is not available.

**Data quality:** G = 'Good' (e.g. based on surveys); M = 'Moderate' (e.g. based on partial data with some extrapolation); P = 'Poor' (e.g. rough estimation)

### 3.2 Species referred to in Article 4 of Directive 2009/147/EC and listed in Annex II of Directive 92/43/EEC and site evaluation for them

### 3.3 Other important species of flora and fauna (optional)

## 4. SITE DESCRIPTION

## 4.1 General site character

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Habitat class	% Cover
N01	100.0
<b>Total Habitat Cover</b>	<b>100</b>

### Other Site Characteristics

This site hosts interesting geomorphological characteristics. Most of the shore along the sides and mouth of the inlet present at this site consists of a vertical face and drop-offs, with boulders and large cobbles lying on the bottom of the base. At the head of the inlet, the bottom consists of an accumulation of pebbles, small boulders and cobbles. In the inner and central parts, the bottom consists of soft sediment. The site presents typical examples of a range of habitats occurring in the Maltese Islands, which are in a moderately pristine state within this site, particularly those associated with sandy bottoms and steep rock faces. The entire coastline is characterised by the presence of a large number of emergent and fully submerged caves, as well as coastal reef habitats.

## 4.2 Quality and importance

The Posidonia meadows present within this site comprise small patches with average shoot densities. The shoots have an average of 5 leaves and heavy epiphytic growth. In the mouth of the inlet the Posidonia has a shoot density approximately three times as that of other patches found within this site, and an average of 6 leaves per shoot. None of the Posidonia patches appears to possess a well-developed mat. The Posidonia meadows present within this site are semi-isolated since there is little continuity with meadows present in other coastal areas. Regarding reefs, the biotopes present in the inlet and beyond its mouth are typical of ones found along the south-western coast of the Maltese Islands. An assemblage of infralittoral algae is present on the submerged portions of cliff faces, with photophilic algae dominating in shallower depths and progressively more sciaphilic ones in the darker regions at greater depths. In the upper well-lit region, the dominant species of the photophilic assemblages are phaeophytes such as *Cystoseira* spp., *Dictyopteris polypodioides*, *Dictyota* spp. and *Sargassum vulgare*. The deeper, darker regions are characterised by sciaphilic assemblages dominated by encrusting corallines, by *Fabellia petiolata*, *Peyssonellia squamaria* and *Halimeda tuna*, and by *Halopteris* spp. and *Zonaria tournefortii*. Sciaphilic assemblages also occur at shallow depths in situations receiving diminished light such as below overhangs. Several faunal species, including sponges, cnidarians, polychaetes, molluscs, crustaceans and echinoderms are observed associated with the infralittoral algal assemblages, including species of conservation interest such as star coral (*Astroides calycularis*), stony coral (*Cladocora caespitosa*), spiny lobster (*Palinurus elephas*), slipper lobster (*Scyllarides latus*), triton snail (*Charonia* sp.), and the grainseed seastar (*Ophidiaster ophidianus*). Small populations of important fauna can be found, including populations of *Pinna nobilis*, *Centrostephanus longispinus* and *Scyllarides latus*. The site also hosts the hermit crab and the gastropod *Phallium undulatum* at a shallower level than the normal depth at which they are generally found. Sand banks are also present at this site. In fact, vegetation belonging to the *Cymodoceion nodosae* is present in several places inside the inlet present at this site, where it mainly forms monospecific stands. Regarding caves, assemblages of sciaphilic algae present on hard substrata at the mouth and entrance of caves are characterised by species such as the chlorophytes *Palmophyllum crassum*, *Cladophora prolifera* and *Flabellia petiolata*, and sciaphilic brown algae such as *Halopteris filicina* and *Zonaria tournefortii*. The most common type of flora found are red algae (Rhodophyta), such as *Lithophyllum incrustans* and *Peyssonellia squamarina*. The most abundant macroinvertebrates found at the entrance of caves include sciaphilic species of sponges such as *Agelas oroides*, *Crambe crambe*, *Petrosia ficiformis*, *Chondrosia reniformis*, and *Ircinia* sp.; the sipunculan *Phascolosoma granulatum*; species of the polychaete families *Amphinomidae*, *Nereididae*, *Sabellidae*, *Serpulidae*, and *Syllidae*; the echinoderms *Ophidiaster ophidianus* and *Hacelia attenuata*; the cnidarian *Astroides calycularis*; and the ascidian *Halocynthia papillosa*. Crustacean species generally recorded from the mouth of caves are several species of hermit crabs (e.g. *Calcinus tubularis*); the slipper lobster *Scyllarides latus* and the crawfish *Palinurus elephas*; species belonging to the marine isopod families *Janiroidea* and *Sphaeromatidae*; as well as tanaeids. Biotic assemblages found on hard substrata in the semi-dark parts of caves just beyond the cave mouth where dim light is still present include sparse patches of coralline red algae such as *Lithophyllum incrustans*, and *Cruoria cruoriaeformis*. The macrofauna present in this zone is more abundant and diverse than the macroflora, consisting of species such as the anemone *Cerianthus membranacea* in sediment pockets, the scleractinian *Madracis* sp.; the long-spined sea urchin *Centrostephanus longispinus* and the Mediterranean featherstar *Antedon mediterranea*; the scleractinian *Leptospammia pruvoti*; and a large diversity of sponges. Several species of bryozoans are common in the semi-dark parts of caves of the Maltese Islands, including *Myriapora truncata* and *Sertella* sp. The most common species of crustaceans include the shrimps *Stenopus spinosus*, *Plesionika narval*, the majid crab *Herbstia condyliata*, numerous red cave copepods *Ridgewayia* sp., as well as the mysid *Hemimysis margalefi*. *P. narval* may form large swarms. Species found in totally dark parts of inner caves or side pockets and chambers include macrofauna such as occasional individuals of the sponge *Fasciospongia* sp., sabellarid and serpulid polychaetes and crustaceans such as *Palaemon serratus*, decapods of the genus *Lysmata*, as well as mysids and ostracods. Moreover, several of the more mobile species found in the semi-dark zones of caves are frequently also encountered in the totally dark inner parts of caves. Large mobile fauna are frequent such as the grouper *Epinephelus*

marginatus, the conger eel *Conger conger*, the forkbeard *Phycis phycis* and the brown meagre *Sciaena umbra*. Note: This site was proposed as an SCI in 2010, confirmed as an SCI in 2012 and was then extended in 2018.

### 4.3 Threats, pressures and activities with impacts on the site

The most important impacts and activities with high effect on the site

Negative Impacts			
Rank	Threats and pressures [code]	Pollution (optional) [code]	inside/outside [i o b]
L	H03.03		i
L	G01		i
L	G02.10		b
L	M02.01		b
L	I01		b
M	F02.03		b
L	A07		o
L	M01.01		b
L	A08		o
M	F02.01		b

Positive Impacts			
Rank	Activities, management [code]	Pollution (optional) [code]	inside/outside [i o b]

Rank: H = high, M = medium, L = low

Pollution: N = Nitrogen input, P = Phosphor/Phosphate input, A = Acid input/acidification, T = toxic inorganic chemicals, O = toxic organic chemicals, X = Mixed pollutions

i = inside, o = outside, b = both

### 4.4 Ownership (optional)

### 4.5 Documentation

## 5. SITE PROTECTION STATUS (optional)

### 5.1 Designation types at national and regional level:

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### 5.2 Relation of the described site with other sites:

### 5.3 Site designation (optional)

## 6. SITE MANAGEMENT

### 6.1 Body(ies) responsible for the site management:

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Organisation:	Environment and Resources Authority
Address:	
Email:	natura.2000@era.org.mt

### 6.2 Management Plan(s):

An actual management plan does exist:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No, but in preparation
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

### 6.3 Conservation measures (optional)

## 7. MAP OF THE SITES

INSPIRE ID:

MT.ERA.MT0000104

Map delivered as PDF in electronic format (optional)

Yes  No

Reference(s) to the original map used for the digitalisation of the electronic boundaries (optional).