



## Public Consultation on the Management of Malta's Marine Natura 2000 Network

The aim of the Natura 2000 network is to ensure the long-term survival of Europe's natural features. It is the largest network for biodiversity conservation in the world. It is composed of areas that host certain natural habitats or are considered as important for the survival of certain species. The habitats and species are listed in the EU Nature Directives, which are the Habitats Directive<sup>1</sup> and the Birds Directive<sup>2</sup>. Annex I of the Habitats Directive, contains a list of habitats while Annex II contains a list of species for which important areas are to be established as protected areas. The Birds Directive stipulates a list of birds for which protected areas should be designated. All European Union Member States are contributing to the creation of the Natura 2000 network, since it covers both terrestrial and marine areas.



<sup>1</sup> Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:31992L0043>.

<sup>2</sup> Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds, available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32009L0147>.

There are different types of protected areas whose protective instructions range from minimal levels through to strict nature reserves in which human activity is severely restricted. However, the protected areas forming part of Natura 2000 should not necessarily be strict nature reserves and therefore, in the areas forming part of the network, human activity does not have to be prohibited. This implies that development and activities are to be monitored and regulated in such a manner that they do not cause harm to the natural environment. This ensures that the protected areas are managed in a sustainable manner taking into consideration both ecological and socio-economical factors.



**Plate 1 – Coastal view from the marine protected area between Rđum Majjiesa and Ras ir-Raħeb**

The designation of areas to form part of the network has to respect a number of criteria which are listed in the nature directives. The protected areas under the Birds Directive are referred to as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) while those under the Habitats Directive are known as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

Once a State designates a SPA, it would automatically form part of Natura 2000 network. Under the Habitats Directive, the process is slightly different and a Member State would first submit to the Commission a list of areas which at this stage would be referred to as proposed Sites of Community Importance (pSCIs). Once these areas are scientifically assessed and published on the EU's official journal, they become part of the Natura 2000 network and are known at EU level as Sites of Community Importance (SCIs).



The concerned State would then have to ensure, within a specific timeframe, that appropriate management measures are in place. Subsequently, the areas would then be referred to as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). The objective of such measures would be the improvement or maintenance of features for which the area was designated. Therefore, the implemented measures would delineate the targets to be achieved by management.

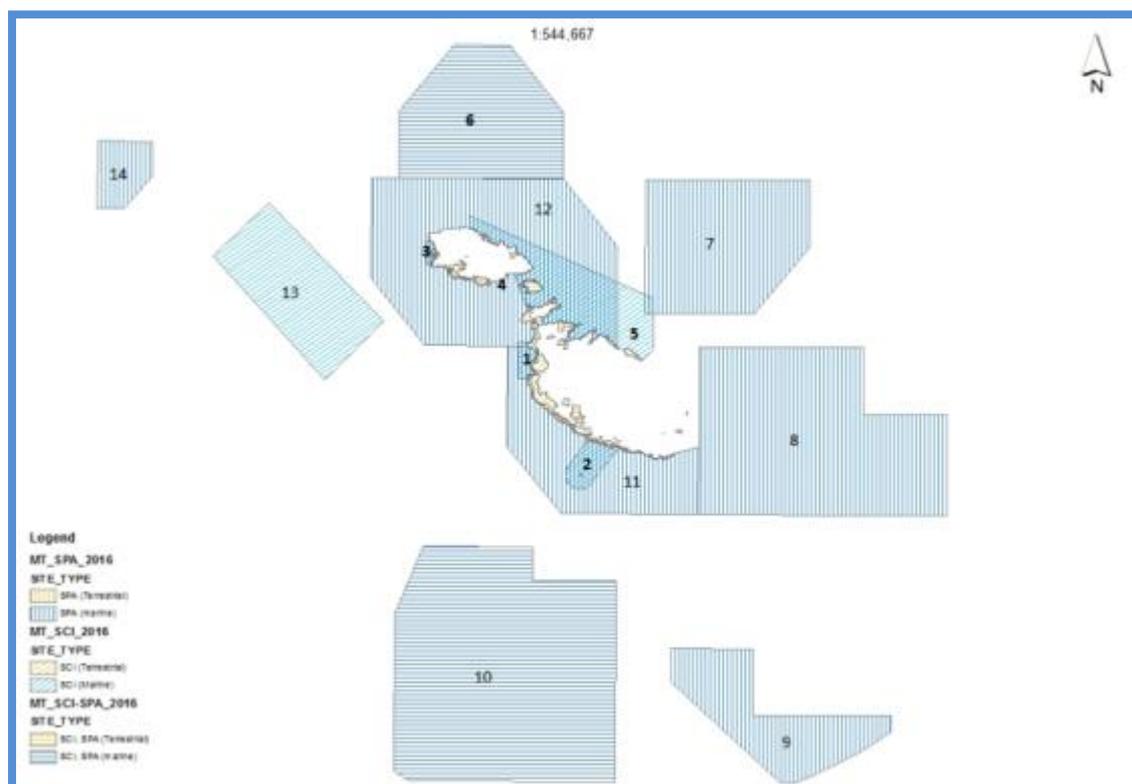


**Plate 2 – *Il-Ġebal tal-Ġeneral* located at the MPA in the limits of Dwejra**

To date, Malta has designated a total of fourteen marine protected areas. Eight of these are SPAs, five are SCIs and three of them are still at the pSCI stage. Some overlaps between these areas exist both in terms of spatial coverage and designation.



Figure 1, shows the location and designation of these areas.



	MPA Name	Protected Feature	
1	Il-Baħar bejn Rdum Majjiesa u Ras ir-Raheb	Benthic habitats	SCI
2	Il-Baħar fl-Inħawi ta' Għar Lapsi u ta' Filfla	Benthic habitats	SCI
3	Il-Baħar fl-Inħawi tad-Dwejra (Għawdex)	Benthic habitats	SCI
4	Il-Baħar fl-Inħawi ta' Mgarr ix-Xini (Għawdex)	Benthic habitats	SCI
5	Il-Baħar fil-Grigal ta' Malta	Benthic habitats	SCI
6	Il-Baħar tat-Tramuntana	Dolphins, turtles, and seabirds	SPA & pSCI
7	Il-Baħar tal-Grigal	Seabirds	SPA
8	Il-Baħar tal-Lvant	Seabirds	SPA
9	Il-Baħar tax-Xlokk	Seabirds	SPA
10	Il-Baħar tan-Nofsinhar	Dolphins, turtles, and seabirds	SPA & pSCI
11	Il-Baħar tal-Lbiċ	Seabirds	SPA
12	Il-Baħar ta' madwar Għawdex	Seabirds	SPA
13	Il-Baħar tal-Punent	Turtles and dolphins	pSCI
14	Il-Baħar tal-Majjistral	Seabirds	SPA

Figure 1 - MPAs in Malta

Malta is now at the stage where it has to establish the management measures for the marine protected areas. In order to ensure that economic, social, cultural, regional and recreational requirements are adequately considered, interested parties are encouraged to participate in the consultation process. In the interim, the sites are being governed by existing national regulations which offer some elements of protection. In particular, developments and activities are screened so that as necessary, an appropriate assessment is prepared to identify potential negative impacts and how these can be mitigated. Other sectors, such as fisheries and maritime transport are regulated through the respective Acts and their subsidiary legislation. This process ensures the protection of natural features. Furthermore, an initial assessment exercise has already been undertaken at the national scale and a set of programme of measures are being compiled under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, a conservation plan, that follows the completion of a project to identify important areas for the bottlenose dolphin and the loggerhead turtle, has been devised and it also comprises a number of actions aimed to ensure the efficacy of the protected areas.



**Plate 3 – The connection between the inland sea and the coast along the MPA in the limits of Dwejra**

<sup>3</sup> Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive), available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32008L0056>.

## The consultation process

The consultation process will be held in three phases:

- a) The first phase will allow stakeholders to provide any information deemed relevant, including opinions and vision of how any of the MPAs should be managed, as well as what in the stakeholders' opinion is positively or negatively affecting the site or what activities are known to take place within the respective sites. Discussions will facilitate the explanation of the goals that are to be achieved and the legal obligations that exist under national laws to equip stakeholders with valuable information to effectively participate in the consultations process.<sup>4</sup>
- b) Following input submitted by the interested parties, a set of conservation objectives and management measures will be elaborated together with spatial mapping of any management issues deemed necessary, which will be presented to the stakeholders for discussion during the second consultation phase.
- c) Eventually, a final draft of conservation objectives and measures for each site will be prepared and stakeholders will be invited for a final round of public consultations.

Natura 2000 is about people and not without people. To this effect, the staggered consultation approach will ensure that it provides ample time for the public to voice its opinion and also share any knowledge that it may have on the marine protected areas. .

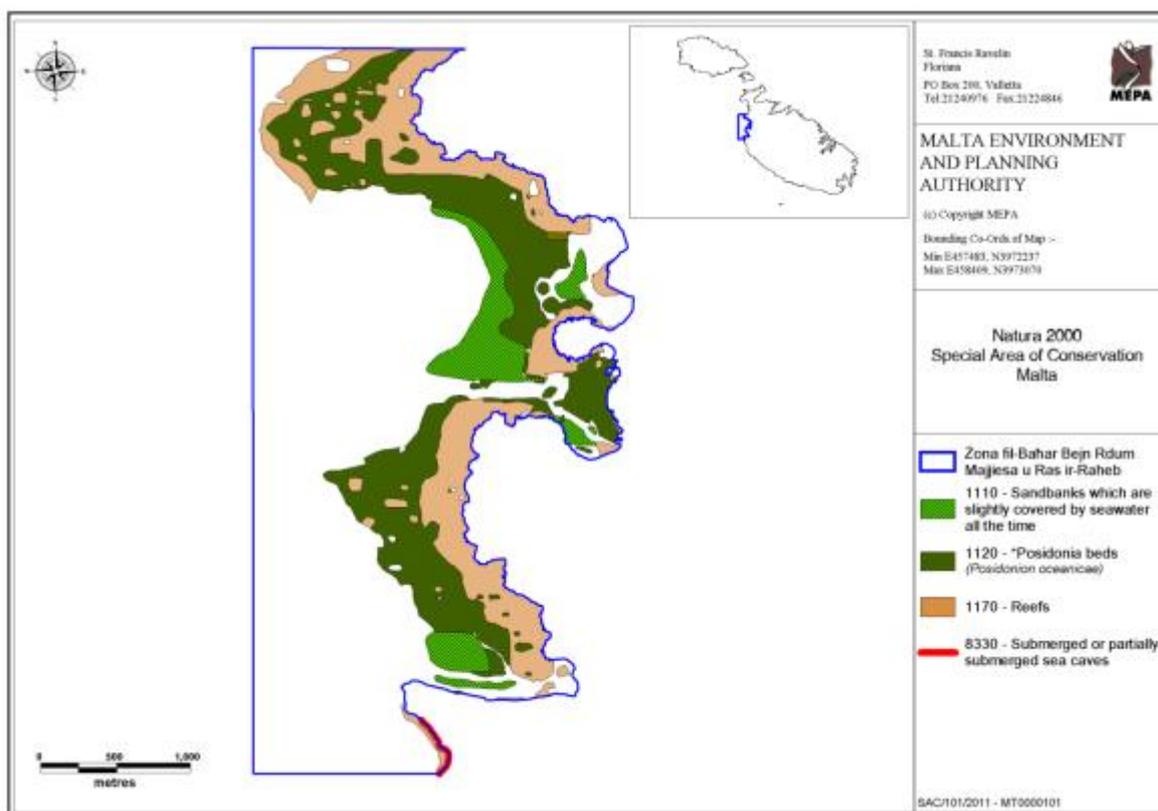
The consultation process will allow recognition of the economic and traditional values of Natura 2000, alongside respecting local and regional values. It will also help to conserve the natural features whilst maintaining sustainable use that is compatible with the targets for these areas.

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<sup>4</sup> See also Regulations 9 and 10, respectively, of the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations, 2006 (SL 549.44), and Regulation 3 of the Conservation of Wild Birds Regulations (SL 549.42); SL 549.44, Regulation 9(2); SL 549.44, Regulation 14 and CAP 549, Article 51(a).



MT0000101  
**Il-Baħar bejn Rđum Majjiesa u Ras ir-Raħeb**  
 SCI – Site of Community Importance



### Important site features

	Area (ha)	Conservation status
Sandbanks	46.60	Good
<i>Posidonia</i> beds	165.25	Excellent
Reefs	135.97	Good
Submerged or partially submerged caves		Significant
<i>Gibbula nivos</i>		Present

### Other species

*Aplysina aerophoba*

*Astroides calycularis*

*Centrostephanus*

*longispinus*

*Cymodocea nodosa*

*Cystoseira compressa*

*Cystoseira ercegovicii*

*Cystoseira spinosa*

*Cystoseira squarrosa*

*Dendropoma petraeum*

*Erosaria spurca*

*Lithophaga lithophaga*

*Luria lurida*

*Maja squinado*

*Ophidiaster ophidianus*

*Pinna nobilis*

*Posidonia oceanica*

*Sargassum acinarium*

*Sargassum vulgare*

*Scyllarides latus*

*Spondylus gaederopus*

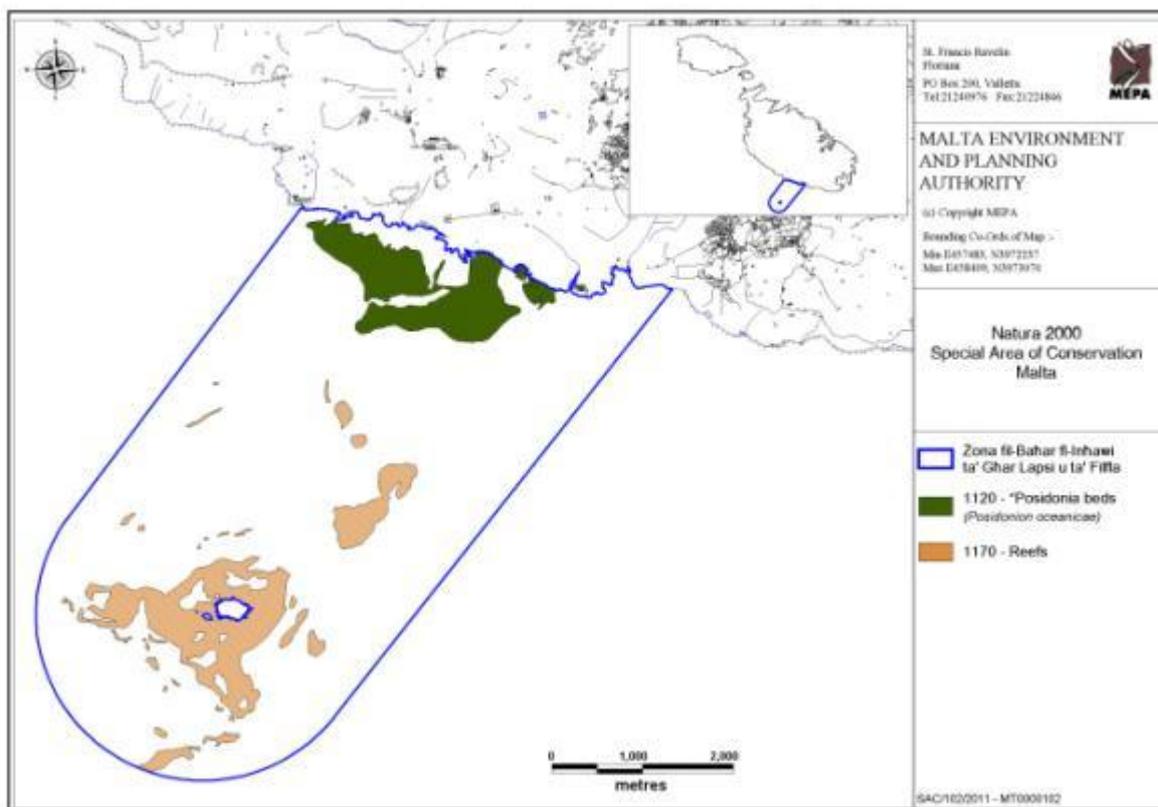
*Tonna galea*

## Brief description

A rich and diverse biota can be found in the Rđum Majjiesa to Ras ir-Raġheb marine area, complementing its geological characteristics. The site hosts representatives of the main marine habitat types occurring in the Maltese Islands, with the associated biotic assemblages including species and ecosystems of conservation importance. Meadows of the seagrass *Posidonia oceanica* dominate large areas of the seabed within the 50 meter depth region. These meadows are found on different types of seabed such as rock and on sand, while in other areas they produce thick mat walls allowing for colonisation by a number of photophilic algae. *Posidonia oceanica* meadows support a large variety of organisms of conservation interest, such as the bivalve *Pinna nobilis*, species of economic importance, such as *Octopus vulgaris*, as well as a number of demersal fish species. The seagrass *Cymodocea nodosa* is also very abundant in the site, where its meadows are among the most extensive around the Maltese Islands. *C. nodosa* forms a major association with fine sands, but has also been recorded on blue clay and globigerina bedrock covered by thin layers of silt. Brown algae cover a high percentage of the hard substrata in the site, with the most common species being *Cystoseira spinosa*, particularly in the shallower depths. At depths greater than 15 meters, associations of *Dictyopteris polypodioides*, *Cystoseira squarrosa* and *Sargassum vulgare* become more dominant. Hard substrata such as drop-offs and cave walls are characterised by species that thrive in the shade dominated by assemblages of *Flabellia petiolata*, *Halimeda tuna* and *Peyssonnelia* sp., with other red algae, calcareous algae and hydroids being also abundant. The extensive sandbanks found in inlets along the coast and beyond the seagrass meadows of the site, support a diverse fauna, mostly echinoderms, such as sea urchins, and species that leave their traces by the numerous burrows beneath the sand surface. The variety of marine habitats found in the site provides important feeding, breeding and nursing grounds for many fish species, including demersal and predatory types. The rocky reefs and drop-offs attract shoals of large fish, such as *Sphyraena sphyraena* and *Seriola dumerilii*; as well as solitary species like the *Epinephelus marginatus* and *Dasyatis* spp.



MT0000102  
**Żona fil-Baħar fl-Inħawi ta' Għar Lapsi u ta' Filfla**  
 SCI – Site of Community Importance



### Important site features

	Area (ha)	Conservation status
Posidonia beds	150.95	Good
Reefs	223.98	Good
Submerged or partially submerged caves		Present

### Other species

*Astroides calycularis*  
*Centrostephanus longispinus*  
*Cladocora caespitose*  
*Cymodocea nodosa*  
*Cystoseira schiffneri*  
*Cystoseira spinosa*  
*Sargassum vulgare*

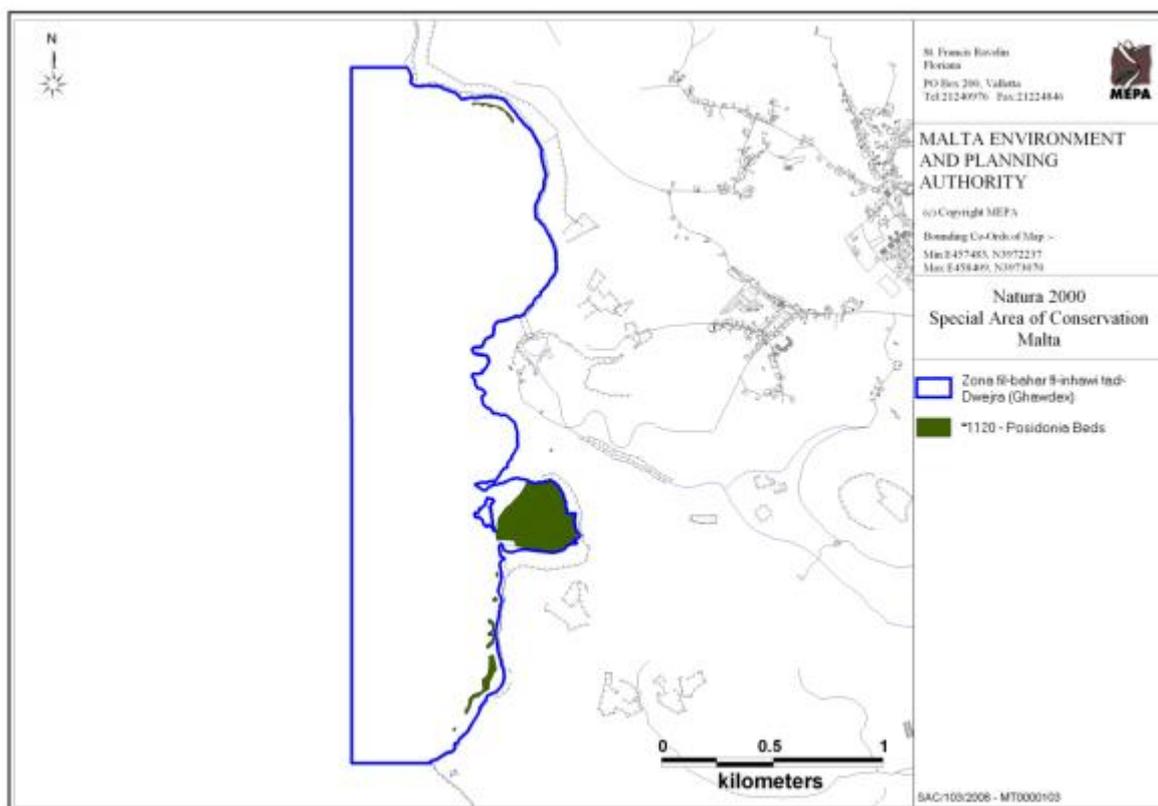
*Luria lurida*  
*Ophidiaster ophidianus*  
*Palinurus elephas*  
*Paracentrotus lividus*  
*Posidonia oceanica*

## Brief description

The islet itself is a strict nature reserve and a Natura 2000 site (MT0000016). Despite the fact that most of the marine species recorded on site are common around the rest of the Maltese Islands, the site's location, the relatively high species richness and the relatively unpolluted waters of the site justify its protection. Indeed, this site hosts a rich and diverse biota, reflecting a heterogeneous bottom. Considering the *Posidonia* beds, the *Posidonia* meadow's rhizome primary production values in the Ghar Lapsi area are among the higher values for the Mediterranean Sea. Furthermore, the general environmental conditions of the site were classified as normal and higher abnormal. *Cymodocea* and *Posidonia* are relatively common along the coast of the island of Malta. The reefs that exist to the south of the island of Malta are in a very good status. Associations with *Cystoseira*, *Flabellia* and *Peyssonnelia* are relatively abundant in the area very close to Filfla.



MT0000103  
**Il-Baħar fl-Inħawi tad-Dwejra (Għawdex)**  
 SCI – Site of Community Importance



### Important site features

	Area (ha)	Conservation status
<i>Posidonia</i> beds	9.05	Significant
Reefs	26.13	Good
Submerged or partially submerged caves		Present

### Other species

*Astroides calycularis*  
*Centrostephanus longispinus*  
*Cladocora caespitose*  
*Cystoseira barbata*  
*Cystoseira ercegovicii*  
*Cystoseira spinosa*  
*Cystoseira stricta*  
*Epinephelus marginatus*  
*Ophidiaster ophidianus*

*Palinurus elephas*  
*Paracentrotus lividus*  
*Petrobiona massilliana*  
*Pinna nobilis*  
*Posidonia oceanic*  
*Sargassum vulgare*  
*Sciaena umbra*  
*Scyllarides latus*

## Brief Description

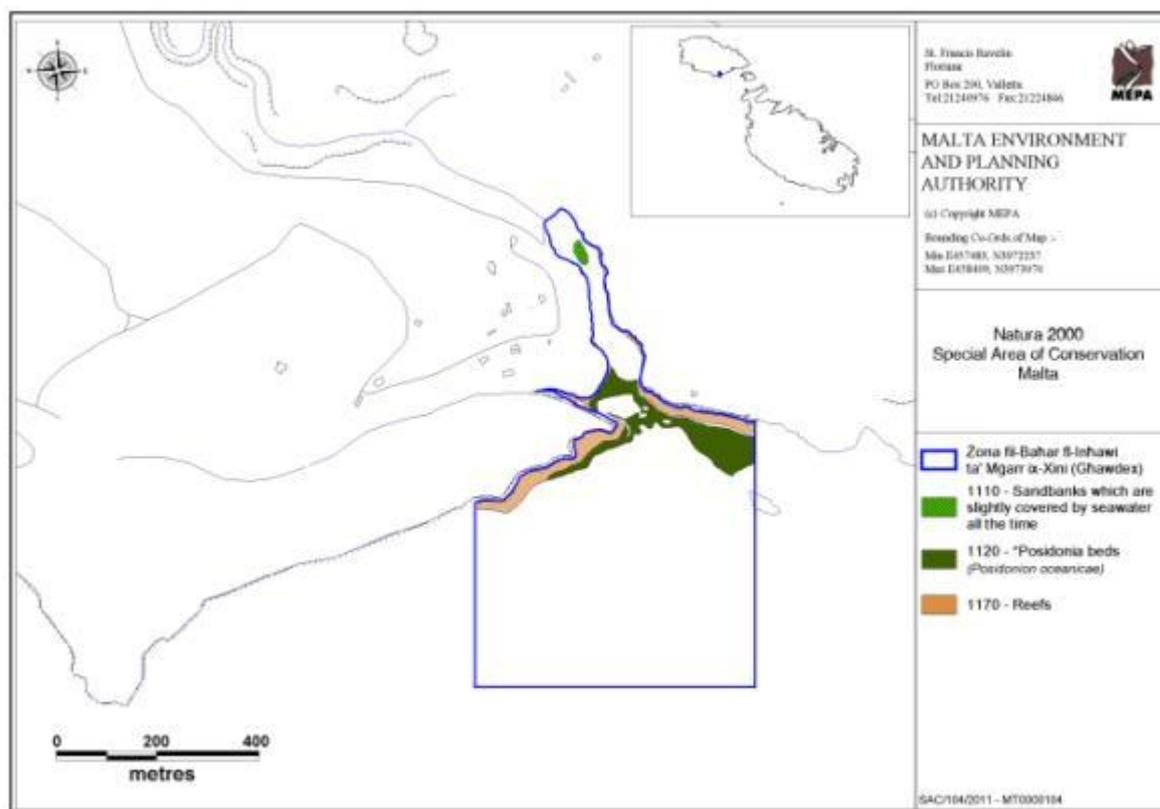
The Dwejra coastal area has a complex of geological, geomorphological, ecological, archaeological, historical and aesthetic features of interest. There is also an extensive, though non-continuous, dense and healthy, *Posidonia* bed within the area of Il-Bajja tad-Dwejra. Small patches of the sea-grass also occur on bedrock in other parts of the area. The *Posidonia oceanica* meadows within this site are considered to be isolated since there is little or no continuity with meadows present in other coastal areas due to the prevailing deep water off most of the eastern coast of Gozo (*Posidonia* does not grow in deep waters). Marine invertebrates associated with the *Posidonia oceanica* meadows include numerous species of molluscs, polychaetes, crustaceans and echinoderms that seek refuge in the leaf canopy and root-rhizome layers, hence being quite inconspicuous. Additionally, several species of sponges, corals, sea urchins, sea stars, crabs and anemones occur within this site. Of particular note is the existence of small populations of *Pinna nobilis*, *Centrostephanus longispinus* and *Scyllarides latus*, and *Epinephelus marginatus* which is frequently encountered by divers. Rocky Reefs are present throughout the area and may either be reefs that rise vertically from a sandy bottom littered with large boulders to join submarine bedrock platforms or submarine continuations of emergent cliffs. Associations with *Flabellia petiolata* and *Peyssonnelia squamaria* cover most reef areas. A total of five fully submerged caves and six semi-submerged caves are present in the area. Several of these caves support very diverse assemblages characteristic of semi-obscure caves, that is those with dim light conditions but not complete darkness. The larger fauna component of this assemblage type consists of a large number of bryozoans, sponges and serpulid polychaetes. The submerged caves mostly located in the northern half of the site have a very complex physiognomy and a bottom characterised by fine sediment. The largest of these appear to be two caves lying below the shore of Il-Hofra ta' Birwin and Iz-Zerqa area. The emergent caves, which are distributed throughout the area, also have a very complex physiognomy, both underwater and above sea-level. The bottom inside the emergent caves consists of bedrock, with small boulders, cobbles and pebbles present in some places.



MT0000104

**Il-Baħar fl-Inħawi ta' Mġarr ix-Xini (Għawdex)**

SCI – Site of Community Importance

**Important site features**

	Area (ha)	Conservation status
Posidonia beds	9.05	Significant
Reefs	26.13	Good
Submerged or partially submerged caves		Present

**Other species**

*Astroides calycularis*  
*Centrostephanus longispinus*  
*Cymodocea nodosa*  
*Cystoseira amentacea*  
*Cystoseira compressa*  
*Cystoseira crinite*  
*Cystoseira ercegovicii*  
*Cystoseira spinosa*  
*Dardanus callidus*

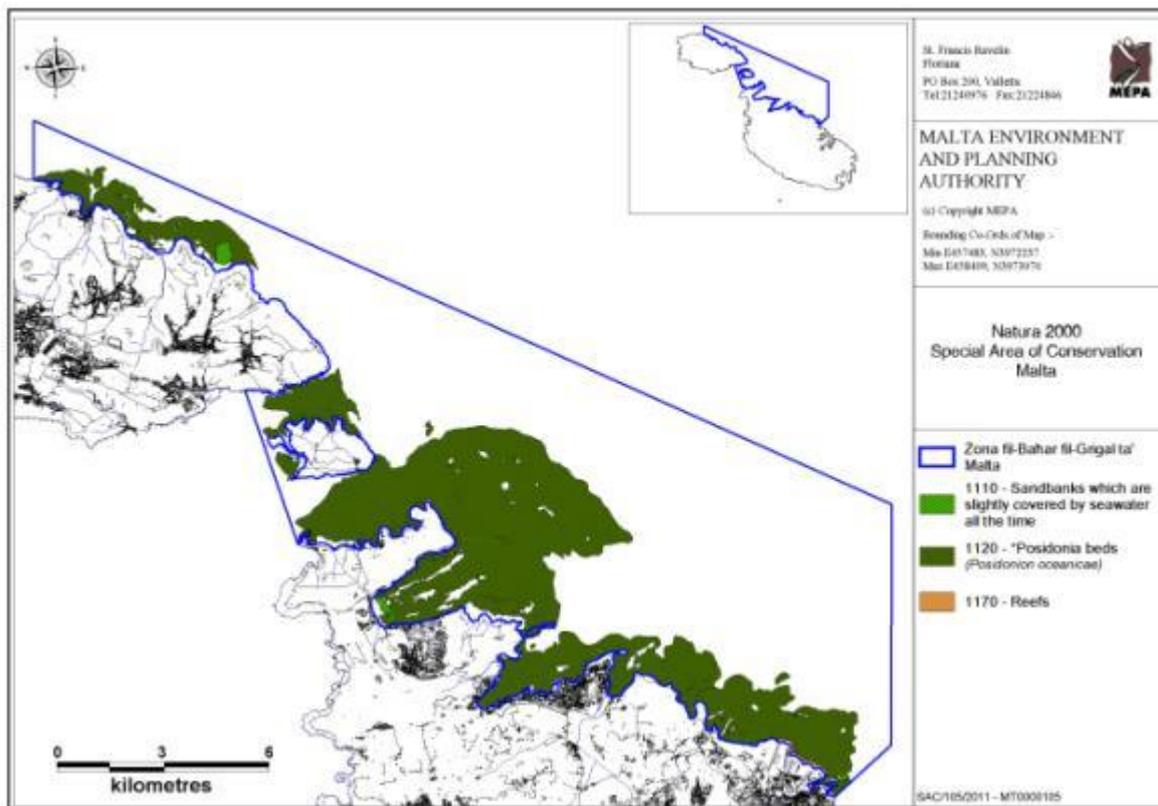
*Lithothamnion coralloides*  
*Ophidiaster ophidianus*  
*Paracentrotus lividus*  
*Perobiona massiliana*  
*Phallium undulatum*  
*Phymatolithon calcareum*  
*Pinna nobilis*  
*Posidonia oceanica*  
*Scyllarides latus*

## Brief description

The *Posidonia* meadows present within this site are semi-isolated since there is little continuity with meadows present in other coastal areas. The biotopes present in the inlet and beyond its mouth are typical of examples found along the south western coast of the Maltese Islands where the prevailing bottom type is steeply sloping rock or consists of submarine cliffs with extensive forests of photophilic algae. 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. A significant area of reefs is occupied by an association with *Flabellia petiolata* and *Peyssonnelia squamaria*. Other important associations include that with *Dictyopteris polypodioides*. Two fully submerged caves are present below the shore on the western side of the inlet. These caves support typical cave species, including some (for example the stony sponge *Petrobiona massilliana*) protected locally and internationally. Sandbanks 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.



MT0000105  
**Il-Baħar fil-Grigal ta' Malta**  
 SCI – Site of Community Importance



### Important site features

	Area (ha)	Conservation status
Sandbanks	41.90	Good
Posidonia beds	4955.34	Good
Reefs	45.01	Good
Submerged or partially submerged caves		Present
<i>Gibbula nivos</i>		Present

### Other species

*Antedon mediterranea*  
*Aplysina aerophoba*  
*Astroides calycularis*  
*Centrostephanus longispinus*  
*Cladocora caespitosa*  
*Cymodocea nodosa*  
*Cystoseira amentacea*  
*Cystoseira brachycarpa*

*Cystoseira compressa*  
*Cystoseira ercegovicii*  
*Cystoseira spinosa*  
*Dendropoma petraeum*  
*Erosaria spurca*  
*Lithothamnion coralloides*  
*Lithothamnion minervae*  
*Luria lurida*  
*Paracentrotus lividus*

*Petrobiona massilliana*  
*Phymatolithon calcareum*  
*Pinna nobilis*  
*Sargassum vulgare*  
*Scyllarides latus*  
*Spantagus purpureus*  
*Tonna galea*

## Brief description

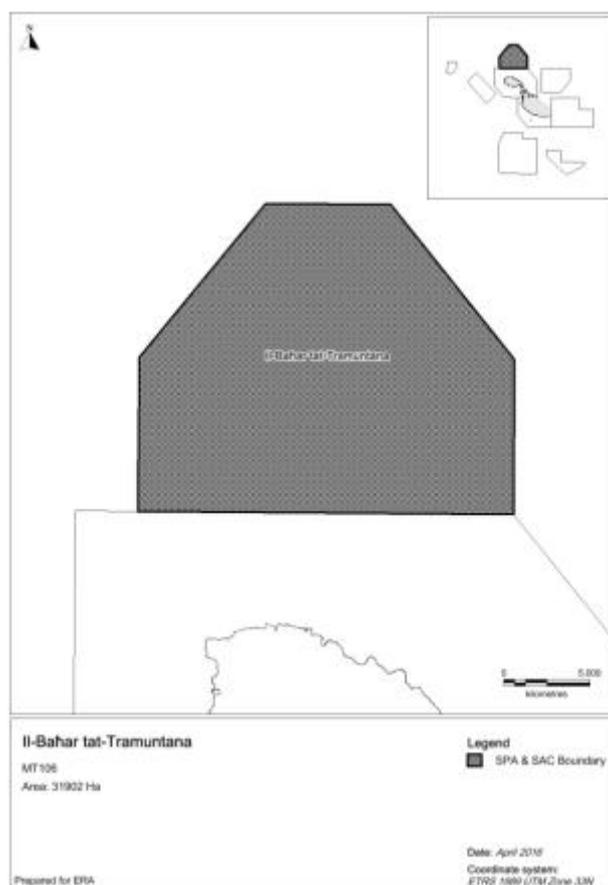
This area hosts the largest variety of *Posidonia* subtypes. The subtypes present in this site are the following: *Posidonia* settled on matte, whose meadows are normally continuous and having a high density; *Posidonia* settled on rock, showing a reticulate distribution of dense strands; *Posidonia* settled on sand, with continuous beds generally showing low densities and variable percentage cover; Mosaic morphology, intermixed between *Posidonia oceanica*, *Cymodocea nodosa* and coarse sand, showing a reticulate structure and 'barrier reef' *Posidonia* meadows. The *Posidonia* meadows within this site are also known for a high degree of connectivity, as well as percentage coverage. From the data available, it is evident that the *Posidonia* meadows in various parts of this site are very abundant and healthy. They are dense and show a high degree of shoot density, particularly in White Tower Bay, which appears to host probably the highest shoot density in the Mediterranean. The site is also known for the deepest records where *Posidonia* grows, namely off the south coast of Comino. However, in some areas within this site, such as at Mistra Bay and at Mellieħa Bay, the beds are showing signs of regression, especially as a result of anthropogenic activities. Sandbanks, formed by associations of *Cymodocea nodosa* are also present within this site. The following subtypes are present: sandbanks with associations of *Cymodocea nodosa* on well-sorted fine sands; sandbanks with associations of *Cymodocea nodosa* on superficially muddy sands in sheltered waters; facies with *Cymodocea nodosa* occurring within coarse sands and gravels with more or less mud. Reefs have also been identified within this site, occurring on hard beds and rocks. The following subtypes occur within this site: reefs with associations of *Dictyopteris polypodioides*; reefs with associations of *Halopteris scoparis* and *Padina pavonica*; reefs with associations of *Flabellia petiolata* and *Peyssonellia squamaria*; reefs with associations of *Cystoseira* spp. Partially submerged caves are also present, mostly located along the coast of Comino. No quantitative data is available for this habitat type. Amongst the important species within this site is *Lithothamnion minervae*, a species which has been included in national legislation as a plant species of national interest whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation. *Gibbula nivos*a, which is considered as the only endemic marine mollusc of Malta, and is listed as having a vulnerable status and a restricted distribution within Maltese waters, is also present within this site. The endemic Maltese top snail, *Gibbula nivos*a has been found on *Posidonia oceanica* leaves and under stones.



MT0000106

**Il-Baħar tat-Tramuntana**

SPA – Special Protection Area; pSCI – proposed Site of Community Importance

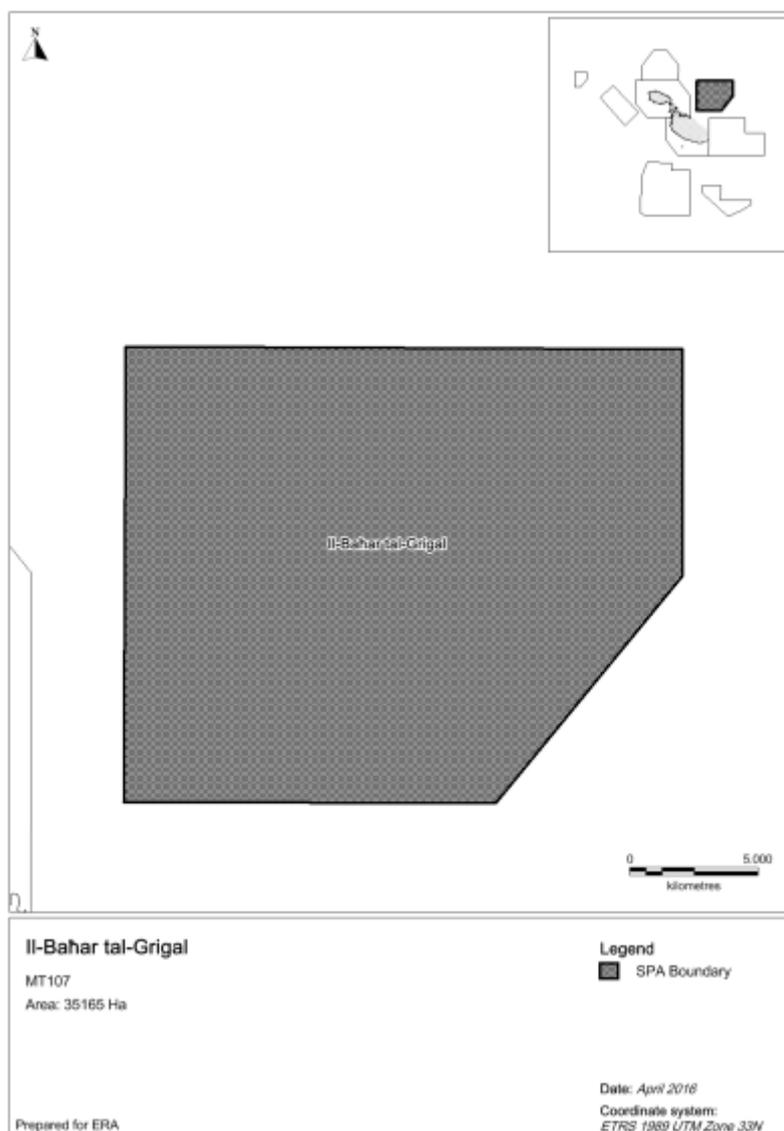
**Important site features**

Area (ha)	Conservation status
<i>Calonectris diomedea</i>	Excellent
<i>Caretta caretta</i>	Excellent

**Quality and importance**

The site was identified in the Maltese marine IBA inventory as result of the EU LIFE+ Malta Seabird Project due to its importance for *Calonectris diomedea* breeding season. The site hosts a concentration of *Caretta caretta* population as identified by the LIFE Migrate project; the average density for Malta is between 0.4 to 7.2 specimens per square kilometre. The area likely serves as a migratory corridor and foraging site for this species, with a higher occupancy by juveniles and sub-adults although more scientific evidence would be required to confirm this.

MT0000107  
**Il-Baħar tal-Grigal**  
 SPA – Special Protection Area



### Important site features

Area 35190.00 Ha	Conservation status
<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>	Significant
<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	Good

### Quality and importance

The site was identified in the Maltese marine IBA inventory as result of the EU LIFE+ Malta Seabird Project (LIFE10 NAT/MT/090) due to its importance for *Hydrobates pelagicus* and *Puffinus yelkouan*.

MT0000108  
**Il-Baħar tal-Lvant**  
 SPA – Special Protection Area



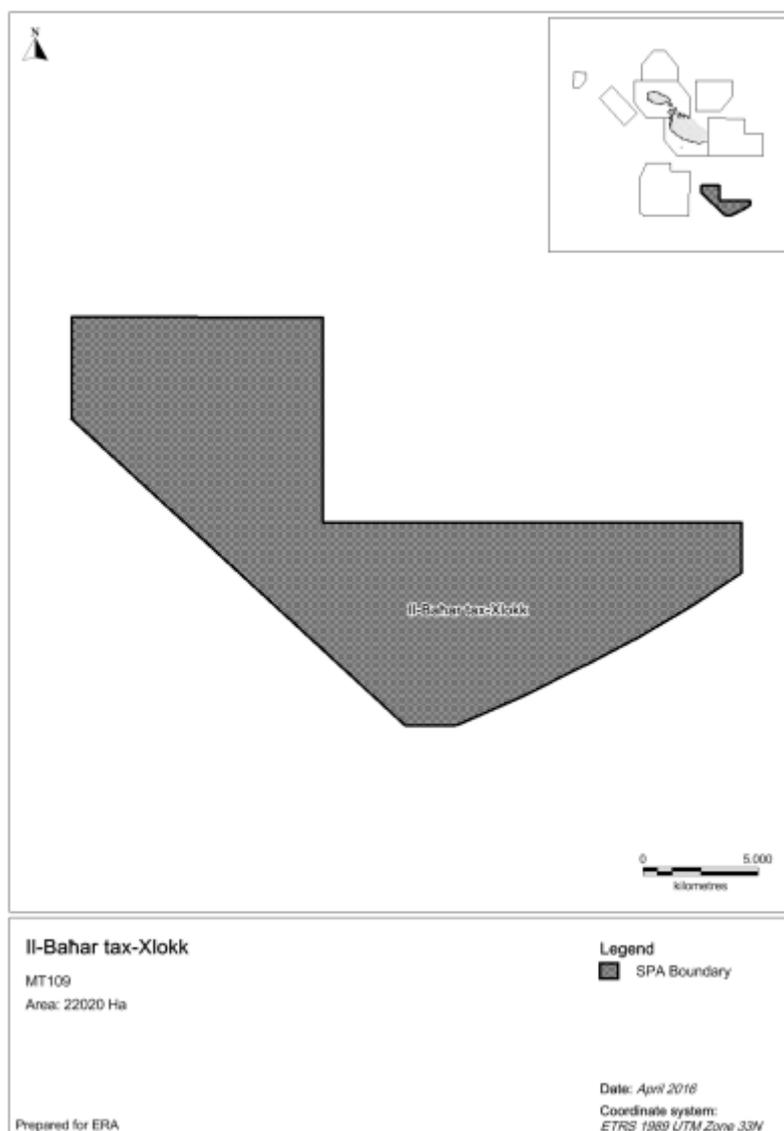
### Important site features

Area (ha)	Conservation status
<i>Calonectris diomedea</i>	Good
<i>Hyrobates pelagicus</i>	Good

### Quality and importance

The site was identified in the Maltese marine IBA inventory as result of the EU LIFE+ Malta Seabird Project (LIFE10 NAT/MT/090) due to its importance for *Calonectris diomedea* and *Hyrobates pelagicus* breeding season.

MT0000109  
**Il-Baħar tax-Xlokk**  
 SPA – Special Protection Area



### Important site features

Area: 21930.0 Ha	Conservation status
<i>Calonectris diomedea</i>	Good

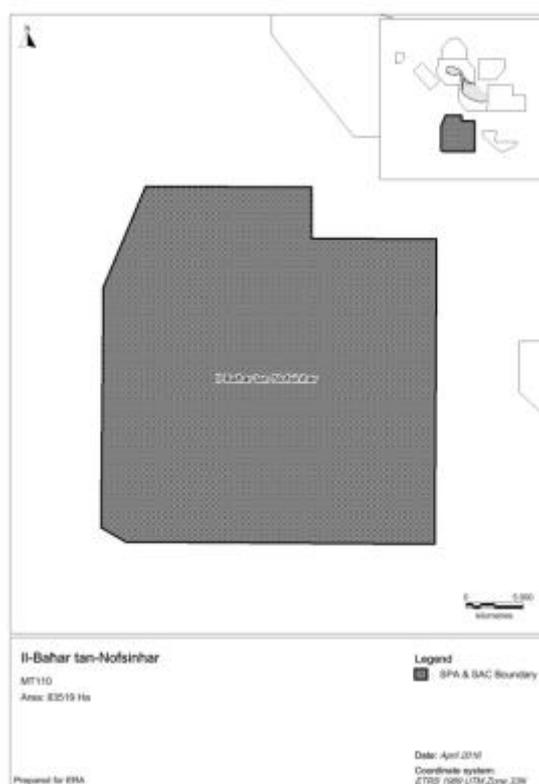
### Quality and importance

The site was identified in the Maltese marine IBA inventory as result of the EU LIFE+ Malta Seabird Project (LIFE10 NAT/MT/090) due to its importance for *Calonectris diomedea* during breeding season.

MT0000110

**Il-Baħar tan-Nofsinhar**

SPA – Special Protection Area; pSCI – proposed Site of Community Importance

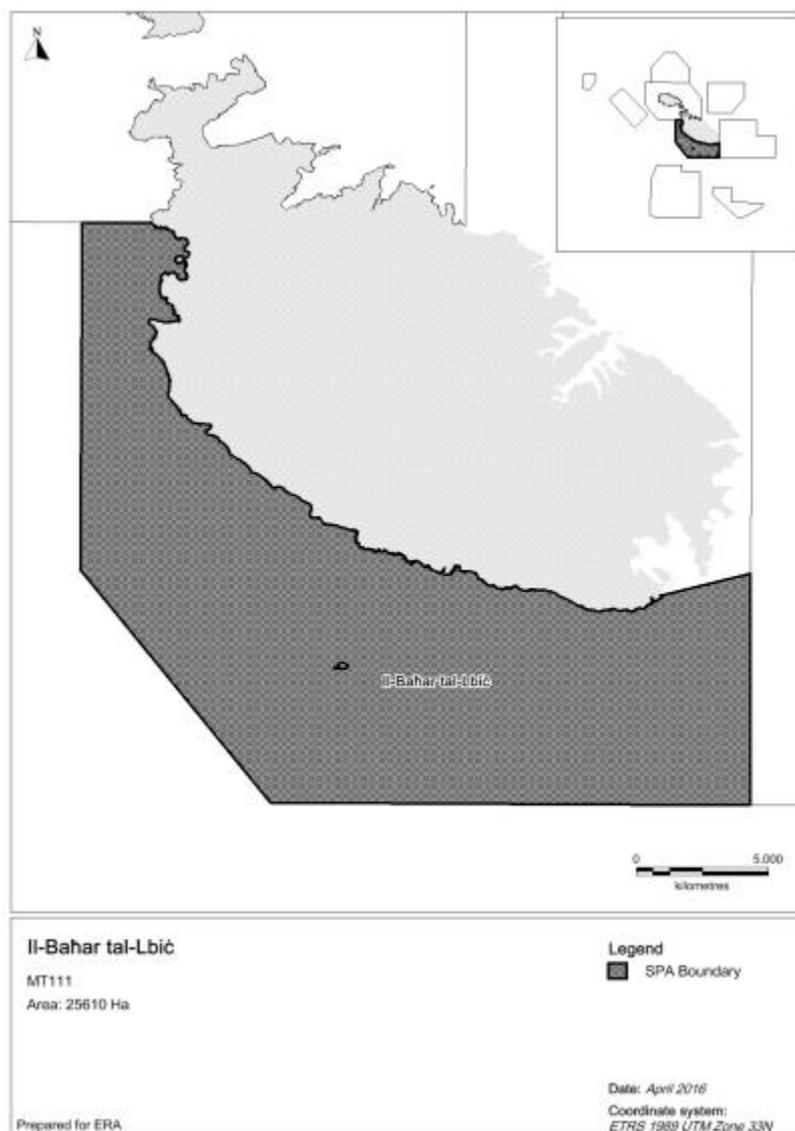
**Important site features**

Area: 83540.0 Ha	Conservation status
<i>Calonectris diomedea</i>	Good
<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>	Good
<i>Caretta caretta</i>	Excellent
<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>	Present

**Quality and importance**

The site was identified in the Maltese marine IBA inventory as result of the EU LIFE+ Malta Seabird Project (LIFE10 NAT/MT/090) due to its importance for *Calonectris diomedea* and *Puffinus yelkouan* during the breeding season. *Caretta caretta* has been observed to concentrate in this area; the average density for Malta is between 0.4 to 7.2 specimens per square kilometre. The area may be part of a migratory route and also serves as a foraging site for this species. There is a higher occupancy by juveniles and sub-adults. It is likely that the presence is dependent on oceanographic parameters. .

MT0000111  
**Il-Baħar tal-Lbiċ**  
 SPA – Special Protection Area



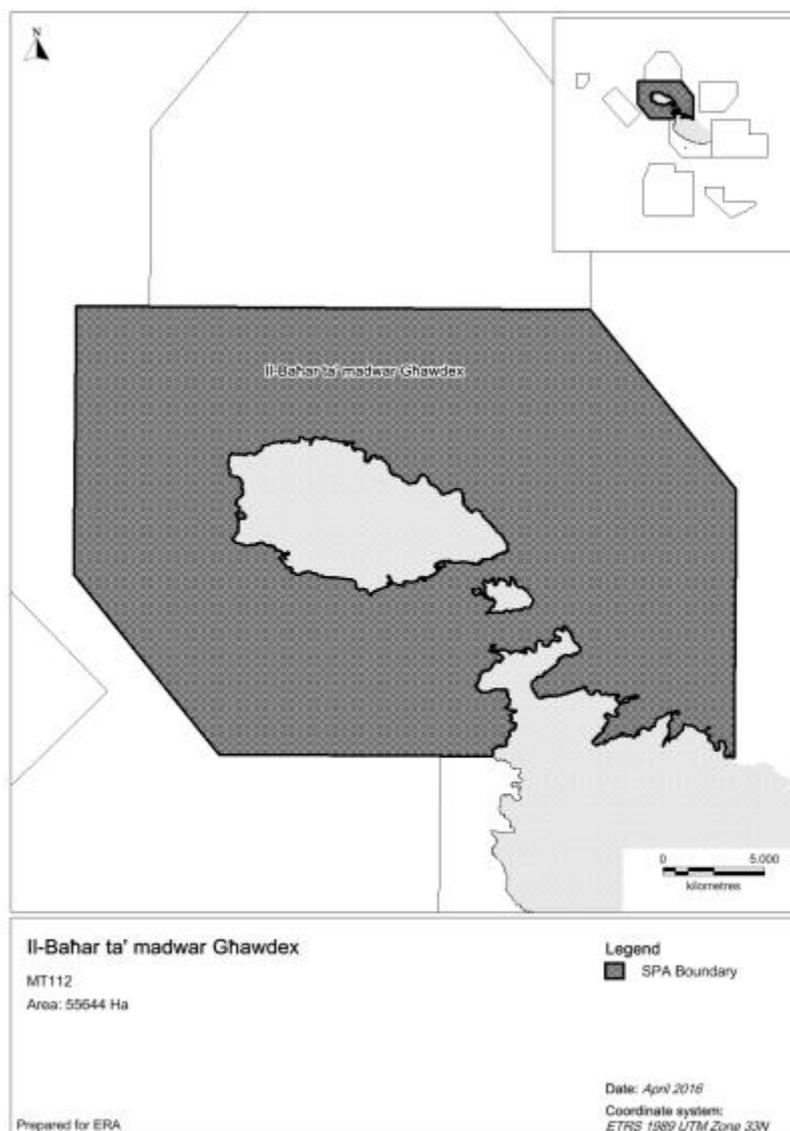
### Important site features

Area: 25630.0 Ha	Conservation status
<i>Calonectris diomedea</i>	Excellent
<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>	Excellent
<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	Excellent

### Quality and importance

The site was identified in the Maltese marine IBA inventory as result of the EU LIFE+ Malta Seabird Project (LIFE10 NAT/MT090) due to its importance for *Calonectris diomedea*, *Hydrobates pelagicus* and *Puffinus yelkouan* during the breeding season.

MT0000112  
**Il-Baħar ta' Madwar Ghawdex**  
 SPA – Special Protection Area



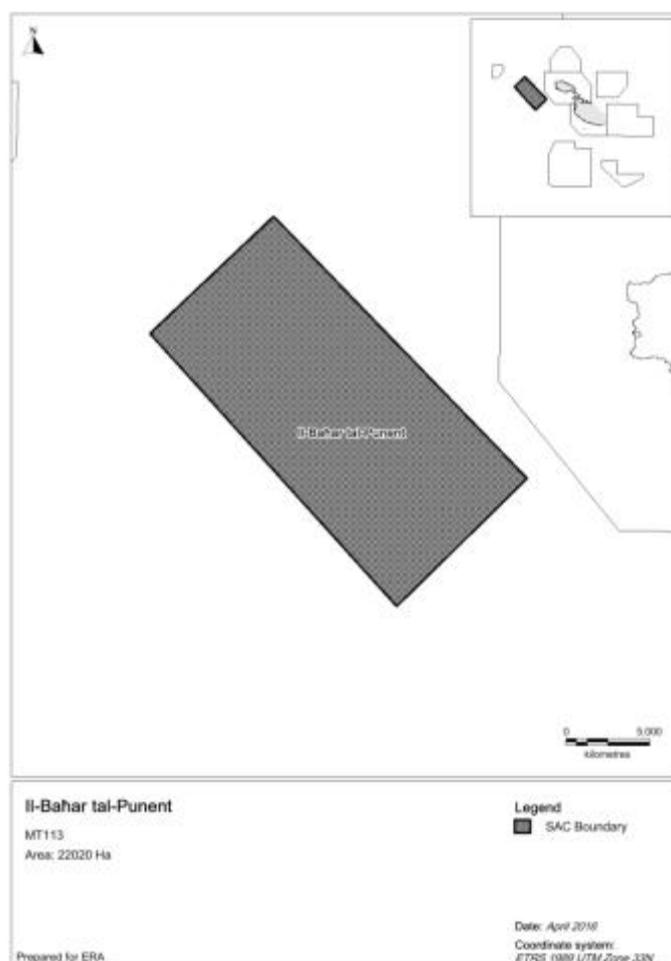
### Important site features

Area: 55670.0 Ha	Conservation status
<i>Calonectris diomedea</i>	Excellent
<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>	Excellent

### Quality and importance

The site was identified in the Maltese marine IBA inventory as result of the EU LIFE+ Malta Seabird Project (LIFE10NAT/MT090) due to its importance for *Calonectris diomedea*, and *Puffinus yelkouan* during the breeding season.

MT0000113  
**Il-Baħar tal-Punent**  
 pSCI – Proposed Site of Community Importance



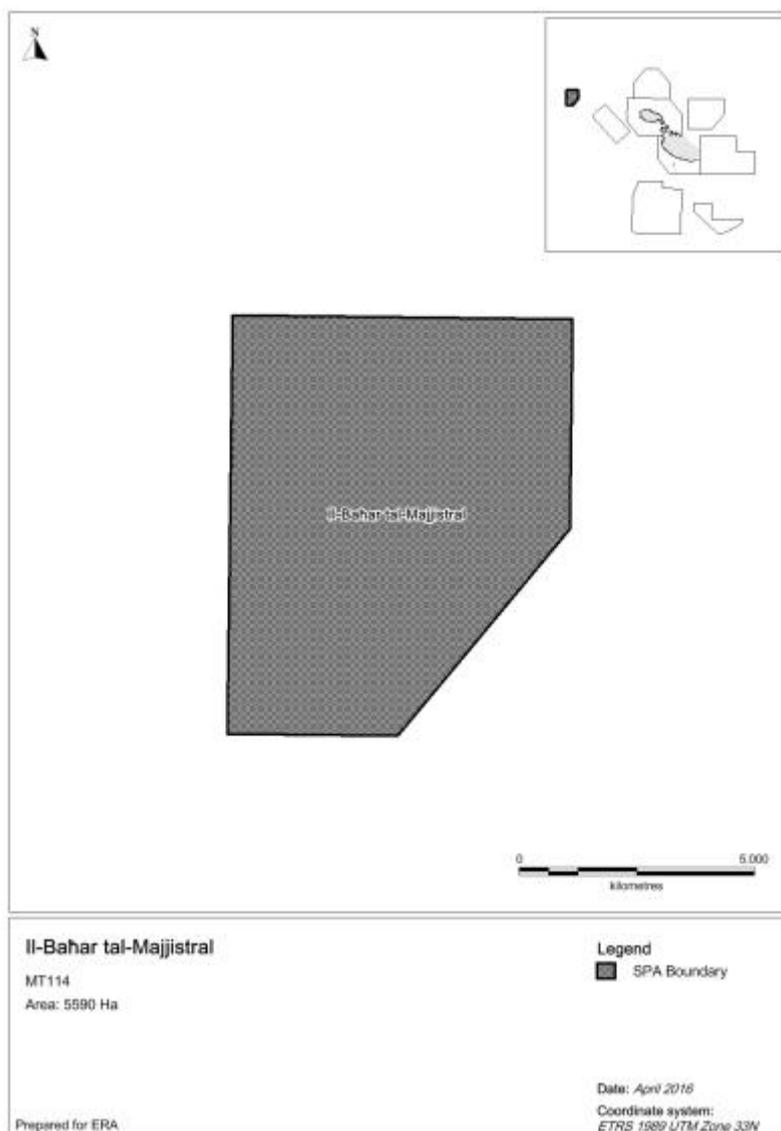
### Important site features

Area: 23100.0 Ha	Conservation status
<i>Caretta caretta</i>	Excellent
<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>	Present

### Quality and importance

The site hosts the highest population density of *Caretta caretta*. The average density for Malta is between 0.4 to 7.2 specimens per square kilometre. The area likely serves as a migratory corridor and foraging site for this species, with a higher occupancy by juveniles and sub-adults although more scientific evidence would be required to confirm this. However, it is likely that the occurrence of sightings of this species is variable depending on oceanographic parameters..

MT0000114  
**Il-Baħar tal-Majjistral**  
 SPA – Special Protection Area



### Important site features

Area: 5592.0 Ha	Conservation status
<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	Significant

### Quality and importance

The site was identified in the Maltese marine IBA inventory as result of the EU LIFE+ Malta Seabird Project (LIFE10 NAT/MT/090) due to its importance for *Hydrobates pelagicus* during the breeding season.

## Potential Impacts

The success of the management of these sites cannot be achieved if relevant impacts are not addressed. Additionally, it should be ensured that activities occurring in such areas which currently are not having an impact on the site's features continue to be practiced in such manner. Once a pressure has been identified its source is to be located.

It is envisaged that the discussions would lead so that the any impacts are identified and appropriate mechanisms how these can be managed will be elaborated. Furthermore, particularly with regards to coastal marine protected areas that have been identified because of the benthic habitats or caves that they host it is likely that a zoning plan would have to be devised. This plan may also identify a number of areas in which certain activities may be more regulated than in surrounding areas and may also include small zones as reserves or no entry zones.

## Conclusion

The marine environment is of high economic and natural importance for Malta. Adequate management will lead so that Malta honours its legal obligations and also to ensure that sustainable use of the marine environment is made. The prosperity of Malta depends on this environment and hence it is important that Malta gives the necessary attention and afford the right level of protection to marine biodiversity.

