

Environmental Impact Assessment

Schedule III

(Screening according to S.L. 549.46)

ERA Reference no.:	EA 00029/18
PA Reference no.:	N/A
Project Title:	Restoration of a quarry at Ta' Labbatija, Kercem, Gozo
Location:	Ta' Labbatija, Kercem, Gozo
Screening date:	May 2018

1. Description of Proposal

1.1 Outline of project/development

An enforcement notice was issued by the Enforcement Directorate of Planning Authority, with reference EC/00019/18, since the disused quarry was not adequately rehabilitated. A Project Description Statement was submitted to ERA to infill this soft stone quarry and to restore the surface area of the quarry in order to be compatible with the existing surrounding landscape. The soft stone quarry has a surface area of approximately 19,212m². An area of circa 17,458m² shall be rehabilitated while the remaining area will be left as is. An area of 6,196m² of the rehabilitated land will be reserved for the future installation of solar panels. The said area will not be covered with topsoil. The remaining area of the rehabilitated land, i.e. an area of 12,906m² will be covered with topsoil and will be used for agricultural purposes.

Planting of olive trees will be undertaken so as the roots of the proposed trees will provide better stability to the proposed terrain.

The objectives of the project are:

- i. To rehabilitate disused and exhausted soft stone quarry by filling the major part with non-hazardous inert/construction waste material which will also help to decrease the uncontrolled dumping practices, environmental nuisances and the potential risks of human health. This progressive restoration strategy will subsequently render the area of Ta' Labbatija limits of Kercem with more after uses benefits;
- ii. To bring the surface according to the natural contours of the surroundings. This will further enhance the cultural, landscape and ecological value of this area, as well as the generally high landscape character of the immediate and surrounding area;
- iii. To cover the inert/construction waste material with topsoil of approximate thickness of 250mm and planting of olive trees;
- iv. To reserve part of the surface for the installation of the solar panels; and
- v. Installation of timber gate at the access point of the site.

1.2 Site description and related considerations

The quarry is located at Ta' Labbatija in Kercem, Gozo (Figures 1 and 2), also known as "Ta' Furrumu". The site is surrounded by other quarries which are all still in operation, agricultural fields and access roads.

The site is located outside the limits to development on the coastal western fringe of Gozo and is accessible from a country road at the outskirts Santa Lucia L/O Kercem.

The site is located:

- c. 400m from “L-Ghadira ta’ Sarraflu”, designated as an SAC of National Importance (MALT_152), as declared through GN 223 of 2005 and an inland water body (MT0000404), as declared through L.N 194/04;
- c. 500m away from “Dwejra – Qawra (l-Inhawi), inkluz Hagret il-General” designated as an SAC of International Importance (MALT_141) as declared through G.N 223 of 2005;
- c. 690m away from “Rdumijiet ta’ Ghawdex: il-Ponta ta’ San Dimitri sa il-Ponta ta’ Harrux” designated as a Special Protection Area (MT 0000030), as declared through (GN 112 of 2007);
- c. 500m away from “Rdumijiet ta’ Ghawdex: il-Ponta ta’ Harrux sa il-Bajja tax-Xlendi” designated as a Special Protection Area (MT0000029), as declared through (GN 112 of 2007);
- Adjacent to an Area of High Landscape Value of id-Dwejra and environs, as declared through G.N 37 of 2011
- Adjacent to a Level 2 Area of Ecological Importance (AEI) – Il-Wied tal-Port and Wied ta’ Kerrex, as declared through G.N 37 of 2011



Figure 1: 2016 Zoomed Aerial image of the site (Source: Planning Authority GeoServer)

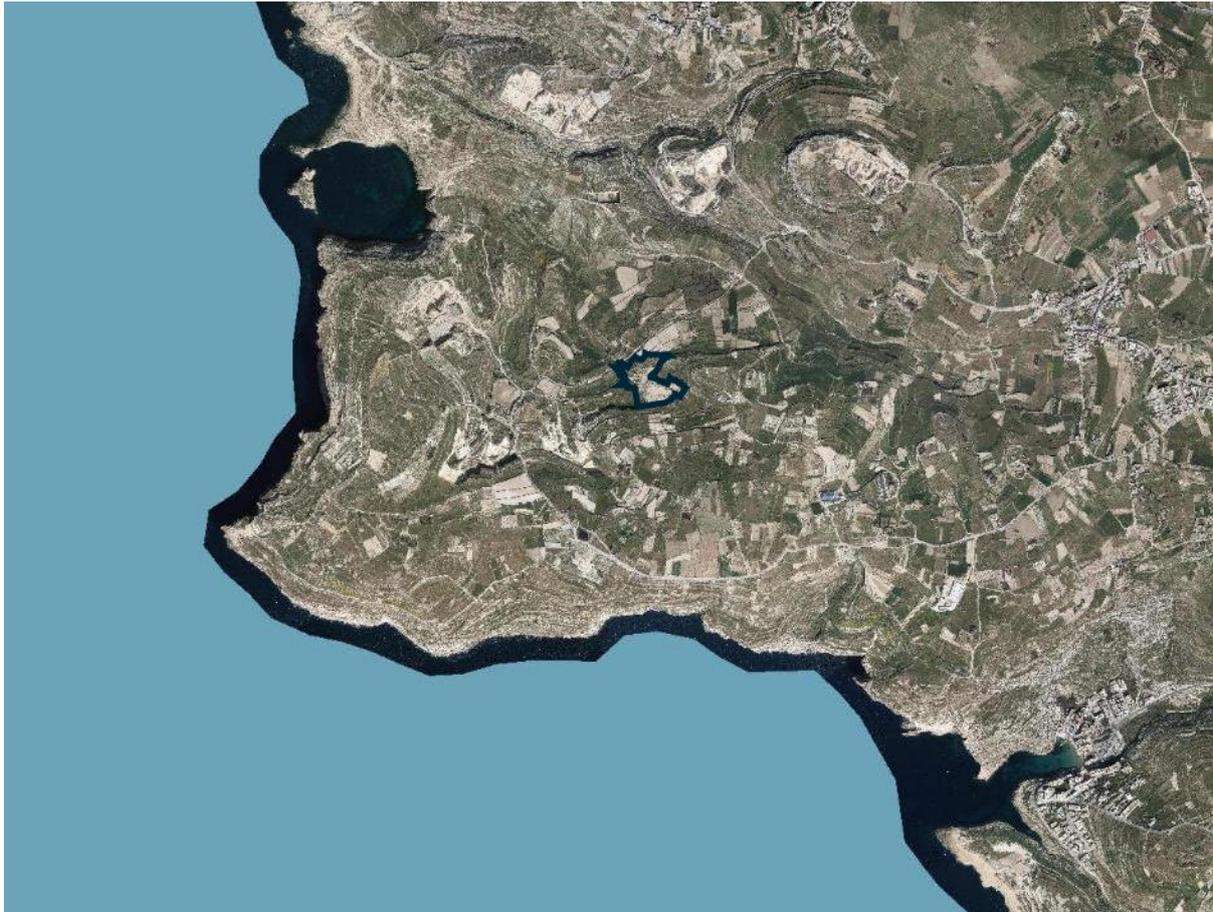


Figure 2: 2016 Aerial image of the site (Source: GeoServer, Planning Authority)

1.3 Site history

EC/00019/18: Quarry not adequately restored, causing Injury to Amenity. Part of the site is a scheduled area as per G.N. 37 of 2011.

2. EIA-relevant history

2.1 Relevant EIA/screening criteria: (citations refer to EIA Regulations, 2017 (S.L 549.46), except where otherwise specified):

The proposed development falls under Schedule I Category II as per Section 9.0.2.3 (Restoration and after-use of existing or disused quarries or mines, other than for restoration of the site back to its pristine state) of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2007 (S.L. 549.46).

2.2 Documents used for screening:

1. Project Description Statement (PDS), referred to ERA on 13th April 2018;
2. Qawra/Dwejra Heritage Park Action Plan 2005; and
3. Method Statement, referred to ERA 20th February 2018.

3. Screening Matrix Checklist

The following screening checklist is based on information in the Project Description Statement provided by the developer in accordance with Schedule II of the EIA Regulations (S.L 549.46) and the European Commission Guidance on Screening (2017).

Question Number:	Questions to be Considered	Types and characteristics of identified potential impacts Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Briefly justify	Document Reference
1	Will construction, operation, decommissioning or demolition works of the Project involve actions which will cause physical changes in the locality (topography, landuse, changes in water bodies, etc)?	<p>Yes. The project will contribute to the infilling of an existing depression in the topography. The depression is a by-product of extinct mining activities on site.</p> <p>The project seeks to reclaim part of the site for agricultural purpose and potentially utilise the quarry surface for the generation of renewable energy.</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No, albeit with reservations.</p> <p>As long as it faithfully reinstates the site (including its contours, rubble walls, and soil cover) to its pristine pre-quarrying state, the infilling of the quarry will have a beneficial impact on the environment and would effectively remove an existing scar from the rural landscape. Additionally, the site is located within an area of low landscape sensitivity and therefore no significant impact is envisaged.</p> <p>However, the current proposal envisages an incomplete restoration of part of the site, leaving it unfinished and degraded. This should be rectified.</p> <p>Sections provided in the PDS, specifically those found on pages 14 and 15 should be revised. The restoration levels should duly follow the natural contours of the surrounding environment.</p>	PDS pg 3, 6, 14 and 15
2	Will construction or operation of the Project use natural resources such as land, water, materials or energy, especially any resources which are non-	<p>The projected use of natural resources is dependent on the phase of the project.</p> <p>The infilling phase of the project will deposit c. 160,000m³ of inert/construction waste to restore the disused quarry.</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The infilling of the quarry with clean inert/construction material will restore the geomorphology of land, rebuild the natural habitat and reduce dust and soil erosion.</p>	PDS pgs 6, 8, 9

Question Number:	Questions to be Considered	Types and characteristics of identified potential impacts Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Briefly justify	Document Reference
	renewable or in short supply?			
3	Will the Project involve the use, storage, transport, handling or production of substances or materials which could be harmful to human health to the environment or raise concerns about actual or perceived risks to human health?	<p>Yes, the project is expected to be a source of dust emissions from tipper trucks entering and leaving the site and during disposing of inert waste material.</p> <p>Potential leaks of fuels or oils from the machinery into the surrounding environment.</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Appropriate dust control measures such as compaction of material and the use of water sprays will help to reduce the possibility of dust dispersion.</p> <p>Additionally, the construction of retaining walls will contain the infill material within the site. Terracing of the deposited material together with the formation of stabilised slopes will prevent any material from sliding towards the valleys and neighbouring fields.</p> <p>As higher levels are reached and during windy days, wetting of the surface by water will be a possible mitigation measure.</p> <p>No fuel oil will be stored on site.</p>	PDS pgs. 6, 9
4	Will the Project produce solid wastes during construction, operation or decommissioning?	No. The project seeks to absorb solid inert waste (circa 160,000m ³) in order to facilitate the backfilling of the existing quarry.	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The site will actually be receiving, rather than generating, inert waste. In this regard, the project is expected to have a beneficial impact.</p>	PDS pg 8
5	Will the project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air or lead to exceeding Ambient Air Quality standards in Directives 2008/50/EC and 2004/107/EC?	Yes. Dust may be released during the transporting, spreading and compaction of inert waste and soil.	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Reply to question 3 refers.</p>	/
6	Will the Project cause noise and vibration or the releasing of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation?	Yes. The main generator of noise and vibrations shall be heavy vehicle traffic to and from the area, and noise and vibrations emitted during material compaction.	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Noise levels will be low and do not pose a problem to the surrounding environment.</p> <p>No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.</p>	PDS pg 9

Question Number:	Questions to be Considered	Types and characteristics of identified potential impacts Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Briefly justify	Document Reference
7	Will the Project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?	No. the proposal will not generate any hazardous waste and will not be releasing pollutants onto the ground or into water bodies, as long as there are stringent controls to ensure that only inert waste is used for the infilling.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged as long as there are stringent controls to ensure that only inert waste is used for the infilling.	/
8	Will there be any risk of accidents during construction or operation of the Project which could affect human health or the environment?	No increase in the risk of accidents is envisaged, other than that indicated in Question 27.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged, other than that indicated in Question 27.	/
9	Will the Project result in environmentally related social changes for example, in demography, traditional lifestyles, employment?	No, the project will not contribute to significant changes, considering the nature of the proposal and its location.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.	/
10	Are there any such factors which should be considered such as the consequential development which could lead to environmental impacts or the potential for cumulative impacts with other existing or planned activities in the locality?	Potentially yes: ancillary infrastructure (access arrangements, power supply/cable connections to the electricity grid, etc,	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant impacts are envisaged, as long as: (1) only already-existing access routes are used and without the need for any physical modifications thereto; and (2) The potential after-use of the site, i.e. the installation of solar panels should be assessed through a development application. Further discussion with the Planning Authority should be undertaken with regards to the development consent mechanism.	PDS pg 7

Question Number:	Questions to be Considered	Types and characteristics of identified potential impacts Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Briefly justify	Document Reference
11	Is the project located within or close to any areas which are protected under international, EU or national or local legislation for their ecological, landscape, cultural or other value, which could be affected by the Project?	<p>Yes. The site is located:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • c. 400m from “L-Ghadira ta’ Sarraflu” designated as an SAC of National Importance (MALT_152), as declared through GN 223 of 2005 & an inland water body (MT0000404), as declared through L.N 194/04; • c. 500m away from “Dwejra – Qawra (l-Inhawi), inkluz Hagret il-General” designated as an SAC of International Importance (MALT_141) as declared through G.N 223 of 2005; • c. 690m away from “Rdumijiet ta’ Ghawdex: il-Ponta ta’ San Dimitri s ail-Ponta ta’ Harrux” designated as a Special Protection Area (MT 0000030); and • c. 500m away from “Rdumijiet ta’ Ghawdex: il-Ponta ta’ Harrux sa il-Bajja tax-Xlendi” designated as a Special Protection Area (MT0000029) • Adjacent to an Area of High Landscape Value of id-Dwejra and environs, as declared through G.N 37 of 2011 • Adjacent to a Level 2 Area of Ecological Importance (AEI) – Il-Wied tal-Port and Wied ta’ Kerrex, as declared through G.N 37 of 2011 	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The nature of the project, including the installation of PV panels is not expected to affect the SACs and SPAs mentioned, as long as all necessary measures are taken to stabilise the material deposited on the site against erosion by wind and runoff, thereby avoiding impacts in the surrounding areas or further downstream (e.g. sedimentation of waterways and smothering by wind-borne dust).</p> <p>No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.</p>	/
12	Are there any areas on or around the location which are important or sensitive for reasons of their ecology e.g. marshlands, wetlands,	Reply to question 11 refer.	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Reply to question 11 refer.</p>	

Question Number:	Questions to be Considered	Types and characteristics of identified potential impacts Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Briefly justify	Document Reference
	watercourses or other water bodies, the coastal zone, mountains, forests or woodlands, which could be affected by the Project?			
13	Are there any areas on or around the location which are used by protected, important or sensitive species of fauna or flora e.g. for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, over wintering, migration, which could be affected by the Project?	Reply to question 11 refer.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> Reply to question 11 refer.	/
14	Are there any inland, coastal, marine or underground waters (or features of the marine environment on or around the location which could be affected by the Project?	Reply to question 11 refer.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> Reply to question 11 refer.	/
15	Are there any areas or features of high landscape or scenic value on or around the location which could be effected by the Project?	Reply to question 11 refer.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> Reply to question 11 refer.	/
16	Are there any routes or facilities on or around the location which are used by the public for access	Access to site is from the villages of Kercem and Santa Lucia, via Triq Għajn Għabdun down Triq Ta' Spiteri towards the quarry site.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> The present access arrangements to and from the quarry will be retained. No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.	PDS pg 7

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	to recreation or other facilities, which could be affected by the Project?	Site can also be accessed via Triq Ta' L-Ghadira past L-Ghadira ta' San Raflu (at the western limits of Kercem) and down Triq Il-Misrah towards the quarry site. This follows the quarry route network designated in Map 6.2.5 of the Gozo and Comino Local Plan (GZLP) and supported by policy GZ-TRANS-5. Trucks will have to be covered to prevent overflows.		
17	Are there any transport routes on or around the location which are susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the Project?	Reply to question 16 refers.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.	/
18	Is the Project in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people?	No.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.	/
19	Are there any areas or features of historic or cultural importance on or around the location that could be affected by the Project?	None that are known of.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.	/
20	Is the Project located in a previously undeveloped area where there will be loss of greenfield/ODZ land?	Yes, however the project involves the restoration of a quarry by means of the deposition of inert waste and its restoration back to agricultural land and installation of PV panels.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No. The finished product of the project is likely to have a positive effect on the quality of the environs, since it seeks the restoration of an existing extinct quarry.	/
21	Are there existing land uses on or around the location e.g.	None that are known of.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.	/

Question Number:	Questions to be Considered	Types and characteristics of identified potential impacts Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Briefly justify	Document Reference
	homes, gardens, other private property, industry, commerce, recreation, public open space, community facilities, agriculture, forestry, tourism, mining or quarrying which could be affected by the project?			
22	Are there any plans for future land uses within or around the location which could be affected by the Project?	Yes. The Qawra/Dwejra Heritage Park Action Plan and the Gozo and Comino Local Plan encourage the rehabilitation of disused quarries through infill and subsequent conversion to agriculture.	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The site will be infilled with inert/construction material, thus will have a beneficial impact on the environment and would effectively remove an existing scar from the rural landscape.</p> <p>Although the installation of solar panels goes beyond the objectives of the Qawra/Dwejra Action Plan, no significant impacts are envisaged. However, this part of the proposal should be subject to caveat mentioned in Question 10.</p> <p>No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.</p>	Qawra/Dwejra Heritage Park Action Plan Gozo and Comino Local Plan
23	Are there any areas on or around the location which are densely populated or built-up, that could be affected by the project?	None that are known of.	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No significant impacts are envisaged.</p>	/
24	Are there any areas on or around the location which are occupied by sensitive land uses e.g. hospitals, schools, places of worship,	None that are known of.	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No significant impacts are envisaged.</p>	/

Question Number:	Questions to be Considered	Types and characteristics of identified potential impacts Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Briefly justify	Document Reference
	community facilities which could be affected by the project?			
25	Are there any areas within or around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources e.g. groundwater, surface waters, forestry, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, minerals, which could be affected by the project?	Reply to questions 11 and 12 refer.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.	/
26	Are there any areas within or around the location which are already subject to pollution or environmental damage e.g. where existing legal environmental standards are exceeded that could be affected by the project?	Yes. The surrounding area is characterised by other intensive quarrying activity, which constitutes the most serious of the environmental impacts affecting the surrounding sensitive area and a major defacement of the landscape.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant further adverse impacts are being envisaged relative to the current baseline. Furthermore, the elimination of this disused quarry will result in an eventual net positive impact.	/
27	Is the project location susceptible to earthquakes, or subsidence, landslides, erosion, flooding or extreme or adverse climatic conditions e.g. temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the project to present	Potentially yes. Subsistence and landslides on the adjacent valley are a possibility.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> The impact can be mitigated though proper stabilisation and contouring, The terracing should follow the natural contours of the site. No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.	/

Question Number:	Questions to be Considered	Types and characteristics of identified potential impacts Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Briefly justify	Document Reference
	environmental problems?			

4. EIA Screening Conclusion and recommended way forward

4.1 EIA screening conclusion

The above detailed EIA screening concludes that impacts of the development are unlikely to be significant to the point of warranting an EIA, as long as:

- (1) the site (including its contours, rubble walls, and soil cover) is faithfully restored to its pre-quarrying state and effectively integrated into the surrounding rural landscape; and
- (2) various mitigation measures are duly incorporated through the mainstream development consent mechanism and mitigated by means of conditions and specifications (e.g. approved documents) in the development permit.

In this regard, as long as the proposed plans are duly amended to reflect the above concerns, the proposal does not require an Environmental Impact Assessment in line with the EIA Regulations (S.L. 549.46).

4.2 Screening disclaimer

The above screening results, the ensuing conclusions and recommendations are without prejudice to any required changes or updates should the development proposal be eventually modified or should the information/assumptions provided turn out to be incorrect. Any deviations of the proposal from this submission, or failure to honour any conditions tied to the screening conclusion, would need to be re-assessed and the merits of this screening would need to be re-opened.