



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 **MT0000024**
SITENAME **Rdumijiet ta' Malta: Ir-Ramla taċ-Ċirkewwa sal-Ponta ta' Benghisa**

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1. SITE IDENTIFICATION

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1.1 Type B	1.2 Site code MT0000024
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1.3 Site name

Rdumijiet ta' Malta: Ir-Ramla taċ-Ċirkewwa sal-Ponta ta' Benghisa

1.4 First Compilation date 2004-04	1.5 Update date 2019-09
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1.6 Respondent:

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

1.7 Site indication and designation / classification dates

Date site classified as SPA:	0000-00
National legal reference of SPA designation	No data
Date site proposed as SCI:	2004-04
Date site confirmed as SCI:	2008-03
Date site designated as SAC:	2016-12
National legal reference of SAC designation:	Government Notice No. 1379 of 2016, in accordance with the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations, 2016 (S.L. 549.44)

2. SITE LOCATION

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2.1 Site-centre location [decimal degrees]:

Longitude

14.3727

Latitude

35.8877

2.2 Area [ha]:

2315.1

2.3 Marine area [%]

0.0

2.4 Sitelength [km]:

0.0

2.5 Administrative region code and name

NUTS level 2 code

Region Name

MT00

Malta

2.6 Biogeographical Region(s)

Mediterranean (100.0
%)

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
1170			0.12		G	B	C	A	B
1210			0.04		G	C	A	C	C
1240			96.3		G	A	A	A	A
1410			1.64		G	D	A	B	B
1420			3.16		G	B	A	A	B
1510			188.17		G	C	A	B	C
2110			0.12		G	C	B	B	C
3170			1.99		G	B	A	B	B
5230			0.93		G	B	B	B	C
5330			357.18		G	A	A	A	A
5410			96.42		G	C	A	B	B
5430			19.8		G	B	A	B	B
6220			137.9		G	C	A	B	B
8210			113.71		G	C	A	A	A
8310				19	M	B	A	B	B

92A0		1.02		G	C	A	C	C
92D0		1.72		G	C	A	C	C
9320		8.36		G	B	A	B	B
9340		0.91		G	C	A	C	C

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

Species					Population in the site						Site assessment			
G	Code	Scientific Name	S	NP	T	Size		Unit	Cat.	D.qual.	A B C D	A B C		
						Min	Max				Pop.	Con.	Iso.	Glo.
P	4102	Anacamptis urvilleana			p				R	P	A	B	A	B
B	A243	Calandrella brachydactyla			r				P	P	B	C	C	C
B	A010	Calonectris diomedea			r	1000	1650	p		G	B	B	C	B
B	A288	Cettia cetti			p				P	P	B	C	C	B
B	A288	Cettia cetti			r				P	P	B	C	C	B
B	A289	Cisticola juncidis			p				P	P	C	B	C	B
B	A206	Columba livia			c				P	P	A	C	C	C
B	A206	Columba livia			r				P	P	A	C	C	C
P	4079	Cremonophyton lanfrancoi			p				R	P	A	B	A	B
P	4082	Crepis pusilla			p	50	100	i	V	P	A	C	A	C
R	1293	Elaphe situla			p				P	P	A	B	A	B
P	4092	Elatine gussonei			p				V	P	A	C	A	C
P	4084	Hyoseris frutescens			p				V	P	B	C	A	B
I	4060	Lampedusa imitatrix	Yes		p				V	P	A	C	A	B
I	4061	Lampedusa melitensis	Yes		p				V	P	A	B	A	B
B	A459	Larus cachinnans			r	15	15	p		G	A	C	C	C
P	4114	Linaria pseudolaxiflora			p				V	P	A	C	A	C
B	A383	Miliaria calandra			r				P	P	C	C	C	C
B	A383	Miliaria calandra			c				P	P	C	C	C	C
B	A281	Monticola solitarius			p				P	P	A	B	C	B
M	1307	Myotis blythii			c	150	150	i		G	B	B	A	B
P	4105	Ophrys melitensis	Yes		p				R	P	A	B	A	B
P	4085				p				R	P	A	B	A	B

		Palaeocyanus crassifolius												
P	1395	Petalophyllum ralfsii			p				V	P	A	C	A	B
B	A464	Puffinus yelkouan			r	200	350	p		G	B	B	C	B
M	1303	Rhinolophus hipposideros			c	1	17	i		M	B	B	A	B
B	A303	Sylvia conspicillata			r				P	P	C	C	C	C
B	A305	Sylvia melanocephala			p				P	P	B	C	C	C

Group: A = Amphibians, B = Birds, F = Fish, I = Invertebrates, M = Mammals, P = Plants, R = Reptiles

S: in case that the data on species are sensitive and therefore have to be blocked for any public access enter: yes

NP: in case that a species is no longer present in the site enter: x (optional)

Type: p = permanent, r = reproducing, c = concentration, w = wintering (for plant and non-migratory species use permanent)

Unit: i = individuals, p = pairs or other units according to the Standard list of population units and codes in accordance with Article 12 and 17 reporting (see [reference portal](#))

Abundance categories (Cat.): C = common, R = rare, V = very rare, P = present - to fill if data are deficient (DD) or in addition to population size information

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); VP = 'Very poor' (use this category only, if not even a rough estimation of the population size can be made, in this case the fields for population size can remain empty, but the field "Abundance categories" has to be filled in)

3.3 Other important species of flora and fauna (optional)

4. SITE DESCRIPTION

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4.1 General site character

Habitat class	% Cover
N27	26.42
N23	10.35
N08	28.99
N05	9.07
N10	0.01
N18	0.11
N04	0.14
N26	4.21
N09	14.08
N16	0.04
N02	0.21
N06	0.25
N21	6.12
Total Habitat Cover	100

Other Site Characteristics

As a result of the tectonics of the Central Mediterranean area, notably the Pantelleria Rift System, the island of Malta is slightly tilted from west to east, with the west characterised by sheer cliffs and the east characterised by gently sloping rock at mean sea water level. The former area in question comprises the series of cliffs, mostly characterised by Coralline Limestone, running along the western area of the island of Malta, and spanning from Wied ix-Xaqqa (I/o Birzebbuga), lying along the southern tip of the island, to the northern cliffs of Ċirkewwa and Qammieħ (both I/o Mellieħa). The general area, referred to as the Coastal Cliffs of Malta, is actually composed of a series of habitats. Whilst in some areas sheer cliffs characterise the landscape, in other areas the 'cliffs' encompass a series of habitats. The Upper Coralline Limestone, which is the youngest sedimentary rock forming the Maltese Islands, forms plateaux

which overlie a series of gently rolling landscapes characterised by Blue Clay slopes (locally known as 'zrieżaq tat-tafal'), which in turn overlie other landscapes based on the Glibberina Limestone and the Lower Coralline Limestone, the older sedimentary rocks, as at Dingli Cliffs. Other areas are also characterised by various boulders resulting from weathering erosion on cliff plateau's layers. This creates a peculiar boulder scree community, locally known as rdum, as at the Rdum il-Qammieħ (l/o Mellieħa) area. Boulder scree forms when Blue Clay is eroded from beneath the Upper Coralline Limestone. This renders some Upper Coralline Limestone blocks at the edge of the plateaux unsupported, with the result that these collapse under their own weight. A boulder scree may form at any level on the overall 'cliff' depending on where the Blue Clay / Upper Coralline Limestone junction is. Where this junction is close to sea level, the boulder scree forms a boulder shore, which may continue below the water surface as a boulder field. The 'cliffs' themselves are often the steep banks of dry coastal valleys (known as 'widien', singular 'wied', in Maltese) which empty into the sea, as at Wied Babu (l/o Żurrieq), and are often also backed by relatively extensive garrigue communities and agricultural areas, as in the areas of Dingli, Rabat and Siġġiewi. A number of areas within the cliffs are also typified by perennial or near-perennial springs ('għejun', singular 'għajn', in Maltese), as in the areas of Baħrija, in the limits of Rabat, and Għajn it-Tajba at Mtaħleb in the limits of Rabat. This depends on the presence of the perched aquifer and seepage from the Blue Clay and Upper Coralline Limestone junction as 'high level springs'.

4.2 Quality and importance

This site essentially constitutes the Coastal Cliffs of the west side of the island of Malta. The area can be subdivided into a series of communities and sites, notably the Coastal Cliffs and Rdum Communities, the Cliff Plateau and Coastal Communities, Mediterranean Temporary Ponds, the Widien and Associated Riparian Communities, Mediterranean Salt Steppes, Beaches and Dunes, Caves and Reefs. The coastal cliffs and rdum communities of the area represent a biotope based upon a wide array of Maltese endemic and sub-endemic species, of which the most important are the endangered endemic *Atriplex lanfrancoi* (= *Cremnophyton lanfrancoi*), and *Cheirolophus crassifolius* (= *Palaeocyanus crassifolius*), both of which are listed as priority species in Annex II of the Habitats Directive, but also included in Annex IV of the same Directive and Appendix I of the Bern Convention. *Atriplex lanfrancoi* (= *Cremnophyton lanfrancoi*) was first described from the cliffs of Miġra Ferħa, in the limits of Rabat, whilst *Cheirolophus crassifolius* (= *Palaeocyanus crassifolius*) was reputedly first noted from the cliffs of the Wied Babu area. Both species are considered as palaeoendemics, belonging to monotypic genera. They both have a very patchy distribution in the area, with an indication of decline. Although also known from the cliffs of the Maltese island of Gozo, the island of Malta provides the most important and extensive populations of these two species. Other endemic species are reported from the area, including *Hyoseris frutescens*, an Annex II & IV species of the Habitats Directive, and also a Bern Convention Appendix I species, known from isolated populations in the Rdum il-Qammieħ area. This rare species is otherwise more widespread in the Gozo cliffs. Reference in this regard can be made to the datasheet of MT0000019: Dwejra - Qawra Area, inkluż Haġret il-Ġeneral. A rather rare species which is also known from Wied Babu is the Annex II plant species *Petalophyllum ralfsii*, a bryophyte. Other endemic species include *Salsola melitensis* (= *Darniella melitensis*), *Chiliadenus bocconeii*, the Pelago-Maltese endemic *Daucus rupestris*, and the Siculo-Maltese endemic *Senecio pygmaeus*. Other noteworthy species include *Crucianella rupestris* and the rare *Senecio leucanthemifolius*. One of the most threatened European molluscs, the endemic *Lampedusa melitensis*, a Habitats Directive priority Annex II species which is also listed in Annex IV, is known to be found in the area of the coastal cliffs. This critically endangered species is confined to a small number of large boulders. The total population is estimated to be not more than a few hundred individuals occupying an area of a few tens of square metres only. The cliffs also represent the only site for the island of Malta for *Cynomorium coccineum*, a nationally very rare and critically endangered parasitic flowering plant, otherwise also known from the Haġret il-Ġeneral Nature Reserve, a small islet located off the Maltese island of Gozo. Reference in this regard can be made to the datasheet of MT0000019: Dwejra - Qawra Area, inkluż Haġret il-Ġeneral. This species is locally also of considerable cultural and historical importance. Deep cracks and crevices along steep-sided cliffs and rdum in the south-western cliffs of Malta support populations of the vulnerable and endemic top-snail *Trochoidea gharlapsi*. The Cliff Plateau and Coastal Communities encompasses various habitats; ranging from rocky platforms close to sea level, to steep near-vertical walls, and all intermediate zones between these. Maritime biotopes such as those with *Limonium* and those with *Limbarda* grow where there is a suitable substratum and maritime influence, at times limited to pockets and at times occupying more extensive areas. In places where there is less maritime influence, one finds a variety of 'non-maritime' coastal habitat types, including steppe, garrigue, maquis and agriculture-associated communities. Where the terrain is such that these different habitat types are in close proximity, mosaics may occur. These communities are also characterised by a variety of endemic and/or threatened species. Examples include: phrygana communities based upon *Anthyllis hermanniae* subsp. *melitensis* and/or *Hypericum aegypticum*, *Lotus cytisoides* and *Cichorium spinosum*; endemic *Crithmo-Limonietea* communities based upon the endemic *Limonium melitense*, the endemic *Anthemis urvilleana*, and *Crucianella rupestris*, *Crithmum maritimum*, *Daucus gindidium*, *Plantago coronopus* s.l. and *Drimia maritima*; aerohaline communities based upon *Limbarda crithmoides*, *Salsola melitensis* (= *Darniella melitensis*) and *Arthrocnemum macrostachyum*, which can be found particularly in the more exposed maritime areas; pre-desert scrub communities, based upon the endemic *Euphorbia melitensis*, *Euphorbia dendroides*, and *Periploca angustifolia*; Mediterranean xeric grasslands, mostly based upon *Brachypodium retusum*; andropogonid grass steppes based upon *Andropogon distachyus* and/or *Hyparrhenia hirta*; labiate garigues based upon *Thymbra capitata*, *Prasium majus* and *Teucrium fruticans*; or other garrigue communities based on the nationally rare *Rosmarinus officinalis*, the shrubby *Convolvulus oleifolius*, a species of restricted distribution in the Mediterranean, or the rare *Cistus creticus* and/or *C. monspeliensis*. At the foot of the escarpments and boulder scree, beneath limestone caps or along the sides of inaccessible valleys, maquis communities develop, with a variety of species, mostly belonging to the Oleo-Ceratonion, and dominated by *Ceratonia siliqua*, *Olea europaea*, *Pistacia lentiscus* and *Crataegus* spp., with the rare *Laurus nobilis*, the very rare *Rhamnus alaternus*, the very rare

Myrtus communis, and other sclerophyllous trees in some areas. Such maquis communities also include a variety of climbers and undergrowth shrubs, which include the very rare *Rosa sempervirens*, the scarce *Clematis cirrhosa*, the rare *Tamus communis*, *Asparagus aphyllus*, *Hedera helix*, *Smilax aspera* and occasionally naturalised *Vitis vinifera*. Many invertebrates are known to be associated with these maquis assemblages. The endangered endemic door-snail *Lampedusa imitatrix*, also listed in Annex II of the Habitats Directive, is known from a small area along the cliffs and maritime 'garrigue' and the population here is referred to as the nominotypical population; whilst the other extant population, on the island of Filfla which is another Natura 2000 site: MT0000016, is referred to as *L. imitatrix gattoi*. The endemic spider of indeterminate status *Aelurillus schembrii* was first described from Iċ-Ċumnija in the limits of Mellieħa, the type locality; whilst the rare endemic pseudo-scorpion *Chthonius maltensis* is known from three sites in the Maltese Islands, two of which fall within the coastal cliffs, namely Fomm ir-Riħ and Ras il-Qarraba in the limits of Mġarr, the latter being the type locality. Furthermore, Coleoptera are amongst the best known fauna of the area. Some examples include the Italo-Maltese endemic of indeterminate status *Akis subterranea*; *Meloe murinus*, known from the xeric habitats of Ġhajj Tuffieħa and Ras il-Pellegrin; *Cnemeplatia atropos*, known from beneath *Ceratonia* trees in Wied Babu; the vulnerable endemic *Aulacoderus sulcithorax melitensis*, often associated with *Lonicera implexa*; the endemic *Chiloneus hoffmanni*, known from the 'garrigue' in the Ġhar Ħasan area and Wied Babu; the endemic *Danacea thymi*, common on blossoming *Thymbra capitata*; the endemic *Laemostenus picicornis melitensis*; the vulnerable endemic *Microptinus melitensis*, known from leaf litter of *Cistus monspeliensis* in the Mtaħleb area; the critically endangered *Lacon punctatus*, only known from under the bark of broad-leaf trees at Wied Moqbol; the endemic *Otiorhynchus moriger*, known from crevices and leaf litter in the areas of Baħrija, Mtaħleb and Wied Babu; the endemic *Otiorhynchus schembrii*, from the Wied Babu/Mnajdra area and Miġra Ferħa; the endemic *Stenosis melitana* and *Stenosoma melitense*, both widespread throughout the area; the endemic *Tentyria laevigata leachi*, reported from Ġhar Lapsi; and the Italo-Maltese endemic *Tenuicomus velox velox*, known from Miġra Ferħa and Fomm ir-Riħ. The area is also rich in rock pools, considered as Mediterranean Temporary Ponds, with a variety of associated species. The vegetation of temporary ponds in limestone karstland is mostly characterised by a variety of charophytes and flowering plants, most of which are threatened, including the endemic *Zannichellia melitensis*; the Pelago-Maltese endemic *Elatine gussonei*, which is listed in Annexes II and IV of the Habitats Directive; *Callitriche truncata*; *Chara vulgaris*; and *Ranunculus saniculaefolius*. There are also 'transitional' pools with marine species at certain times of the year, as at Qammieħ. Amongst the fauna, the most known of which are the Coleoptera, one can encounter a variety of rare and vulnerable species; some of which are also found in slow-moving waters. These include *Dryops algericus*, *Graptodytes varius*, *Hydroporus tessellatus*, *Meladema coriacea*, *Ochthebius celatus*, *Ochthebius dilatatus*, and *Stricticomus transversalis meridionalis*; the latter being a subspecies for which Malta represents the only known native European station (it is also known from Libya, Tunisia and Algeria). This site is also characterised by a series of Mediterranean dry valley systems, known as 'widien', with a seasonal watercourse which dries completely in the drier season, and which is influenced by the saline conditions of the area. The vegetation of these 'widien' is a mosaic of wetland communities, dry valley beds, maritime communities (including rupestral communities) and, in some parts, disturbed communities. The valley-beds of such valleys are normally based upon species associated with watercourses, such as *Apium nodiflorum*; *Arundo donax*; *Arundo plinii*; *Aster squamatus*; *Centaurium tenuiflorum*; *Carex* spp.; *Cyperus* spp.; *Festuca arundinacea*; *Nasturtium officinale*; *Panicum repens*; *Plantago major*; *Polypogon monspeliensis*; *Potentilla reptans*; *Mentha pulegium*; *Rumex* spp.; *Scirpoides holoschoenus*; *Ranunculus muricatus* and *Rumex conglomeratus*. There are many more perennial springs in the region, all originating from the perched aquifer. These are mostly tapped at source. However, galleries associated with these tapped springs give rise to important habitats of subterranean water. Such widien associated with perennial or near-perennial springs, including the watercourses in the areas of Baħrija, Mtaħleb and Wied ir-Rum, all of which are in the limits of Rabat. The valley-bed vegetation in such areas is often enriched by a variety of nationally vulnerable plants with a more restricted distribution, since they require a more regular freshwater supply, such as *Equisetum ramosissimum*; *Mentha suaveolens*; *Persicaria salicifolia*; *Scrophularia auriculata* and *Teucrium scordioides*. Some of these valley systems also house some important riparian assemblages based upon *Populus alba*, *Salix pedicellata* and *Ulmus canescens*, occasionally with individuals of *Salix alba*, which were re-introduced from the extant stock of Ġnien il-Kbir, within the Natura 2000 site MT0000018: Buskett - Ġirgenti Area. All these species are threatened in the Maltese Islands due to the dearth of their habitat; habitat loss to agriculture; and general persecution by farmers. These areas also support the largest extant populations of the endangered endemic Maltese Freshwater Crab, *Potamon fluviatile lanfrancoi*, as well as numerous other threatened freshwater invertebrates that have a restricted distribution, including the freshwater amphipod, *Echinogammarus pungens*; freshwater snails such as *Ancylus fluviatilis*, the supposedly endemic *Mercuria* cf. *similis* (= *M. melitensis*) and *Pseudoamnicola melitensis*, *Planorbis moquini* and *Lymnaea trunculata*; the Siculo-Maltese endemic woodlouse *Haplophthalmus avolensis*; the hymenopteran *Sceliphron destillatorium*, *Stizus pubescens* and *Tachysphex nitidor*; the orthopterans *Conocephalus conocephalus* and *Homorocoryphus mitidulus*; and the beetles *Haliplex lineaticollis*, *Herophydrus musicus*, the endemic *Dasytidius melitensis*, the endemic *Langelandia niticosta*, the endemic *Tinodemus mifsudi*, the endemic *Torneuma maltense*, found in soil under *Salix pedicellata* in the Mtaħleb area, and the Siculo-Maltese endemic *Tychomorpha integer*. Garrigue and maquis communities associated with such humid environments also support a number of additional species. Of interest is a still unnamed Siculo-Maltese endemic, *Vitrea* sp., known from underneath stones and leaf litter in 'garrigue' and maquis habitats in wet areas along watercourses, as at Baħrija. Some 'widien' also provide important habitats for some maquis and woodland communities, and one site, the area of Wied Ħażrun/Ta' Baldu in the limits of Rabat is characterised by a small copse of *Quercus ilex*. In fact, this valley system includes a forest remnant with a small stand of *Quercus ilex* along the sides of the valley; part of which was, unfortunately, seriously vandalised and burnt by farmers in the early 1990s. The area in question, being one of the very few woodland habitats in the Maltese Islands, is an important site for xylophilous, xylophagous and saproxylic invertebrates. Moreover, it is an important site for fungi. An important record is *Amanita gracilior*, where Wied Ħażrun seems to be the only known locality for this species. A number of

other rare fungi have been recorded from this site. Among others, these include *Schizophyllum commune*, *Daldinia concentrica*, *Phallus impudicus*, *Coprinus plicatilis*, *Peziza proteana* var. *sparassoides*, and *Amanita proxima*. Valleys in general are also important agricultural areas, due to their high degree of fertility. Selected examples of important agricultural valleys include Wied Hażrun, Wied ir-Rum, Wied Markozz and Wied ta' l-Imtaħleb. A considerable part of the coastal cliffs is typified by coastal clay slopes. Most of these clay slopes are essentially dominated by *Lygeum spartum*, accompanied by *Cynara cardunculus* and *Hedysarum coronarium*, as well as *Arundo donax*, *Avena* spp., *Carlina involucreta*, *Dactylis hispanica*, *Phalaris* spp., *Piptatherum miliaceum* and other grasses and thistles. Such communities normally make up habitats known as Mediterranean Salt Steppes. Threatened and/or rare flora are also associated with such clay slopes, including the rare *Fagonia cretica*, particularly important in the Ghajn Tuffieħa/Fomm ir-Riħ area, and various sedges that tend to occur in clay slopes close to perennial springs, as the now rare *Carex hispida* in the area of Ghajn it-Tajba in the limits of Rabat. Native *Nerio-Tamaricetea* assemblages, mostly based on *Tamarix africana*, are also known from these slopes. These coastal clay slopes also support a variety of threatened and/or endemic species, particularly beetles, which include: *Acmaedrella lanuginosa*, known from the clay slopes of Għar Lapsi; *Myriochile melancholica*, associated with moist areas at Għar Lapsi; and the possibly rare *Tilloidea transversalis*, a predatory beetle on curculionid and cerambycid beetles known from clay slopes with *Cynara cardunculus* in the areas of Għar Lapsi/Haġar Qim and Mtaħleb. The argillaceous areas of Ghajn Tuffieħa in the limits of Mġarr provide an important locality for the vulnerable *Hohenwartia hohenwarti*, a snail known only from these clay slopes and the ones at Ghajn Hadid, located within the Natura 2000 site MT0000021: L-Imġiebaħ / Tal-Miġnuna Area. Owing to the water-retaining abilities of clay, a number of clay slopes are actively utilised for agricultural purposes. Some of these fields also retain some rare weed flora, such as the populations of *Glebionis segetum* along the fields of Wied il-Ħut and Ghajn it-Tajba in the Mtaħleb area. A small number of sandy beaches are known from the area; including one of the extant sand dune areas of the Maltese Islands, known as *Ramla tal-Mixquqa* in the limits of Mġarr. The said dune houses a variety of nationally threatened dune species, including *Elytrigia juncea*, *Matthiola tricuspidata* and *Pancratium maritimum*. A variety of important fauna is also associated with these sandy beaches, including the rare woodlouse *Armadilloniscus candidus*, for which *Ras il-Qarraba* represents one of two localities; and various beetles, such as the vulnerable *Ammobius rufus*, known from Ghajn Tuffieħa and *Ramla tal-Mixquqa*; *Belopus elongatus ecalcaratus*, known from various sandy beaches in the area; the endemic *Erodium siculus melitensis*, found associated with the roots of sand dune plants; *Phaleria acuminata*; *Phaleria bimaculata*; *Trachyscelis aphodioides*, found associated with the roots of sand dune plants; and the Siculo-Maltese endemic *Stenosis freyi*, only known from *Ramla tal-Mixquqa* in the Maltese Islands. Some other important invertebrates recorded from the area of Ghajn Tuffieħa include *Oncocephalus squalidus*, only known from a single record from Ghajn Tuffieħa; *Pasira basiptera*, known only from Ghajn Tuffieħa and Wied Żnuber, both of which are within the cliffs area; *Smicromyrma viduata*, known only from Ghajn Tuffieħa and Santa Marija Bay in Comino; *Aphaenogaster sicula*, a species restricted to clay slopes; *Chaernes sicilensis*, known only from Ghajn Tuffieħa; *Euscorpius carpathicus candiota*, a species of biogeographical interest; and *Buchnerillo littoralis*, a species with a restricted distribution across the Maltese Islands with it having been recorded only from 3 localities, one of which is the area of Ghajn Tuffieħa. Shingle beaches, which are overall rare in the Maltese Islands, are also found at Fomm ir-Riħ. A number of caves (Maltese: sing. 'għar'; pl. 'għerien') within the site in question are of importance since they support bats. Among these are Għar Iswed at Mtaħleb in the limits of Rabat and Għar Hasan in the limits of Birżebbuġa. The former is known to support about 5 individuals of *Rhinolophus hipposideros* and 3 male *Myotis punicus*. Għar Iswed is a water-worn cave which is well over 200m deep, and which is situated high among the rubble screes on the way down to Miġra Ferħa. On the other hand, Għar Hasan is known to support a maximum of 150 individuals of *Myotis punicus* and up to 2 individuals of *Plecotus austriacus*. It too is a water-worn cave and there are five areas within it that have been identified as roosts, with the main roosts being protected with a grille. *Tadarida teniotis* has been recorded with bat detectors from the Dingli Cliffs area, however the exact location of the roosts are not known. Caves are also very important for invertebrates, including endemic species, such as the endemic woodlouse *Armadillidium aelleni* at Għar Hasan. One must note that there are many unexplored caves, including a number in the cliff-sides as well as others that are partly submerged at sea-level. Reefs forming above the low-water mark are located along stretches of the north-west and south-west sides of Malta. These reefs are based on *Lithophyllum lichenoides*, which form cushion-like concretions several tens of metres long. Their presence within this site is mostly attributed to the presence of the extensive coastal cliffs and scree slopes that dominate this side of the island of Malta. These reefs are mainly located along Fomm ir-Riħ to Il-Blata, from Miġra il-Ferħa to Il-Qaws, and from Ix-Xaqqa to Blue Grotto. In general, the *trattoirs* are protected by their inaccessible location; however, in view of their slow recovery period and sensitivity to hydrocarbon pollution, their protection is important. Most of the area of the cliffs that makes up this Natura 2000 site includes a number of caves, crags and fissures. These may be found at various heights and are known to offer ideal nesting sites for birds, particularly sea-birds. The availability of nesting sites has increased throughout the years since large boulders and screes have accumulated at the foot of the cliffs and on ledges, and in fact, certain areas of the cliffs support important colonies of sea-birds. *Puffinus yelkouan*, a species that is endemic to the central and eastern parts of the Mediterranean Sea, breeds in deep crevices and fissures along sea-cliffs and is found along the southern and south-western cliffs of Malta and Gozo. *Calonectris diomedea* is known to breed under boulders, in rubble screes and natural burrows along the sea-cliffs. Due to human disturbance, most colonies are found along rather inaccessible parts of the cliffs. Most colonies of this sea-bird that are found across the Maltese Islands are concentrated along the southern and south-western cliffs of Malta and Gozo. A small colony of *Larus cachinnans* is known from the cliffs between Rdum Depiro and Rdum Dikkiena. *Calandrella brachydactyla* has been recorded from the northern part of the cliffs while *Monticola solitarius*, a breeding resident, is known from all along the cliffs. The latter bird used to breed frequently inland, but has now become mainly confined to the coastal cliffs, where its nest is located in holes, fissures or depressions in the cliff-face. *Sylvia conspicillata* nests in low vegetation, and is known from the southern part of the coastal cliffs,

while Miliaria calandra has been recorded from two localities towards the north where just a few pairs are known to occur. Columbia livia is a breeding species that was recorded in recent years along the southern cliffs.

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]
M	H02		i
L	E02		b
L	E03.03		i
L	F03.02		b
L	E04.01		b
M	H05		i
L	F03.02.01		i
M	F04		b
M	K01.01		b
M	C01.07		i
H	I01		i
M	G05.01		i
L	G01		i
H	A01		b
L	A04		i
M	C01.01.01		b
M	J02.11		i
M	C01.01.02		i
M	D05		o
M	E01		b
H	J02.05		i
L	G02.08		i
H	D01.01		i
H	J02.05.02		i
M	E01.03		i

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	Name: Rdumijiet ta' Malta: Mir-Ramla taç-Çirkewwa sar-Ramla tal-Mixquqa; Rdumijiet ta' Malta: Għajn Tuffieħa; Rdumijiet ta' Malta: Ir-Ramla ta' Għajn Tuffieħa sax-Xaqqa; Rdumijiet ta' Malta: mix-Xaqqa sal-Ponta ta' Bengħisa Link: https://era.org.mt/en/Pages/Natura-2000-Management-Planning.aspx
<input type="checkbox"/> No, but in preparation	
<input type="checkbox"/> No	

6.3 Conservation measures (optional)

7. MAP OF THE SITES

INSPIRE ID:

MT.ERA.MT0000024

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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).

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