

Our Ref.: GF NA 04/20_9

Ms Antonia & Mr Joseph Agius



9th October 2020

Dear Ms Antonia Agius, Mr Joseph Agius, Ms Emanuela Fenech, Mr Lawrence Fenech, Ms Grace Sammut, Mr Alfred Sammut, Ms Josephine Abela, Mr Roderick Abela, Ms Daniela Bugeja, Mr Mario Abela and Mr Carlos Abela,

Re. Notice of Environment & Resources Authority (ERA) Board Decision: Request for reconsideration of protection as a Special Area of Conservation – Site of International Importance on a parcel of land in ‘L-Inħawi tal-Wej’, limits of Mosta.

Reference is made to your request for reconsideration dated 31st July 2020 (ref: GF NA 4/20) received by the Authority on 31st July 2020.

Your request has been presented to the ERA Board on the 25th September 2020, during which the ERA Board has upheld the protection afforded to the parcel of land in question and has not favourably considered your request for the reconsideration for the protection of the plot of land indicated in your request within ‘L-Inħawi tal-Wej’ as a Special Area of Conservation – Site of International Importance for the following reasons:

1. Consideration to ecological integrity, coherence, connectivity and edge effects is an integral part of the designation process of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). Each parcel of land within the SAC contributes to these conservation principles and thus the site must be considered as a whole. This is especially important when taking into consideration the geographical limitations of this site, which is also physically isolated from other natural areas. This holistic approach is also important when it comes to site management in order to ensure effective conservation of the species and the respective habitats;
2. The location of the site (geographical representation) and the habitats/species which it supports (ecological representation) are of particular relevance. L-Inħawi tal-Wej is of significance for the National Ecological Network and the Natura 2000 network in view of its particular location, as well as in view of the nature of the habitats and species composition therein that are rather distinct;

3. The presence of the Schedule I listed priority habitats 3170 *Mediterranean temporary ponds and 6220 *Pseudo steppe with grasses and annuals of the *Thero-Brachypodietea*; habitat 5410 West Mediterranean clifftop phrygas, and the presence of the Schedule II Maltese Waterwort, *Elatine gussonei*, within the SAC. The SAC also hosts a number of protected, rare, endemic and/ or otherwise threatened species, including the Maltese Tassel Pondweed, *Zannichellia melitensis* (MT: il-ħarira tal-ilma ta' Malta) and the Tadpole Shrimp, *Triops cancriformis* (MT: il-gamblu tal-elm), which are protected in line with Regulations 25 and 26 of the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations (S.L. 549.44). The SAC must be protected as a whole in order to protect and conserve such habitats and species.

Any aggrieved person may appeal from this decision before the Environment and Planning Review Tribunal (EPRT) within 30 days from the issue of this letter in terms of Article 63 of the Environment Protection Act.

In case of any enquiries, feel free to contact us by email on boardsecretary.era@era.org.mt.

Prof. Victor Axiak
Chairman, Environment and Resources Authority