

**ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES AUTHORITY**  
Minutes of Board Meeting held on the 25 July 2025  
Hexagon House, Marsa

*At this stage, the meeting was opened to the public.*

**6728. Environmental Impact Assessment Process related to EA 00009/20 (PA 06663/24)** Proposed alterations and construction of a water polo and swimming pool, deck area, changing rooms, toilets, showers, committee meeting room and ancillary facilities. Site at, San Giljan Aquatic Sports Club, Triq Gorg Borg Olivier, San Giljan

*Related material circulated prior to the meeting.*

The Chairman invited the EIA Coordinator to deliver the presentation.

Mr Sacha Dunlop, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) coordinator, began his presentation by giving an overview of the project for the development of the San Giljan Aquatic Sports Club involving a water polo pitch and swimming pool. It was noted that the original application PA03927/19 had already been subject to an EIA and that the application was withdrawn following environmental concerns raised by the ERA, particularly regarding impacts on *Posidonia oceanica* seagrass habitats and visual intrusion, from land reclamation.

Revised plans have been submitted through the current application PA 06663/24, aimed to address the concerns raised by ERA, particularly by reducing the land reclamation footprint from 3,140 m<sup>2</sup> to 2,230 m<sup>2</sup>. Amongst others, further modifications include piling at the bullnose structure to avoid complete burial of the seagrass beneath it and the rounding and contouring of the site's perimeter for improved aesthetics. The revised plans were subject to an EIA Addendum, with an updated marine ecology and visual amenity impacts, noting that other environmental effects remain unchanged from the earlier EIA.

With regard to impacts on the marine ecology, Mr Dunlop noted that the previous loss of 1,089m<sup>2</sup> *Posidonia oceanica* has been reduced to 197m<sup>2</sup> and that the new bullnose will be constructed on piles. This represents a shift from a major significant ecological impact to a minor-to-moderate one.

As to the visual impact, a comparison of photomontages from 6 viewpoints was provided, representing the existing situation, the previous design and the revised proposal. The EIA coordinator noted that the redesigned project with a smaller scale and softer platform edges lowers the visual impact, particularly from Balluta and Sajjieda viewpoints, resulting in a slight reduction in the visual impact. Visual impacts from other vantage points are similar to those previously assessed.

A description of the proposed mitigation measures during the construction and operational phases (including the requirement of monitoring of the *Posidonia* during construction works) was also provided.

The Chairman then invited the Directorate to make the presentation.

The Directorate informed that ERA raised concerns about the development's original proposal (PA 03927/19), namely in view of the encroachment onto the seabed supporting *Posidonia* habitat, as well in view of the visual impact.

Following review of the revised plans submitted through PA 06663/24 and of the evaluation of the addendum to the EIA report, the Directorate acknowledged the implemented improvements and noted that they are in line with previous discussions between ERA and applicant. Main revisions include a smaller footprint of reclamation area which reduced habitat loss by 82% from that proposed in PA 3927/19 and a slight reduction in the visual prominence.

The Directorate noted that the residual visual impacts are unavoidable due to the nature of land reclamation, especially when taking into account the setting within a densely developed urban area, which encompasses all surrounding viewpoints.

In conclusion, given the reduced environmental impact and revised design, the Directorate noted that the downscaled proposal is favourably recommended, subject to conditions proposed to minimise the impacts on the environment. These include the requirement for an Environmental Permit for dredging works and reclamation of land, construction-phase monitoring of marine environment, material containment, spillage prevention, waste management, effluent management and lighting mitigation.

Chairman asked the Environmental Impact Assessment Coordinator and the applicant if they had any further points to raise, to which they replied in the negative.

There were no comments from the members of the public.

The Chairman then opened the discussion to the Board members.

In reply to a query by ES, Directorate informed that the pool effluent will not be discharged but self-contained. This was also confirmed by the EIA co-ordinator.

The Chairman remarked about the negative impacts which might still be exerted on the *Posidonia* by the piles, particularly during the construction phase. In reply, Perit Matthew Muscat noted that the decision to build on piles was aimed to reduce the impact on the *Posidonia* and that the alternative was to have the caisson directly on the seabed. The Directorate added that whilst the piling might be marginally better than the latter alternative, the main issues which the developer was requested to address as per previous discussion during the ERA Board were the reduction of the encroachment on the *Posidonia* and the visual impact, which were addressed.

The Chairman remarked on the importance of the monitoring on the status of the *Posidonia* during the construction phase. Mr Dunlop informed that the monitoring will be in line with an approved Environment Monitoring Plan and that issues identified during the monitoring will be reported to ERA.

Whilst acknowledging the reduction in the footprint, MGD remarked that the project is still substantial when compared to the existing situation. MGD further added that impacts are still expected on the *Posidonia* at the margins. In reply, the Directorate noted it was granted the mandate to discuss/negotiate with the applicant regarding two main outstanding concerns, namely reduction in visual impact and reduction in the encroachment of *Posidonia*, and that these issues were addressed as best as possible.

CC remarked on the importance of having the silt curtain regularly maintained and on the availability of the coast to the public. The EIA coordinator and Directorate expressed their agreement, with the Directorate noting that these issues will be addressed as permit conditions as much as possible. In reply to CC's query about wave study and the absorption of waves, the EIA coordinator noted that whilst the revised proposal is not expected to give rise to major changes in the impacts from those already

identified in the original proposal, the beach will be more protected by the project, as mentioned during the previous discussion at the Board.

The Chairman recommended that a monitor, approved by ERA, should be engaged by the developer at its expense to monitor the works and report on a regular basis to ERA. The Directorate noted that this was already included in the conditions.

The ERA Board was then requested to vote on the final assessment as proposed by the Directorate.

Board members voting **in favour** of the Directorate's final assessment:

Perit Vincent Cassar, Chairman

Prof. Emmanuel Sinagra, Deputy Chairman

Dr Christopher Ciantar

Mr Kurt Farrugia

Perit Kevin Fsadni

Mr Isaak Koroma

Mr Clarence Pace

Board members **against** the Directorate's final assessment:

Mr Martin Galea De Giovanni

Ms Charmaine Mangion

The Board **approved** the final assessment recommended by the Directorate.

*The meeting in public was terminated at this stage.*

LORNA FARRUGIA

ERA BOARD SECRETARY