

**ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES AUTHORITY**

Minutes of Board Meeting held on the 06 March 2026

Hexagon House, Marsa

**7088. Environmental Impact Assessment Process (EA 00052/19) related to PA/08471/19 & PA/04783/20** - Construction of a berm and revetment including dredging at Valletta Grand Harbour & Construction of new Breakwater arm beneath St. Elmo to offer protection to the Grand Harbour during North Westerly storms. Site at Valletta Grand Harbour, Il-Port Il-Kbir, Belt Valletta

*Related material circulated prior to the meeting.*

The Chairman invited the EIA Coordinator to deliver the presentation.

Mr Adrian Mallia, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) coordinator, began his presentation by giving a general overview of the project for the development to improve the wave climate in the Grand Harbour, also noting that the reflected waves affect the areas directly opposite Valletta. The proposed interventions qualified for an EIA, as per Schedule I, Category II of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations (S.L. 549.46). The Coordinator briefly outlined the EIA process, highlighting the key design considerations and the main design and construction details, including the assessment of five designs and hydrodynamic modelling. A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) was also prepared and submitted to the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage.

The EIA identified significant residual impacts primarily in relation to the geo-environment and marine environment, notably due to seabed alteration, extraction of mineral material, and changes in underwater morphology arising from the breakwater and associated structures. Short-term adverse impacts on benthic habitats, especially Cystoseira communities, were anticipated during construction, with longer-term stabilisation expected through habitat recolonisation.

Adverse effects were also identified in relation to landscape character and visual amenity, particularly in relation to the new breakwater as viewed from key vantage points around the harbour. Mr Mallia also highlighted a number of positive impacts, including improvement in wave climate and stronger coastal protection, with specific reference to the recent impacts of Storm Harry on cultural structures and the sea caves.

Suggested mitigation measures include colour treatment of visible structures, good site-working practices to reduce turbidity and marine litter, securing environmental permits for dredging, using silt curtains where approved, archaeological monitoring if required, and ongoing environmental monitoring throughout the works. It was also noted that a balance between aesthetic considerations and functionality had been sought.

Mr Mallia noted that consultation feedback raised no particular concerns, with most points adequately addressed through permit conditions.

The Chairman then invited the Directorate to make the presentation.

The Directorate noted that the EIA covered scoping, technical studies, public consultation, and review by the relevant authorities. The EIA also evaluated alternatives, including the do-nothing scenario, which was considered potentially counterproductive in addressing coastal resilience objectives. The Directorate referred to mitigation measures already embedded within the design and construction methodology and those recommended to be addressed as permit conditions, including good construction practices and environmental monitoring.

Reference was made to the HIA, which was submitted as an annex to the EIA and that in consultation with the SCH, any outstanding matters will be addressed directly through the development-control process.

In light of the conclusions of the EIA, the Directorate concluded that, although some residual impacts remain, these were evaluated against alternative designs and are considered adequately mitigated within the best achievable compromise. Thus the Directorate noted that it does not object to the proposed development, subject to appropriate permit conditions and environmental safeguards.

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.

The Chairman then opened the discussion to the Board members.

SFO queried whether sediment build-up and beach formation could occur behind the berm. Mr Mallia explained that the site does not have the conditions required for beach formation, and that the post-construction situation would be similar to the present. Clarifications were also sought on the modelling approach, particularly whether extreme storm events were considered. The EIA coordinator noted that the mathematical model is based on 50 years of data and was updated following the 2019 storm. Data from Storm Harry has not yet been incorporated, although ongoing datasets are routinely added to update the models.

Perit Janice Borg, on behalf of Infrastructure Malta, explained that the berm height required a balance between functional efficiency and visual impact. A higher berm would be more effective, but its height was limited to reduce visual intrusion.

In response to a query by the Chairman as to whether data from Storm Harry should have been included, Mr Mallia noted that the modelling was based on a 50-year dataset and that Storm Harry had not been included as the model was finalised beforehand. It was acknowledged that, over time, adjustments to the berm height may still be needed, particularly with future sea-level rise, noting that the current design represents a compromise. IM representative confirmed that 100-year stability tests were undertaken, but visual-impact constraints required a lower profile, even though a higher structure would provide greater effectiveness. It was also remarked that the sea caves and overlying structures have already been compromised and need stabilisation.

In reply to a query by KFS, EIA coordinator noted that the interlocking blocks are designed to withstand wave height of circa 9.2m.

In response to a queries by MDG, the EIA coordinator confirmed that the SCH was in agreement with the proposed colour treatment for the revetments and breakwater and that IM is committed to implementing it. Regarding the Cystoseira habitat, ADI stated that approximately 29% of the habitat in the area will be affected and that it is dubious whether this species can be transplanted.

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  
Mr Kurt Farrugia  
Prof. Saviour Formosa  
Perit Kevin Fsadni  
Mr Martin Galea De Giovanni  
Mr Isaak Koroma

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

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

MS. LORNA FARRUGIA  
ERA BOARD SECRETARY