

ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES AUTHORITY

Minutes of Board Meeting held on the 07 August 2026

Hexagon House, Marsa

7284. Environmental Impact Assessment Process (EA 00020/22) related to PA/06096/23 -

Proposed Thermal Treatment Facility in the ECOHIVE Complex, including plant building, storage building, administration building, waste water treatment, tank farm and cisterns. Site at, ECOHIVE Complex, Tul il-Kosta, Naxxar.

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 outlining the project's objectives and noted that locally there is limited capacity to treat hazardous waste and while the existing Marsa TTF faces operational constraints. The proposed new TTF is intended to increase local treatment capacity and meet future demand more effectively. Mr Dunlop noted that the project will occupy an area of 18,185 m² and proceeded to provide an overview of the project's main components, design, technology and ancillary infrastructure, including two independent treatment lines and a stack, whereby flue gases will be treated using BAT-compliant abatement systems. The key design considerations that informed the development of the proposal were also presented. A general overview of the proposed operations was provided, noting that the facility is designed to treat fallen animals, expired food, abattoir and butcher shop waste, clinical waste and manufacturing and industrial waste.

Reference was made to the alternatives considered, including the do-nothing scenario and the assessment of four sites within the ECOHIVE Complex, where Site 4 was selected due to its significant advantages.

An overview was provided of the topics assessed as part of the EIA, including land cover and land use, visual amenity, geology, water resources, ecology, agriculture, archaeology, air quality, noise and vibration, and infrastructure and utilities. The assessment identified a number of moderate to major adverse residual impacts during the construction and the operational, despite mitigation measures phases. These primarily relate to the permanent loss of agricultural land, effects on terrestrial ecology, landscape and visual amenity, groundwater recharge, and archaeological and cultural heritage.

Photomontages were presented to demonstrate the visual impact of the proposed development, considering the cumulative development scenario arising from the Waste-to-Energy Facility (WTE), Organic Processing Plant (OPP), Material Recovery Facility (MRF), and Thermal Treatment Facility (TTF). Reference was also made to the cumulative impacts during the construction and the operational phases.

It was further noted that matters relating to terrestrial ecology and avifauna were subject to both an EIA and an Appropriate Assessment (AA).

Mr Dunlop also referred to the feedback received on the EIA Report, from the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH), the Environmental Health Directorate (EHD), the Energy and Water Agency (EWA), and members of the public. An overview of the key issues raised and the corresponding responses provided by the EIA coordinator was also presented.

In conclusion, it was noted that the project will contribute towards the objectives of Malta's Long-Term Waste Management Plan (2021-2030). Although the development will result in some environmental impacts, the adoption of Best Available Techniques (BAT), together with the proposed mitigation and monitoring measures, is expected to ensure compliance with applicable standards and support sustainable waste management outcomes.

The Directorate then delivered the presentation, giving a brief overview of the project, noting that the development will comprise a waste treatment plant, storage areas, an administration building, a tank farm, a wastewater treatment facility, an electrical substation, parking areas, and landscaping. It was also noted that the proposal had been assessed through both an EIA and an AA due to its proximity to Natura 2000 sites.

The Board was informed that the EIA Scoping process included a public and statutory consultation, resulting in the issuance of the final Terms of Reference in June 2024. Feedback received highlighted the need for assessments and mitigation measures relating to air emissions, public health, light pollution, cultural heritage, biodiversity, waste management, fire safety, and other environmental and operational impacts associated with the project. The Directorate also noted that the regulatory and public consultation process on the EIA Report commenced on March 09, 2025. Feedback received through the EIA review consultation and during the public hearing held on April 23, 2025 included submissions from regulatory consultees and over 300 representations from members of the public.

The Directorate outlined the alternatives considered and noted that Site 4 within the ECOHIVE Complex was selected due to operational efficiency, visual integration, logistics and environmental performance. Rotary kiln technology was chosen as the preferred treatment process, and the facility was designed as four interconnected sections following the site's topography. The selected design includes the reuse of excavated material for on-site levelling, a reduced stack height to minimise visual impact, and a layout achieving a net-zero balance between excavation and backfilling.

The Directorate referred to the main findings of the EIA, which indicated that the most significant residual impacts relate to the change of land use and permanent loss of agricultural land, loss of soil, terrestrial habitats and species, landscape and visual amenity, groundwater recharge and increase in runoff, and archaeological and cultural heritage. Regarding air quality, the Directorate presented the assessment methodology adopted and noted that the residual impacts are not expected to be significant, particularly with the implementation of continuous monitoring. Reference was also made to the cumulative impacts during the construction and the operational phases.

The AA concluded that, although a number of environmental impacts remain, with the proposed mitigation measures, nearby Natura 2000 sites would not be adversely affected. Potential indirect impacts, including light, noise, dust and atmospheric emissions, were assessed and considered capable of being adequately mitigated through the application of Best Available Techniques and other environmental controls.

The Directorate recommended no objection to the proposal, noting that the proposal aligns with the objectives of the Waste Management Plan. It was acknowledged that, given the nature of the project, certain environmental impacts are unavoidable, and consideration was given to the site's existing landfill setting when assessing the proposal. The recommendation was made subject to extensive environmental safeguards. These include the submission of detailed pre-commencement documentation, archaeological monitoring, baseline investigations and IPPC permitting requirements, waste and runoff management measures, landscaping and tree protection obligations, and provisions to minimise light pollution. Additional permit conditions

were also proposed to ensure environmental monitoring to minimise impacts during both construction and operation.

The Chairman then opened the discussion to the Board members.

Dr Ciantar acknowledged the importance of the proposed facilities but expressed reservations regarding the rationale for consolidating them within a single site, noting that such an approach entails both advantages and disadvantages. He also considered that a broader range of site alternatives could have been explored and that the EIA could have considered potential synergies with other industries and examined more advantageous scenarios. Referring to cumulative impacts, Dr Ciantar remarked that there are existing facilities that generate odour and other environmental impacts.

In reply, the EIA co-ordinator explained that cumulative impacts had been assessed across all environmental topics considered within the EIA and that these were acknowledged and considered within the baseline environmental conditions.

Mr Richard Bilocca further clarified that the cumulative impact assessment was not limited to WasteServ projects, but also included for example the interconnector and the wider waste management infrastructure within the area. He explained that Wasteserv is committed on improving and enhancing the infrastructure of the waste management facilities, and that co-locating facilities on a single site offers significant advantages through the sharing of infrastructure and the maximisation of waste treatment opportunities, thereby reducing waste transportation requirements, truck movements and associated emissions. Facilities that do not have such interactions have been located elsewhere.

The Directorate referred to the importance of considering the EIA within the broader context in which the project forms part.

Mr Bilocca further noted that the incinerator will provide a new service to the agricultural sector through the treatment of animal waste. He explained that WasteServ will be responsible for the collection and transportation of larger animal carcasses, to ensure that such activities are carried out by competent personnel.

In response to a query from Mr Farrugia regarding the requested addendum by the SCH, Mr Bilocca confirmed that the matter had been addressed. The Directorate confirmed that the comments received had been communicated to the applicant, and that the recommended viewpoints had been duly considered and assessed. It was further noted that the feedback received had been incorporated into the revisions made to the EIA.

As there were no further comments from the public, the ERA Board was then requested to vote on the final assessment as proposed by the Directorate.

The following Board members voted **in favour** of the recommendation by the Directorate:

Perit Vincent Cassar, Chairman

Prof. Emmanuel Sinagra, Deputy Chairman

Prof. Stephanie Fabri

Mr Kurt Farrugia

Prof. Saviour Formosa

Perit Kevin Fsadni

Mr Martin Galea De Giovanni

Mr Isaak Koroma

Mr Clarence Pace

Votes **against** the recommendation:

Dr Christopher Ciantar (*for the reasons previously outlined*)

The Board **approved** the recommendation.

MS. LORNA FARRUGIA
ERA BOARD SECRETARY