

ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES AUTHORITY

Minutes of Board Meeting held on the 07 August 2026

Hexagon House, Marsa

7285. Environmental Impact Assessment Process (EA/00042/20) related to PA/04863/22 -

Proposed Thermal Treatment Facility in the ECOHIVE Complex, including plant building, storage building, administration building, wastewater 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 increasing waste generation and the need to improve recycling performance have created a demand for additional waste recovery infrastructure. Based on future projections, the proposed MRF is expected to require a treatment capacity of approximately 70,000 tonnes per annum by 2030.

Mr Dunlop noted that the project will occupy an area of 21,373 m² and proceeded to provide an overview of the project's main components, design, technology and ancillary infrastructure. A general overview of the proposed operations was provided, noting that the facility is designed to accept and process a number of recyclable waste streams, including but not limited to polyethylene, polystyrene, PVC, ferrous and non-ferrous metals, mixed paper, cardboard and tetrapak.

Reference was made to the alternatives considered, including the do-nothing scenario, which is not aligned with the Long-Term Waste Management Plan, and the assessment of four alternative sites, namely three within the ECOHIVE Complex and one as a replacement for the former Sant Antnin MRF in Marsascala, with the selected location offering the greatest overall 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, 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 Light Pollution Awareness Group, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH), the Environmental Health

Directorate (EHD) and BirdLife Malta (BLM). The key issues raised during the consultation process and the responses provided by the EIA Coordinator were also presented.

In conclusion, it was noted that the project supports the objectives of Malta's Long-Term Waste Management Plan (2021-2030), with a minimal site footprint and measures to reduce environmental impacts. The project is also expected to contribute towards a sustainable waste management in Malta.

The Directorate then delivered the presentation, giving a brief overview of the project, noting that the facility is designed to process grey bag waste and recover recyclable material streams through mechanical sorting. 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 April 2023. The main issues raised were related to land uptake, biodiversity, cultural heritage, landscape and visual impacts, light pollution, air quality, noise, traffic, water management, public health and safety, and waste management.

The Directorate noted that the regulatory and public consultation on the EIA Report, which commenced on August 31, 2025 and remained open for 30 days, generated feedback from the Light Pollution Awareness Group, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH), the Environmental Health Directorate (EHD) and BirdLife Malta (BLM). The Directorate outlined the key issues raised in the feedback received during the consultation process.

The Directorate outlined the alternatives considered, including the replacement of the previous MRF facility at Sant'Antnin and noted that Site 3 within the ECOHIVE Complex was selected in view of its size, topography and strategic location. 'Clean' MRF technology offered more advantages over 'dirty' MRF while the modular layout was selected due to its flexibility and suitability to the site constraints. The assessment also concluded that the zero-option was not viable given the need for additional waste recovery capacity.

The Directorate noted the main findings of the EIA which identified the main moderate and major residual impacts relating to land use, loss of agricultural land and geology, terrestrial ecology, landscape and visual amenity, and cultural heritage/archaeology. Photomontages were presented to demonstrate the visual impact of the proposed development, taking into account 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 noted that the main residual beneficial impacts relate to reduced greenhouse gas emissions and increased waste recovery capacity.

With regard to the impacts on the nearby Natura 2000 sites, the Directorate noted that the main potential impacts relate to dust, noise and light pollution, particularly on nearby protected seabird species. It was further noted that the implementation of standard mitigation measures and good site practices is expected to reduce these impacts to insignificant levels, with no expected adverse effects on the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites.

Whilst noting that some residual impacts would remain following the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, the assessment concluded that the project is of strategic importance for the implementation of Malta's Waste Management Plan, contributing towards achieving recycling targets through the centralisation and enhanced waste management infrastructure. It was further concluded that similar impacts would arise under all alternative site configurations considered and are therefore largely unavoidable. Approximately half of the excavated material is expected to be reused on site or as daily cover, with the remaining material disposed of at an authorised facility.

The Directorate recommended no objection to the proposal, subject to extensive environmental safeguards. These include the submission of detailed pre-commencement submissions, permitting requirements, SCH clearance, waste and runoff management measures, landscaping and lightning plans.

The Chairman then opened the discussion to the Board members.

Dr Ciantar remarked that the proposal is a valuable facility and suggested that potential synergies with the Beverage Container Refund Scheme (BCRS) could be explored. In reply, Mr Bilocca noted that WasteServ and BCRS operate independently. He noted that the tender for the MRF has not yet been issued and explained that the material collected through the grey bag is already being treated, with the proposed project representing a scaling-up of existing operations. While BCRS falls outside WasteServ's remit, Mr Bilocca highlighted the free collection services available to elderly persons and noted WasteServ's commitment in supporting the circular economy, while expressing that operations remain subject to the limitations of the infrastructure available. He also noted the significant shift in waste streams from the black bag to the grey bag.

In reply to a query by Prof. Formosa regarding the separation of recyclables at source, Mr Bilocca explained that the Waste Management Plan contemplates the separate collection of paper and cardboard, although this does not fall within WasteServ's remit.

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

Dr Christopher Ciantar

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: NIL.

The Board **unanimously approved** the recommendation.

MS. LORNA FARRUGIA
ERA BOARD SECRETARY