

<b>Meeting</b>	EIA Public Consultation in relation to the following proposal:  <u>PA/04777/20</u> – EA00001/21: Proposed demolition of existing hotel at San Niklaw Bay and existing bungalows at Santa Marija Bay. The proposed development consists of part excavation and the construction of Class 3B Hotel (140 beds) at San Niklaw Bay area and individual serviced Bungalows (21 units) at Santa Marija Bay area with ancillary facilities and amenities including Spa (class 3C), bars/lounges (Class 4C) and restaurants (class 4D), upgrading the existing berthing facilities (class 3D); construction of swimming pools; reservoirs; complete upgrade of the infrastructure systems and back of house facilities. Upgrading and reinstatement of the natural ecological and existing disturbed terrain in both San Niklaw and Santa Marija areas in accordance with the Gozo and Comino Local Plan. Comino Hotel and Bungalows, Gzira ta' Kemmuna, Kemmuna, Ghajnsielem.
<b>Date</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> November 2021
<b>Duration</b>	16.30hrs – 17.30hrs
<b>Location</b>	Hexagon House, Spencer Hill, Marsa
<b>ERA representatives</b>	Mr Kevin Mercieca, Ms Josianne Abela Vassallo, Mr Ryan Busuttil
<b>Minutes taken by</b>	Ms Marie Therese Vella (ERA) and Ms Christine Scerri (ERA)

Mr Kevin Mercieca opened the online meeting giving details about the proposed development which is currently subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (PA/04777/20– EA 00001/21 : Proposed demolition of existing hotel at San Niklaw Bay and existing bungalows at Santa Marija Bay, Kemmuna).

Details vis-à-vis the purpose of the meeting were provided, in particular that the meeting was part of the EIA process. It was also clarified that this was not the decision-taking meeting but was being held to present the EIA findings and to gather feedback from the public in due time for any relevant considerations to be factored in during the process.

The public was also informed that comments can be put forward in an anonymous manner. There were no objections for the online meeting to be held in English.

Ms Rachel Xuereb on behalf of Adi Associates delivered a presentation explaining the studies carried out as part of the EIA.

Mr Kevin Mercieca opened the floor for comments after the presentation and reminded the participants that they can also leave a comment in the chat being administered by ERA's staff.

**Dr Marie Claire Gatt (Moviment Graffiti)**

Since the light pollution impact in relation to the village has been listed as minor, Dr Gatt expressed her concern and is not convinced that the overall impact is going to be minor. She pointed out that the document is on the mitigation of light pollution with the major aim to promote ecological responsible use of outdoor lighting. She believes the village is going to see a drastic increase in use, footprint and lighting from the bungalows especially given the location being next to a wetland of high significance ecological importance. Regarding loud music she has her doubts as to how effectively this can be managed to actually keep loud music down due to the distance from the bungalows to the hotel. With respect to the impact of the additional pier at Santa Marija Bay, she pointed out that the impacts listed seem to be linked with the construction but not so much with the operation, and with this massive pier in Santa Marija Bay, the overall use is expected to increase. She also said that there has not been a mention of the increased impact of increased traffic because of this, both on the marine environment and also on the terrestrial environment. Dr Gatt suggested that when it was mentioned that the aspect of trampling directly linked to the bungalow use, she thinks this should be also linked to the pier use.

**Ms Rachel Xuereb (ADI Associates)**

Ms Xuereb explained that they are aware that there is an existing light source, they also worked with the person designing the lights. She assured that there is an awareness on the ecological importance of the island and using outdoor lighting to the bare minimum. In terms of music, the coordinator explained that they assessed the worst case impact where full blast speakers were used, which is unlikely on Comino. In terms of the piers, she explained that they also looked at the operation and also the impact on the seabed from the toing and froing of vessels. They also noted that visiting the bay on a weekend in summer, this will be full of boats, and one of the aims of having a pier is for the boats not to anchor in Santa Marija but to actually berth at the pier so there was a balance between these two impacts.

**Perit Antonio Belvedere (Project Architect)**

When it comes to light pollution, Perit Belvedere outlined two major approaches, one is to control the exterior lighting to protect the dark sky in Comino, whilst also controlling the lighting inside. The hotel will have canopies, as well as in the bungalow courtyards to avoid light spilling out and contain it within the village and the hotel. They have also spaced the outdoor lighting to reduce the amount of light.

**Dr Marie Claire Gatt (Moviment Graffiti)**

Dr Gatt said she appreciates the efforts of reducing lighting going upwards, however she was still concerned about the very short distance effects that are significant in this case so it's also the light pollution that is spilling onto the adjacent habitats. She expressed her concern that we cannot compare the future impact to the current one in order to justify what is about to be done with the project.

**Ms Rachel Xuereb (ADI Associates)**

Ms Xuereb clarified that there was an element of light that the avifauna coexisted with, in the past.



**Dr John Paul Cauchi (Moviment Graffiti)**

Dr Cauchi's main concern is about the actual expansion of the village. He said that the hotel seems to be pretty well mitigated but the proposed bungalows seem to be over-spilling over the current footprint. His concern is not only for the reasons already mentioned vis-à-vis lighting noise etc. but also vis-à-vis the number of people in greater amounts being there for a longer period over the year. There are more people staying there in a concentrated area. And given Comino's size and its status as a Natura 2000 site, the extensive increase could be a transformative impact when it comes to the outcome of Santa Marija Bay, for example. On the other hand, he is happy for the actual sewage treatment. Dr Cauchi pointed out that what needs to be factored in is the increased number of boats into the pier and in Santa Marija Bay due to an increasing demand of people staying in the proposed bungalows.

Mr Kevin Mercieca closed the meeting by confirming that the points raised have been noted. He also thanked the participants and invited them to send any further comments, preferably by email to [eia.malta@era.org.mt](mailto:eia.malta@era.org.mt), or by post to 'The Director, Environment and Resources Authority, Hexagon House, Spencer Hill, Marsa', by the 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2021.

