

MEMORANDUM

TO: Perit Vincent Cassar – Chairman

FROM: Christine Tanti – Unit Manager

CC: Kevin Mercieca – CEO
Aimee Brincat – Director
Alexander Camilleri – Deputy Director

DATE: 6th March 2026

SUBJECT: EA 00052/19 - 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

Introduction and Case Background

PA/08471/19 proposes the construction of a submerged berm and revetments offshore between St Elmo Bridge and Barriera Wharf whilst PA/04783/20 proposes the creation of a new outer breakwater arm extending north of St Elmo Point.

The proposals are within the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (S.L. 549.46), specifically the following criteria in Schedule I, Category II:

- Section 6.2.2.2 – *Dredging or other changes to the seabed, excluding maintenance dredging within an already existing harbour or its official fairway*; and
- Section 6.2.2.3 – *Coastal works to combat erosion, and works capable of altering the coast (through the construction of, for example, breakwaters, dykes, moles, jetties, groynes, sea-walls, wave-breakers, underwater berms, and other sea defence works) not covered by Category I, excluding the maintenance and repair of such works.*

Accordingly, the proposals have been screened holistically in accordance with the above-mentioned Regulations. In view of the nature, scale, context and complexity of the proposal, the screening indicated the need for further assessment including technical studies, through an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). A summary of the EIA, its ancillary process and the salient findings is annexed.

The consultants' EIA report along with all the relevant documentation can be accessed from the ERA website (Ref: EA 00052/19), through the following link: <https://era.org.mt/era-project/ea-00052-19/>.

A Heritage Impact Assessment was also requested by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH) and was submitted as an Annex within the EIA. The report was referred to UNESCO for their review and a response is still pending. Following discussion with the SCH, it was agreed that the Heritage Impact Assessment and its ancillary process are best followed up independently from the EIA, thereby enabling the EIA process to be concluded and the heritage impact assessment to be mainstreamed directly into the development control process.

Overview and main findings of the EIA Report

The EIA Report identified significant residual impacts on:

- Geo-environment:
 - due to extraction of c.19,000 mineral resources (Berm - c.13,000m³; revetments c.2,244m³; outer breakwater c. 4,000m³) and
 - change in underwater geomorphology in the outer grand harbour area.
- Marine environment:
 - changes in the configuration of the coast due to the breakwater; and
 - changes in the configuration of the seabed due to all of the interventions.
- Marine biodiversity in terms of the loss or damage to benthic habitats (mainly relating to algal species) due to the construction of the berm. There will be a major adverse impact in the short term however it will shift to minor in the long term due to the berm providing a new space for colonisation and possible regrowth;
- Cultural Heritage, due to the impacts on the coastal landscape context of Valletta via the construction of the revetments and the outer breakwater;
- Landscape (visual impact, and modification of landscape character in terms of change in land use for Local Landscape Tract of Valletta) due to the outer breakwater; and
- Visual Amenity:
 - due to the construction of the outer breakwater from viewpoints 1 – Fort St. Angelo, 5 – Fort Ricasoli (looking northwest), 6 – Tigné Point and 9 – Simulation of cruise passenger liner approaching the Grand Harbour (looking northwest); and
 - cumulative impact from viewpoints 1 – Fort St. Angelo, 5 – Fort Ricasoli (looking northwest) and 6 – Tigné Point.

Directorate's Assessment and Recommendations

While noting the residual impacts the Directorate acknowledges that these considerations were reviewed in the context of other design possibilities, that the proposed configuration has been adequately mitigated, and that the do-nothing scenario could be potentially counter-productive.

Following its assessment of the proposal, and taking into consideration the consultants' evaluation, the Directorate does not object to the proposed development, subject to the adoption of appropriate mitigatory measures including good practice during the construction phase.

In this regard, a number of conditions are being recommended for inclusion in the development permit accordingly (refer to **Annex II**).