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THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

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Legal and Policy Issues

1.1 Core Functions

The core business of the Superintendence as set by the Cultural Heritage Act 2002 includes the following functions:

- Heritage Data Management and Processing: national heritage databases, national inventory of cultural heritage assets, museums and sites, clean storage/archiving of documents and artefacts, data provision to the general public.
- Planning development issues: field evaluations, planning process consultations, recommendations for scheduling, Environmental Impact Assessments, Appeals Board.
- Museums and Sites Monitoring: assessment, auditing, guardianship.
- Surveillance, Enforcement and Prosecution: all aspects of the Cultural Heritage Act 2002.
- Movement of Cultural Goods: import/export, Customs, border control, EU regulations.
- Heritage Data-Capture: field work, excavation, evaluation of art objects, collections, documentation and other, covering all territory including territorial waters.
- International Commitments: UNESCO, Council of Europe, European Union, European and Euro-Med partnership, bi-lateral and multi-lateral relations.
- Communication and Outreach: press, public relations, education, Local Councils, schools, publication programme.
- National Forum: compilation and upgrade of the State of the Heritage Report.
- Policy Development: policy, standards, guidelines, regulations, heritage management plans, advice to Government on heritage matters.

The National Cultural Inventory

1.1 Cultural Heritage Inventory Management System (CHIMS)

The Cultural Heritage Act 2002 identifies the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage as the statutory body responsible for the development and management of a National Inventory of Cultural Property.

The Superintendence launched the Cultural Heritage Inventory Management System Project (CHIMS), which aims to create a new knowledge-based context for understanding, managing and disseminating data concerning Malta's cultural heritage through the creation and maintenance of an electronic database.

The Project involving the creation of the required electronic database System started in October 2005 and was completed in February 2007, by which CHIMS was fully developed, implemented and tested.

CHIMS was officially launched on the 9th of February 2007. The launch was inaugurated by H.E. Dr. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici and the Hon. Minister for Tourism and Culture, Dr. Francis Zammit Dimech. Speeches were held by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage and by Datatrak Solutions Ltd, who developed the System. A demonstration of the System was also given.

Land Use Issues

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage is regularly engaged in reviewing land use and land development proposals. In cases in which cultural heritage assets appear to be impacted negatively by these proposals the Superintendence intervenes in line with the provisions of the Cultural Heritage Act. In carrying out these duties, the Superintendence interfaces either directly with the entity proposing the development, or with other public entities involved in the regulation of land use and land resources.

2.1 Major Land Use Issues 2007

- Dock Number 1, Cospicua

The Superintendence gave feedback to a request for consultation by MEPA on a proposed project for the development of Dock Number 1 in Cospicua. In its reply, the Superintendence emphasized the cultural and historical values of the Dock, as well as the surrounding buildings and fortifications. The Superintendence also recommended a change in the project proposal. Another recommendation by the Superintendence was that the cultural assets affected by this project should be given appropriate consideration during the design and implementation of the project.

- Ta' Cenc, limites of Sannat

The Superintendence continued evaluating the proposed development at Ta' Cenc. The Superintendence carried out several inspections of the area extending from the entire Ta' Cenc plateau towards the valley and bay of Mgarr ix-Xini. During these inspections several previously unknown archaeological features were discovered, which led to a better understanding of the archaeological and historical sensitivity of the area as a whole. The Superintendence recommended that the entire area be scheduled by MEPA, in view of its value as a cultural landscape.

- Ramla I-Hamra, limits of Xaghra

The Superintendence was informed of a proposed development over a stretch of land overlooking Ramla l-Hamra bay. The proposed development was considered to have a highly negative impact on the cultural heritage of the area. Although the MEPA process was in an advanced stage, the Superintendence intervened urgently and informed MEPA about the serious threat to cultural heritage posed by the proposed development, and stated that the cultural heritage assets of the area should be identified and preserved.

- Tal-Kus, limits of Xewkija

The Superintendence was involved in assessing the impact of a proposed Waste Separation plant in the area of Tal-Kus. The Superintendence informed MEPA about several archaeological remains and features in the area, and recommended that these archaeological sites and the surrounding landscape should be conserved and protected. The Superintendence also recommended that the area surrounding the proposed development should be cleared from the extensive illegal dumping and that the original guarigue landscape at Tal-Kus should be restored.

- Fort Chambray, Ghajnsielem

The Superintendence intervened with respect to an application for the development of a hotel within the 18th Century Fort Chambrey. The proposed development would have required the demolition of a 19th Century Barracks Block known as the British Block. The Superintendence made a recommendation to MEPA to Schedule the British Block. It was also recommended that Fort Chambrey should be the object of a Master Plan to ensure that future developments within it should be carried out in respect of the surviving historical fabric of this monument.

- Sukkursu Channel, Salina Bay.

The Superintendence intervened to stop potentially damaging dredging works within the Knights' Period channel, known as the Sukkursu Channel. The dredging was being carried out by Works Division as part of a wider project aimed at improving storm water runoff in the area of Burmarrad Plain. Following a consultation process between the parties, the plans for dredging of the Channel were amended to ensure the historical fabric of this structure is adequately protected.

- San Niklaw Airstrip / Tal-Qanpiena

The San Niklaw is the best preserved example of a World War II military airstrip in the Maltese Islands. Following an application by the Department for Agriculture to demolish the WWII structures and replace them with a cattle breeding

complex. The Superintendence raised concerns about the suitability of such a land use in view of the area's historical significance. Following this submission MEPA requested the developer to fund a base line study of the area's heritage assets and to assess the impact of the proposed development on the area.

- Valletta Harbours

The harbours around Valletta have been the object of increasing attention both by public and private economic operators. In particular the area's tourism and economic infrastructure is becoming the object of an upgrading and expansion exercise on an unprecedented scale. The Superintendence has submitted its views and given detailed consultations on a number of these proposals, including:

- The Marsamxett Master Plan
- Grand Harbour Projects
- Projects relating to the Cottonera Waterfront
- Dock No. 1

The Superintendence has highlighted the great architectural, archaeological and landscape value of the Valletta Harbours area and the need to ensure that it is not lost or damaged in the process of redevelopment of the area. In particular two key issues were raised in the relevant submissions on these developments, namely:

The need for a comprehensive approach to the re-development and conservation needs of the Valletta Harbours.

The urgent need to develop a comprehensive cultural heritage database for the architectural and archaeological assets of the Valletta Harbours area.

2.2 Malta Environment and Planning Authority, Consultation on Development Applications

In 2007 the consultation process between MEPA and the Superintendence was reviewed to ensure a better coverage of the applications considered. Consequently an officer of the Superintendence started attending the meetings of the Heritage Advisory Committee. The Superintendence only has observer status at these meetings, though its input is recorded in the minutes.

Independently of the HAC, the Superintendence has also carried out consultations with the MEPA Directorate on a number of development applications impacting known or possible archaeological and architectural assets. In the course of 1997 approximately 180 development applications were received by the Superintendence.

In 2007 the Superintendence introduced a new system for the archaeological monitoring of developments already approved by MEPA. A list of approved archaeological monitors was posted on the Superintendence website, facilitating the process for developments with the 'monitoring clause' included. Following the introduction of this measure, the number of documented monitored developments under the direction of the Superintendence rose considerably. In 2007 the number of monitored cases stood around 120 cases.

2.3 Awtorita` Dwar it-Trasport, Applications for Road-works

In 2006, ADT introduced an on-line system for the processing of road work applications. In the course of 2007, the Superintendence was inserted on this system as a regular consultee by ADT on road and trenching works in areas known to be archaeologically sensitive. This allows the Superintendence to submit its observations and recommendations to ADT in real time. In the course of the 2007, the Superintendence responded to approximately 70 road work applications by ADT.

3.1 BOV Tarxien Temples Project

Following the results of the archaeological investigations carried out on the site proposed for the building of the Visitors Centre at Tarxien Temples, the Superintendence held a number of meetings with Heritage Malta. During these meetings the issue of re-designing the footprint of the Visitors Centre was discussed, and finally approved. The revised footprint of the building was reduced in order to preserve an area in which prehistoric deposits had been discovered.

3.2 Excavations Related to the Visitors Centre, Tarxien

Following the removal of topsoil and debris from the area identified for the location of the Visitors Centre at Tarxien Temples, further excavation was carried out manually by ASC, under the supervision of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, in a number of trenches where the stilts supporting the building were being proposed.

These excavations revealed four points which were found to be archaeologically sensitive, located in the south-western corner of the site proposed for development. Excavation of these trenches was continued by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage and Heritage Malta. The archaeological excavation yielded deposits rich in prehistoric pottery shards and burnt bone. Some lithics were also retrieved. Traces of charcoal were also found. Two small spherical stones were found, similar to those found within the Temple site itself. A number of cuts in bedrock were also discovered, and also possible prehistoric structure remains.

In view of the discoveries made above, it was decided that the building of the Visitors Centre should not disturb this archaeologically rich area in any way. As such, plans for the building were amended by Heritage Malta accordingly, and approved by the Superintendence.

3.3 Hagar Qim and Mnajdra Heritage Park Project

Monitored clearance of soil and debris covering the area proposed for the Visitors Centre at Hagar Qim and Mnajdra

Heritage Park started in March 2007. Archaeological investigation of the area proceeded by Kim Muscat under the supervision of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. These excavations revealed a number of circular rock cut features which are possibly prehistoric.

The original plan for the Visitors Centre involved unacceptable rock-cutting. The Superintendence asked that these plans should be revised so as to avoid this rock-cutting. Attention was also given to the height of the building so as not to have a negative impact on the skyline. Following the revision of these plans by Heritage Malta, it was noted that the new plans still required some interventions on the rock surface. Further mitigation measures were taken to reduce the impact as much as possible.

A tender for the excavation of the areas identified for the proposed anchoring of the protective shelters over Hagar Qim and Mnajdra was issued by Heritage Malta. The Superintendence was involved in the drafting of the tender and also formed part of the Tender Adjudication Team. The archaeological investigations were carried out under the supervision and direction of the Superintendence started in August 2007. The first archaeological features were reported in December 2007. These included a number of post-holes cut into the bedrock in the approximate vicinity of the main structure at Hagar Qim.

4.1 Theft of Archaeological and Historic Sites at Sea

The criminal proceedings started jointly by the Police and by the Superintendence in 2006 against five sport divers was concluded in 2007. The five divers were being prosecuted for removing illegally over 500 historical and archaeological artefacts from various sites in the Maltese Territorial Waters. The Court found all five divers guilty. The items recovered from the residences of the divers were confiscated and allocated by the Court to the Superintendence for safekeeping.

4.2 Ta' Hagraat Temples

Following the issue of a Development Permit for the construction of a private residence in the immediate vicinity of the Ta' Hagraat Temples, the Superintendence objected to the start of works. The works were stopped on the grounds that such a development was damaging to this World Heritage Monument. The Superintendence had already objected to this development at the planning stage, prior to the issue of the Development Permit. Following the action of the Superintendence, Government through the agency of Heritage Malta started procedures for the acquisition of the land in question.

5.1 Export or Movement of Cultural Goods

In the course of 2007 and in keeping with its role, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage regulated the export and movement of cultural goods leaving and entering the country from EU States, and States outside the Union.

In the course of the year, the Superintendence monitored approximately 350 shipments of goods, and inspected several items having cultural heritage value.

6.0 Archaeological Investigations

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage carried out approximately 20 archaeological investigations, both on land and at sea. A number of projects were also carried out as part of the research collaborations both with local and international partners.

6.1 Major Fieldwork Cases

Besides the interventions reported in Bus 3 above, and in continuation to interventions reported in section Bus 2, the main archaeological interventions treated in the course of 2006 were the following:

6.1.1 Hagar Qim and Mnajdra Temples – Protective Shelter foundations

The Superintendence directed an archaeological investigation at these two key sites as part of an impact assessment of the proposed foundation system of the protective shelters at these sites. Work started in August 2007 and required the excavation of 28 trenches at Hagar Qim and a further 23 trenches at Mnajdra. In almost all cases the excavation removed the upper agricultural soil strata to establish whether any archaeological features could be detected beneath. The exercise was completed in February of 2008.

6.1.2 Archaeological Site at Ta Qali New American Embassy

A large scale archaeological investigation was carried out at the site of the new American Embassy at ta' Qali. The investigation documented a cluster of 14 silo pits, with occupation layers of both the Bronze Age and the Early Roman Period. A cluster of rock-cut Late Roman and early Byzantine tombs were also uncovered in the area. Steps were taken, in collaboration with the Embassy to ensure that these archaeological remains were adequately protected.

6.1.3 Site at il-Giardina off Triq il Kullegg, Rabat

An extensive excavation was carried out by the Superintendence within a catacomb complex sited off Triq il-Kullegg, Rabat. The site had been discovered late in the preceding year in the course of construction works. The site consists of three interconnected catacombs dating from the Mid-to-Late Roman Empire. About half of the subterranean chambers have been excavated in the course of these investigations by the end of 2007.

6.1.5 St. Rita Street, Rabat

A further investigation was carried out in Rabat in an area of St.Rita Str. The investigation documented part of a large rock-cut ditch or depression known to exist in this area and which is traditionally described as part of the defences of the ancient Roman town of Melita.

6.1.6 The Old Parish Church of Siggiewi

Is-Sovrintendenza tal-Patrimonju Kulturali ikkollaborat mal-Unit tar-Restawr tad-Divizjoni tax-Xogholijiet waqt xogholijiet ta' restawr skond il-permess ghall-izvilupp PA 06840/06. Is-Sovrintendenza kellha f'idejha is-sorveljanza tax-xogholijiet u l-harsien tal-antikitet. Waqt ix-xogholijiet instabu ukoll bosta elementi ta' skultura u gebel mahdum li kienu mirduma taht il-hamrija tal-ghalqa li inholqot aktar minn mitt sena ilu.

6.2 Research Collaborations

6.2.1 Ghar ix-Xih Excavations, Xewkija

The excavation of the archaeological site of Ghar ix-Xih entered its third year. This investigation is sponsored by the Local Councils of Xewkija and Sannat and is being carried out as a joint collaboration between the Superintendence and the Department of archaeology of the University of Malta.

6.2.2 Ancient Landscape Project : Mgarr Ix-Xini / Tas-Salvatur, Sannat

In addition to the investigations at Ghar ix-Xih, the Superintendence also continued the archaeological survey of the Mgarr ix-Xini Valley system. The Survey identified and documented new archaeological features in the valley. This Survey was also sponsored by the Local Councils of Sannat and Xewkija.

6.3.3 GRAN – Polynesian Wreck 3-D survey

In 2006 a research collaboration agreement was signed with a French NGO, the Group de Recherche en Archeologie Naval .The aim of the collaboration is to set up joint projects for the study of marine sites and wrecks. The first initiative to be set up under this agreement is the 3-D survey of the World War I wreck of the *Polynesiene*, a French Liner sunken off Marsascala in 1918. The wreck was surveyed by means of multi-beam sonar on board of the French Minesweeper *Le Verseau*, which was loaned for the occasion from the French Navy. The survey was successfully completed and a detailed 3-D scan of the wreck was obtained in the process.

6.3.4 Universita` di Siena – Geological Survey at Dellimara

The Superintendence issued a permit for the carrying out of a geological survey in the area of Dellimara by the Department of Earth Science of the University of Siena. The object of the survey is to study and date the sequence of Globigerina Limestone strata and to correlate it to the world geological record.

6.2.5 AURORA / HM Xlendi Project

In 2006 the Heritage Malta/AURORA Trust Project was launched with the aim of exploring some facets of Malta's underwater cultural heritage. The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage has been involved in this Project since its early stages with one of its officers being a full participant to the working of the Scientific Team. An underwater site at Xlendi was identified for investigation. Subsequently, different levels of examination and data capture of the site were carried out, including a digital map of the deepwater area off Xlendi and a detailed record of the areas within the site which have the highest concentration of archaeological material. In 2007 a multibeam survey was carried out in order to consolidate data obtained during the 2006 season. A side scan sonar survey was also carried out, aimed at creating a high resolution geo-referenced topographical map of the seabed and that would detect and map targets within the survey area.

7. The Council of Europe

7.1.1 CDPAT BUREAU

Since 2004, the Superintendence represents the Minister for Culture on the Cultural Heritage Steering Committee of the Council of Europe (known as the CD PAT). In 2007 the Maltese delegate on the CD PAT was elected by the Committee members to sit on the Bureau of the same CD PAT. This nomination is valid for a duration of two years, namely 2007-2008..

7.1.2 European Heritage Network (HEREIN)

The European Heritage Network (HEREIN), launched in 1999, is a permanent information system gathering various services offered by governmental institutions in charge of heritage protection within the Council of Europe. The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage participated in the annual meeting of the national correspondents of HEREIN which took place in Strasbourg in November 2007. Issues discussed in this meeting included the updating of the National Reports, the work carried out in connection with the Monitoring of the Valletta Convention for Archaeological Heritage and HEREIN 3, the maintenance of the System and the relocation of its server to Strasbourg, the required agreements between the network members regarding the structure of HEREIN, the network's Thesaurus, the 2008 intergovernmental work plan which includes a structured dialogue with the Council of Europe's project 'The Compendium on Cultural Policies' in order to develop the Directorate's observatory role, as well as the HEREIN's Work Plan from January to July 2008.

8.1 Superintendence Website

The Superintendence Website can be accessed at: www.culturalheritage.gov.mt. The site is user friendly and from the homepage, one can access information about the functions of the Superintendence, its projects, its news and activities, as well as general information about Malta's cultural heritage.

In the course of 2007, a number of publications of the Superintendence were made available online. Moreover, documents required by various Superintendence processes were made available for downloading through the website.

8.2 Culture 2000 – Crossings, a Contemporary View

The CULTURE 200 project Crossings, A Contemporary View was completed according to program in 2007. The closing event of the program was the setting up of a travelling exhibition of contemporary video art and conceptual art on the subject of Crossings in the present day Mediterranean. This event was launched in Malta in 2006, following which it has travelled to Amiens (France) and Nicosia (Cyprus) in the course of 2007.

8.3 Mgarr ix-Xini Project

The research collaboration between the Superintendence and the Local Councils of Sannat and Xewkija was continued in the course of 2007. The work undertaken included the excavations at Ghar ix-Xih, the survey of Mgarr ix-Xini and the organisation of an exhibition for both Localities. The exhibition was funded jointly by the Local Councils and the Superintendence, and was set up in collaboration with the Department of Archaeology of the University of Malta.

The exhibition showed for the first time to the public some of the results obtained by the excavations at the Punic and Roman sanctuary site of Ghar ix-Xih.

9.1 National Forum 2007

The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage assisted the Ministry for Tourism and Culture in the planning and organisation of the 2007 National Forum for Cultural Heritage.

The key theme of the Forum was the impact of the voluntary sector on the Maltese cultural heritage sector. A lively discussion within the forum was very lively, with particular reference on the role of the voluntary sector in the restoration and conservation of the nation's cultural heritage.

The report of the Superintendence in the Forum was focused on the need to build up appropriate statistics on the performance of the heritage sector, particularly in the public sphere. Without such long term monitoring and statistics collection, implementing the vision of the National Cultural Heritage Strategy will not be effectively achieved.

10.1 National Strategy for the Cultural Heritage

The first National Strategy for the Cultural Heritage was presented to the public by the Hon. Minister for Culture on the 9th of December 2006.

The presentation of the Strategy was done in the course of the National Forum for Cultural Heritage, and was accompanied by an explanatory note on the function of the Strategy delivered by the Superintendence.

The publication of this document is an important landmark in the process of implementing the Cultural Heritage Act (2002). The Strategy is required by the Heritage Act and has the function of giving guidance and coordinating activities within the Ministry responsible for cultural heritage management.

A Maltese version of the document was prepared and printed by the Superintendence in the course of 2007 on behalf of the Ministry for Tourism and Culture.

Proposed Regulation on the Export of Cultural Property from Malta to Third Countries 2005

During 2007, preparatory work was carried out by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage together with H.E. Dr. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici and the Translation and Law Drafting Unit of the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs in order to transpose the Regulation on the Export of Cultural Property from Malta to Third Countries 2005 into Maltese Law.