

Memo to Political Parties For their electoral manifesto 2012



6 November 2012

Address: P.O.Box 9 Valletta VLT 1000 Tel 21313150, email: info:naturetrustmalta.org

Index	2
Introduction	3
Environment Protection Agency	3
Law enforcement	4
Natura 2000 site	5
Marine Protected Areas	6
Fisheries	7
Pollution and Air Quality	7
Transport	8
Waste Incentives	8
Environmental Education	9
Civil Society	10
National Budgets and Eco Taxes	10

Introduction

Nature Trust (Malta) is a nongovernmental non profit organisation that has been working on environmental issues since 12 December 1962. The organisation today focuses on four main areas

Environmental Education – this is carried out through school visits, guided walks in managed sites and other sites of ecological importance, campaigns, and the running of the International programmes such as EkoSkola, Young Reporters for the Environment, Learning About Forests, Blue Flag for Beaches and Green Key for Hotels

Ecological site management – taking up sites of ecological importance and seek funds to restore these and conserve the site while opening it to the public to enjoy and learn on our natural heritage – sites include Wied Ghollieqa Nature Reserve, Xrobb L-Ghagin Nature Park etc. The organisation is also working on the Pembroke Natura 2000 site with the Malta Tourism Authority to promote this new site for Eco tourism

Wildlife Rescue – Rescue and rehabilitation of injured local wildlife e.g. Marine turtles, hedgehogs, bats etc. NTM is now seeking funds to set up the first wildlife rehab centre in Malta

Awareness raising – taking up issues such as Climate change, water quality, biodiversity protection, marine ecology etc

Nature Trust (Malta) is non political and is prepared to work with any government or authority for the improvement of our natural heritage. None of the Council members can be members in any political parties according to the organisation Statute.

On the eve of a General election the Organisation would like to present its suggestions to political parties for their consideration in their electoral programme.

Environment Protection Agency

It is today evident that, the merger of the Planning Authority and the Environment Protection Department was never a success story. One cannot point at any milestone achievements in the last years on biodiversity protection and environmental improvement issues through such a merger. Furthermore MEPA's role to set up a national strategy for environmental conservation was never carried out and such strategies had to come from Government such as the Sustainable Development strategy which was drafted but never implemented and the Environment Strategy which so far has been presented.

It is therefore being suggested that

- The MEPA merger be reversed

- An Environment Protection Agency be set up (Similar to what is done in other EU countries like the UK)
- The Agency would be responsible for Strategies, Policies and legislation recommendations
- The Agency would have a vote on development issues especially those that may have an impact on ecological sensitive sites or that may have a pollution impact such as noise, water, marine, air and biodiversity
- The agency would be responsible to monitor and give up-to-date information on the respective EU Directives and the countries compliance to such directives
- The Agency would work hand in hand with the ALE for enforcement issues.
- The agency would oversee the management of all Natura 2000 sites and SAC and liaison directly with site managers for the conservation of the sites.

Law Enforcement

Law enforcement still remains one of the most poorly managed social protection institutions in the Maltese Islands. Whilst Malta has many laws and regulations that could potentially make the Island a classic example of proper enforcement practices even for other EU member states, such legislation is mostly on paper only. Moreover it makes no sense to have a separate enforcement unit under each authority in a scenario where they are hardly communicating with each other let alone co-ordinating operations. Human resources is too limited in Malta and thus centralisation would be the best option for effectiveness and expertise

It is therefore being suggested that

- The Administrative Law Enforcement unit should be reorganised and made responsible solely for environmental issues – therefore becoming the Environment Police Unit.
- All reports on environmental issues should be sent to the ALE.
- The ALE should be beefed up to be able to carry out its work in relation to any sectors of the environment both in Malta and Gozo.
- ALE officers should be trained on all EU Environmental Directives and local legislation.
- ALE officers should be trained to recognise species - NTM is prepared to allocate free places to ALE Officers in its Natural History Course.
- Penalties should be meted out in proportion to the damage done to the environment, and the Courts should be made aware and updated on environmental issues, especially now that Malta has various obligations under EU law.
- Set up Park and site rangers to act as wardens with executive powers and work hand in hand with the ALE Police Unit

Natura 2000 sites and SACs

With Malta's membership in the EU, our country obligations towards protecting ecological sites such as Natura 2000 sites have become more important. It is a priority that all Natura 2000 sites and SAC sites have a management plan

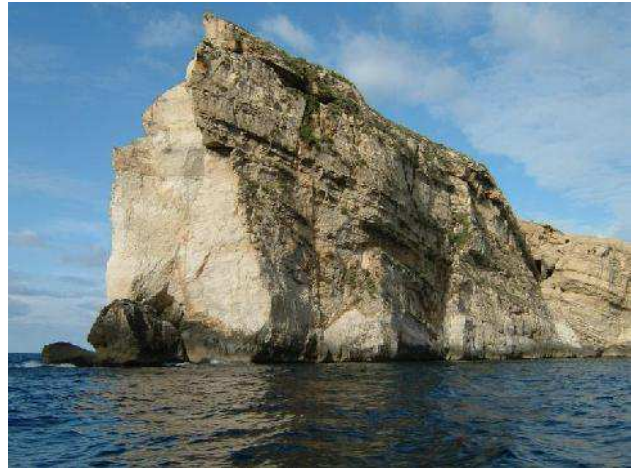
It is therefore being suggested that

- Conservation measures e.g. Management Plans for Natura 2000 sites are completed in the shortest time possible. So far we are informed that before last quarter 2014 no plans will be available. Till such date the Agency should have short term conservation plans to ensure protection of such sites till the management plans are approved
- Natura 2000 sites should fall under central governments and not part of the Local Council since these are areas of EU importance
- Funds are allocated by Central Government for the management and protection of such sites
- The Environment Protection Agency is to pass on the management of such sites to Organisations that are competent to carry out the management plan and have the necessary expertise. Rather than set up management Boards (for each site) such sites should fall solely under the National Environment Agency and it is this agency that would deals with stakeholders and regulating them and also deal directly with the site managers appointed directly by the agency
- Funds passed on to site managers are to be used for Conservation measures in the implementation of plans, human resources management, wardening, educational activities and site management itself. Annual reports to ensure transparency are to be submitted to the EPA
- Management of sites is to be awarded via a contract to designated site manager who should not be part of the EPA. The role of the manager would be to implement the plan and manage the site and would be answerable to the Agency as the responsible authority. The role of the EPA is to set policies and monitor proper implementation of plans by organisation
- The EPA should have one national Board to oversee all sites being managed and work with each manager rather than having one boards for each site. Board members should be appointed according to their expertise in ecological site management and EU requirements.



Marine MPAs

To date, Malta still lacks behind on Marine Protected Areas. The concept of such marine protected areas has been in the pipeline since 1986. What one finds today are half baked solutions with no proper zonation, no enforcement and no proper management. Marine Protected Areas are important as they offer areas where biodiversity is protected, allowed breeding for specie population and therefore of benefit to fisheries, attracting more diving tourists and therefore an economic benefit.



To this reason the following is being recommended

- Carry out studies on potential sites all around the Maltese Islands
- Set up management plans for such sites
- Set up legislation for their protection
- Ensure zonation for all sites with an area identified as a no activity zone
- Carry out carrying capacities for diving visitors to ensure sustainability
- Train police on affective law enforcement on such sites
- Monitor specie populations
- Control all activities
- Appoint site managers to manage such MPAs once plans are in place (To follow same recommendations as terrestrial site management)

Fisheries

There needs to be two major changes in fisheries, which can be achieved by adopting the new reformed CFP and the shark management plan.

It is being recommended that

- adopt the CFP reform
- Focusing on the artisanal fishers and promote this type of fishing. Subsidies should be allocated to fishers to maintain and refurbish their existing fishing boats, rather than for scrap page.
- Putting environmental sustainability on the same level as economic and social sustainability, this is in line with the Lisbon Treaty, which lists all objectives on the same level
- Public funds should be allocated to public goods, for example for research, data collection, monitoring and control and pilot schemes. There must also be transparency in the allocation of public funds. Infringements will remove the eligibility of such funds.
- Sharks Action Plan - The management plan needs to have the following objectives and must be adopted by Fisheries (MRRA), for it to become successful. It will also need to incorporate scientific advice and enforcement. The main objectives of the POA – shark: Data collection, Reduction in by catch, Use of selective gear, Monitoring and control, Education, Although finning does not take place in Maltese Waters, the fins naturally attached and landing of sharks whole, should also be included in the plan



Pollution and Air Quality

Environmental Pollution is today having a negative effect on Society, the country's economy and biodiversity. It is therefore important that issues are addressed without further delay

It is being suggested that

- Proper monitoring is carried out on air quality and results made public on a monthly basis
- Proper monitoring is carried out on water quality and results made public on a monthly basis
- Proper monitoring is carried out on noise and results made public on a monthly basis
- All power plants should be converted to work on Gas or renewable energy

- The construction industry is regulated to reduce particle pollution
- Quarrying and transport of rubble waste needs to be improved and dust particles controlled when construction waste etc is transported
- Town and village centres are to be left free of heavy vehicles and other pollution generators
- Incentives for renewable energy are encouraged to continue especially PVs. Here a national strategy needs to be put in place on Roofs and building heights.
- Renewable energy farms should not be set up on ecological sites considering that Malta has limited land space
- Eco tax funds are to be used to fund the conservation and management of Natura 2000 sites

Transport

The public transport needs to continue the improvement plans. Only in this way can Malta have a proper traffic management System and clean air.

- ✧ The authorities should embark on educational campaigns
- ✧ Increase taxes on older cars
- ✧ Reduce registration tax on new and environment friend cars to encourage more change
- ✧ Continue with incentives on scrapping schemes
- ✧ Ensure that all the public transport fleets are of euro 5 and new cars
- ✧ Press commercial coaches, and heavy vehicles to also fall in line with environment friendly transport (today one can still see old buses and coaches, trucks etc emitting heavy emissions)

Waste incentives

With the Maltese population still producing large volumes of waste, more incentives and educational campaigns need to be introduced.

It is therefore being recommended that

- Subsidise waste composting bins for household use.
- Introduce scrapping incentives on white good to reduce dumping of such in our countryside when purchasing energy friend new goods

- Increase eco tax on junk mails which s increasing all over the Island
- Make national awards for Local councils that promote green consumption and reduce overall waste in the locality. (E.g. Introduce in Malta the Agenda 21 or Eco Community 21 eco label for LCs)
- Get private sector to introduce recycled waste collection machine for Glass bottles, plastic bottles and cans which give the public a refund. This would help in getting the public to recycle more (as was the case with Glass when Malta was refunding on glass beverage bottles). The system already works in Finland and one can see many people going to shop at Supermarkets and before they enter, they deposit empties to get a voucher to be reduced from bill. this acts also as an incentive to purchase from the same store

Environmental Education

NTM is very pleased to note that Education is slowly moving towards Education for sustainable development. More emphasis should be given to this sector in all new campaigns or topics as only in this way will the public support innovation and environment protection

It this therefore recommended that

- More support be given to EkoSkola and discuss the way forward to copy other countries such as Ireland where ESD is outsourced to Ekoskola and supported by the authorities so the Education authorities and Ekoskola can work hand in hand

Embark on campaigns and TV slots to educate more the public Further support should be given to NGOs to seek EU funding especially in those cases where funding requirement is of 50%

-
- Reintroduce Xummiemu as the character it once was and linking it with the champion for environmental issues
- Encourage school field studies and outings so our children can appreciate more our natural heritage. Over the years this has been deduced drastically



Civil Society

NGOs and Civil Society should be consulted more on strategies, policies and proposals as they can contribute a lot to this sector. Furthermore Government should assist more NGOs in attending international and EU meetings on the relevant sector.

Government should also facilitate structural funds so these can be applied for by NGOs

Governments needs to acknowledge more the valuable contribution Non government and non profit organisations are giving to the nation. Many of these dedicate their funds and resources to working either close with the national authorities or on their own to improve the national situation for the country's good and at no personal interest

It is being recommended that

Registered NGOs that are acknowledges as performing well are aided by the authorities in resources needs such as co financing in EU funded projects. Further support should be given to NGOs to seek EU funding especially in those cases where funding requirement is of 50%

The present system where only one civil service can be seconded with an NGO should be revised to a case by cases basis and consideration taken on projects and job descriptions.

National Budgets and Eco Taxes

Eco taxes should be used in a fair manner so as to give the citizen to go for more environment friendly products and do away with environmental damaging products. A fund should be created from the collection of such taxes where funds can go to improve waste collection facilities and aid environment protection and environmental educational projects

It is therefore being recommended to

- Increase taxes on cars older than 10 years
- Reduce car registration on Euro 5 cars to encourage the use of such cars
- Continue to offer the car scrap age system incentive when purchasing a new car
- VRT should ensure that only cars that are non polluting are passed
- Budget every year an amount solely for biodiversity protection and site management (Natura 2000 and Sacs)
- Introduce park rangers for Natura 200 sites and SACs

- Budget for the increase in staff of the ALE Police which can then take the role today carried out by other authorities involved in environmental enforcement and which has always proved to be a very poor system.

6 November 2012