

Statement of Environmental, Heritage and Quality of Life Principles

If elected, I commit to these principles and the introduction of the relevant legal amendments needed to make this framework enforceable.

1. PLANNING REGULATIONS:

1. Parliamentary scrutiny and approval of Planning Authority board members, introducing conflict of interest declarations, and personal accountability for board members who breach policies or ethics rules. More transparency in the PA's operational process, better financial reporting and analyses.
2. Boards & Committees are to justify, with clear rationales based on planning regulations, decisions that overrule Directorate recommendations.
3. Suspend construction works during appeals.
4. Prohibit sanctioning of illegal ODZ developments.
5. Carry out all required EIAs to professional standards, and implement the provision of the EU EIA Directive: the precautionary principle [in requiring an EIA] shall be adopted if the project may have significant effects on the environment.
Include Social Impact in study requirements.
6. Ensure protection for agricultural land, natural habitats, coastlines, and heritage sites.
7. Moratoria on major projects – apartment/office blocks over 8 storeys or hotels - until carrying capacity studies are undertaken to assess adequate provision of water, electricity, drains and public transport.
8. Eliminate DC Annexe 2 which abusively allows buildings significantly higher than the legally-binding Local Plans.
9. Mandatory removal of illegal developments with clear deadlines for enforcement actions.
10. Public blacklisting or penalty-point systems for repeat offending developers regulated by a one-stop enforcement authority with powers to impose stronger penalties and recovery of demolition costs from offenders.
11. Complete dismantling and re-establishment of the Building and Construction Authority following the report drawn up by the BCA-appointed experts, which was never implemented.

2. PROTECTION OF HERITAGE

1. Implement the Public Domain Act in the protection of buildings of historic, architectural or social significance. Protect the right of access and enjoyment to the foreshore, beaches, bays, cliffs, valleys, and woodlands.
2. Carry out reform of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, to prioritise heritage, not development. Ensure enough resources to update Malta's scheduled inventory and enforce law on restoration of scheduled buildings.
3. Protect sites like Valletta, Mdina, Ġgantija, from overdevelopment and loss of authenticity to prevent loss of UNESCO World Heritage Status or Tentative inclusion. Conclude the Valletta WHS Buffer Zone with inclusion of surrounding foreshore as well as protection of other heritage like Santa Verna Temples
4. Prohibit demolitions in Urban Conservation Areas as per Malta Structure Plan and limit facadism through creative reuse of existing structures, preserving our architectural heritage whilst meeting modern needs. Provide free restoration training programmes to contractors operating in the field.
5. Reduce the allowance of 20 bedrooms in UCA boutique hotels. Allowing the use of multiple converted historic buildings with linked facilities in the same UCA is equivalent to a large hotel and promotes the destruction of heritage and residential ambience.
6. Expand the 2015 tax rebate scheme for donations to voluntary organisations in sports, disability and animal welfare, to include registered VOs working in the sectors of heritage and environment.
7. Allow MCVS funding to be used to cover staff costs to assist VOs to better serve the public. Implement transparency in the Secondment of Public Employees Scheme to ensure all NGOs are on an equal, non-political footing.

3. PUBLIC RIGHTS TO GENUINE PARTICIPATION AS PER AARHUS CONVENTION

1. Ensure that the public is informed, early in an environmental decision-making procedure, of details of environmental proposals, either on the part of developers or Authorities when all options are open and effective public participation can take place.
2. Developers, State or private, are to identify the public concerned, to enter into discussions, and to provide information regarding the objectives of their application before applying for a permit.
3. The State shall ensure that in [environmental/planning] decisions due account is taken of the outcome of the public participation before a major project is granted a permit.
4. Registered NGOs are to be granted reduced rates on EPRT appeals and financial compensation for professional fees to remove financial barriers to access to justice.

4. IMPROVE TRANSPORT, REDUCE CAR DEPENDENCY congestion, pollution, land take-up.

1. Enact basic public transport upgrade until mass transit is available, by introduction of smaller, more frequent electric vehicles with better route frequency and coverage.
2. Upgrade and eventually replace Gozo Channel ferries within a definite timeline
3. Increase frequency of Sliema-Valletta Ferry and improve quays for high-swell conditions to make it an all-weather service.
4. Implement a nationwide safe cycling infrastructure along with a multi-media safe driving educational campaign.
5. End fast-track road widening through Infrastructure Malta without full planning scrutiny.
6. Desist from using bays designated for bathing, for marine transport purposes.
7. Step up the inspection of vehicles where there is reasonable suspicion of excessive emissions, defective/missing silencers, unlawful exhaust modifications, excessive vehicle noise, unnecessary revving, unlawful idling or repeated vehicle nuisance.
8. Enforce the issuing of Vehicle Compliance Notices requiring immediate cessation, inspection, repair, proof of repair and certification before a vehicle may return to normal use.
9. Require stricter monitoring of commercial vehicles, including delivery, and construction vehicles, taxis,, buses, tourist coaches, commercial fleets and refuse vehicle re emissions and road-worthiness.
10. Require commercial operators with repeated breaches to undergo operator-level review, including possible fleet inspection, production of maintenance records, with repeated non compliances to be punishable by significant increase in penalties.
11. Strengthen the existing public reporting system including online reporting for visibly polluting vehicles, and suspected unlawful exhaust modifications, repeated idling/excessive vehicle noise/illegal parking, to be issued with a reference number followed by speedy action.
12. Ensure uptake of cruise liner use of port shoreside electricity, to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases, particulate matter, and harmful nitrogen/sulfur oxides, given that uptake is presently minimal.

5. NOISE REGULATIONS - The present primitive construction methods have not been updated for 40 years, impose a serious hazard for workers at close range and a high cost on citizen's mental health and neighbouring businesses. Alternative quieter and less dusty methods will also result in lower cost finished construction.

1. **Demolition/Excavation noise** introduce a special noise permit fee charged on a daily escalating exponential level. Given that alternative far quieter and safer methods and machines have existed for at least 60 years, permits for hammering must prove that no other method is possible for a specific requirement. Only one permit per 500 metre radius at a point in time is issued for limited hours between 8.00 and 13.00.
2. **Construction Noise:** All concrete mixers and cranes must be electric. Otherwise a noise permit is required, limited time operation between 8 and 13.00.
3. All hand operated hammering tools and jiggers used during construction and finishing to be limited between 8 and 12.

Commercial noise pollution affects sleep, health, mental wellbeing, family life, work, study, elderly persons, children, vulnerable residents and the liveability of historic localities.

4. Introduce binding national commercial-noise limits, including a protective residential threshold.
5. Keep commercial amplified music indoors, within acoustically contained and certified premises that hold valid soundproofing engineer certification before any license is granted or renewed.
6. Prohibit amplification of music in Outdoor Catering Areas, terraces, pavements, public encroachments.
7. Revoke Legal Notices 161 and 163 of 2022 which allow music outdoors in Valletta until 2am, and restore the 11:00 p.m. curfew for music in Valletta, and revoke similar legal notices across the Maltese Islands allowing music beyond 11:00 p.m.
Apply strict noise controls to beach clubs, lidos, floating venues, cruise-related entertainment, commercial vessels and party boats.
8. Ensure that local councils retain sole responsibility for locality-level permits, resident notification, public-space management and local enforcement referrals.
9. Introduce meaningful commercial penalties, starting with a minimum EUR 1,000 penalty for commercial noise breaches, triggering higher fines, suspension or revocation for repeat offenders.
10. Convert relevant guidelines into enforceable legal duties and clear thresholds enforceable by a single, centralized body with real powers and mandatory penalties.

6. UPGRADING OF PUBLIC REALM

1. In addition to planned public parks, launch programme incentivising Local Councils to plant street trees.
2. Ensure that parks like Manoel Island are kept free of illegal encroachments, kiosks or commercial sports facilities.
3. Carry out review of encroachment permits to limit outdoor tables and chairs as per Policy, Guidance and Standards for Outdoor Catering Areas on Open Public Space (2016) "Space shall only be granted for an Outdoor Catering Area after taking into consideration activities in the vicinity and after ensuring that third party rights shall be safeguarded."
4. Ensure that legal encroachments are accompanied by publicly-displayed permits and ground markers.
5. Eliminate abusive tables, chairs, catering equipment, A-frames, ticket booths and sales stands not covered by legal permits.
6. Ensure clear access to all public thoroughfares for wheelchairs and emergency vehicles.
7. Limit the sale or lease of public land for commercial use subject to 2/3 Parliamentary approval and prioritise use for public or social purposes, while preserving, as far as possible, its original character, natural, or historical value.

7. TOURISM

Most of the above points are exacerbated by the massive influx of tourists that we are now experiencing, on a virtually year-round basis. While this increase is welcome from an economic view point, and the success in combatting seasonality is to be applauded, the sheer numbers in a small country like Malta are putting an unbearable strain on Malta's infrastructure, and creating tremendous social pressures.

Now that the targeted numbers have been achieved and well exceeded it is time to be more selective in our approach to tourism marketing, and concentrate on the really lucrative sectors that co-exist well, and sustain the local social fabric. To this effect, a comprehensive carrying capacity exercise, which includes a proper economic and social impact assessment should be carried out in collaboration with all stakeholders, with a political commitment to implement the results of the assessment.