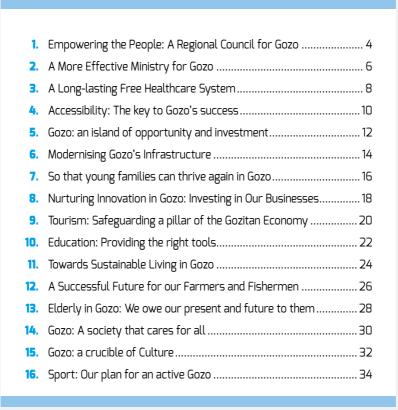


#### **OUR COMMITMENT TO GOZO**



#### A STEADY STREAM OF IDEAS

Simon Mizzi. Chairman. Idea Ghawdex

It is a great honour for me to have been tasked with what is one of the widest consultation exercises to date by a political party in Gozo. More than anything it made me come across genuine feelings and ideas by people who want the best for themselves and future generations to come. This is a first. An electoral programme that is specifically written for Gozo by the people.

I do not feel I am the sole author of this programme, but one of many.

Back in January 2017 we set off with the public convention exercise focusing specifically on Gozo. The public convention was met with enthusiasm. What ensued was a steady stream of ideas from a wide section of civil society. It made me think that in its simplicity Gozo has its complexities but it is vibrant with ideas. During the course of the plenary session

of the convention I had identified four structural pillars that would characterise any policy for Gozo namely; accessibility, identity, opportunity and sustainability. Indeed those four pillars still ring true, but through various meetings and consultation exercises I came to the conclusion that the pillars need to be grounded into a bedrock; good governance.

This document is extensive enough to permeate through all the four pillars and the required bedrock. It provides 100 concrete proposals for Gozo spanning 16 different themes. It sets off by providing the bedrock required to support the four pillars. It sets a governance vision of where Gozo should be as an equal partner and part of the national agenda. This is followed by well defined proposals that would bring Gozo forward starting from, securing our healthcare service, to upgrading our infrastructure, to creating the job opportunities we yearn for, to empowering the families so that they can take forward the Gozitan identity into the future generation.

I sincerely hope that this blueprint laid down for Gozo will be enacted. I sincerely believe that it would help Gozo make strides forward, as an island region that asserts its vision on a national and international level.



## "This document lays down clearly how Gozo will become an equal and important partner on the national agenda"

The Nationalist party is the natural home for Gozo and its citizens. Gozo has always featured prominently on the Nationalist party agenda. This time round we are making another step to promote our vision for Gozo and show that the Nationalist party is still the natural home for Gozo. As part of the series of focused political conventions I launched upon taking leadership of the Nationalist party, we identified Gozo as one of the main priority areas.



This is the result. Our commitment to Gozo.

An electoral manifesto that puts the interests of Gozo and its citizens as a priority. A document that lays down clearly of how Gozo will become an equal and important partner on the national agenda, not the last chapter of an electoral manifesto or the afterthought of a policy exercise.

### OUR COMMITMENT TO GOZO

Simon Busuttil, Leader Partit Nazzjonalista

Under this Labour administration governed by a corrupt clique in Castille, Gozo has definitely not featured as a priority. Indeed many of the promises waged back in 2013 have turned out to be hollow. Whilst members of government were busy setting up dubious companies in Panama, the economic disparity between Malta and Gozo has grown by some 3%. The mantra of 'Jobs for Gozitans in Gozo' turned out to be a falsehood. Some 600 more people travel to Malta than way back in 2013 to earn their livelihood. Gozo is no longer an island of opportunity for its citizens but an island that is governed by a selected self-centred few that stifle innovation and are busy dismantling the checks and balances of the institutions.

Let us change this state of affairs.

Join me in choosing what is right over what is wrong, in choosing to make Gozo a priority over disregarding it as a second class region, in choosing the good for our nation over the corrupt practices of this government.

I choose Gozo. I choose Malta.

### EMPOWERING THE PEOPLE: A REGIONAL COUNCIL FOR GOZO

The time has come for Malta and Gozo to embark upon an exciting project regarding the administration of the island of Gozo. What has been discussed and agreed upon widely over the past 30 years, now needs to be implemented without any further delay, for the benefit of both Gozo and the nation.

The first step is to define Gozo as an Island Region in the Constitution of Malta. Nothing is more sovereign and legally supreme than the Constitution. Such an assertion would truly give Gozo a national standing. Gozo no longer remains a political afterthought, the last chapter of a policy document, or an addendum to a national project.

To reinforce this new regional status, a new PN-led administration shall - in the first 100 days - launch the process for the establishment of a Regional Council for Gozo and ensure that the effective regional status of Gozo is given a statutory basis.

A regional council for Gozo does not mean an isolated Gozo with an independent agenda. On the contrary, it will provide the ideal vehicle for the redesign of the stewardship of the island and elevation of Gozitan



## EMPOWERING THE PEOPLE: A REGIONAL COUNCIL FOR GOZO



affairs to the national agenda. The Council will create a statutory framework for Gozitan stakeholders to participate fully in the decision-making process by bringing Gozitan affairs closer to the people. The vision for Gozo will thus be continually shaped by its own people.

The Government or the Ministry for Gozo will not formulate policy in isolation but in a wide forum bringing together the Government, investors, community leaders and sectoral representatives on the island. Gozo will become more integrated with the rest of country and contribute more significantly to the national decision making process.

The Gozo Regional Council shall be composed of democratically elected members ensuring a wide representation of Gozitan society.

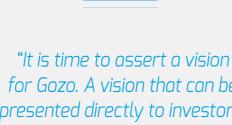
The Gozo Regional Council will have an active role in the development of the Government's vision and policy for the island. It shall monitor the use of financial and other resources dedicated to Gozo - including those allocated to the Ministry for Gozo and other institutions. It will become the natural interlocutor for Government on matters related to Gozo and the development of policy and a long-term vision for the island. The Council will also be able to take up initiatives which are deemed to be beneficial to the island.

- The Regional Status of Gozo shall be enshrined in the Constitution and the Laws of Malta.
- 2. We will launch the process for the statutory establishment of the Regional Council for Gozo in the first 100 days of a PN-led administration.
- 3. Government shall be bound to engage with the Regional Council for Gozo on all matters of vision and policy involving the island of Gozo.
- 4. The Regional Council shall have a wide representation of Gozitan society.
- The Regional Council shall represent Gozo in the European Union fora for Regional territories and other similar international fora
- The Regional Council shall be able to tap into €250 million of EU funds.

"Gozo will become more integrated with the rest of country and contribute more significantly to the national decision making process"

### **MORE EFFECTIVE MINISTRY FOR GOZO**





for Gozo. A vision that can be presented directly to investors, who invariably will bring over good quality jobs to the island of Gozo"

Under the present Labour administration, the Ministry for Gozo has been reduced to an inward-looking, self-serving clique which has written itself off into irrelevance. The Ministry is without vision, planning and strategy.

Official statistics clearly show that the economic disparity between Gozo and Malta has actually grown.

It is time to render the Ministry for Gozo relevant again. The value of the Ministry for Gozo is not just important for Gozo. A well-functioning Ministry for Gozo results in a more successful and integrated Gozo, contributing more towards the national objectives. Gozo's concerns should also be national concerns. This is currently not the case.

We are thus proposing a reform that would render the Ministry for Gozo more relevant and effective. The internal structures of the Ministry will be reorganised in order to function better and make the most efficient use of its resources. In order to improve its influence within Government, the Ministry for Gozo will nominate its own delegate from civil service in ministries such as education, health, tourism, agriculture, environment and other areas where Gozo has a strategic interest. This would address the disconnection that currently exists between the various ministries and the Ministry for Gozo. This would enable the Ministry to drive forward Gozo's policy set out for that particular function on a national level.



The current Ministry for Gozo lacks strategy and vision. In part, this is due to the strategy and policy unit being totally absorbed within a politically charged private secretariat. More than anything else, the political consequence of every policy decision is the topmost priority in such an environment, with little or no regard to long term vision. This does not serve the citizens' best interests.

We are thus proposing the reinstatement of a policy and strategy arm that is led by responsible career civil servants and experts that truly give sound advice to the Minister for Gozo and that is able to interact with the Regional Council for Gozo.

The economic disparity between Gozo and mainland Malta has grown by some 3% under the current administration. Recent numbers have shown an acceleration of this trend. Moreover, the average wage in Gozo has actually decreased under this administration, a historical first in the Gozitan employment sector. The lack of vision and strategy is the main contributor of this increased disparity. It is time to assert a vision for Gozo. A vision that can be presented directly to investors, who invariably will bring over good quality jobs to the island of Gozo. Moreover, investment is hampered amongst other things by the lack of adequate infrastructure that supports the sustainable development of Gozo.

### A MORE EFFECTIVE MINISTRY FOR GOZO

- 7. We will reform the Ministry for Gozo rendering it more efficient and with increased powers.
- 8. The Ministry for Gozo will appoint its delegate to relevant ministries and entities promoting and implementing Gozo's policy at a national level.
- 9. The Ministry for Gozo will reinstate the Policy and Strategy arm that articulates Gozo's strategy and vision.
- 10. We will set up the Gozo Regional Development Agency (GRDA) whose objective will be to attract national and foreign direct investment in Gozo and oversee infrastructural projects.

To facilitate these processes we are proposing to set up a Gozo Regional Development Agency (GRDA) whose mission is to attract national and foreign direct investment. The agency will also be tasked with upgrading the regional infrastructure and facilities that are required to consolidate the high standard investment package to be offered to investors.

This renewed focus together with its representation in every ministry and other governmental entities would strengthen the Ministry for Gozo and turn into a Ministry that serves its purpose, ensuring that Gozitan interests become national interests and represented at an international level.

# A LONG-LASTING FREE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM



Healthcare professionals, patients and taxpayers are concerned with the future of healthcare services in Gozo following the privatisation of Gozo's only public hospital. Notwithstanding the guarantees provided by the state for free healthcare, and the retention of all healthcare professionals and employees, the current administration has set off a precedent whereby free healthcare services will not necessarily remain free. There is scope for certain healthcare activities to be liberalised where possible. However this should not be at the expense of inferior patient care or worse, withholding of care because of profitability or for reasons of commercial viability.

The partial publication of the contract for the privatization of healthcare services and facilities (19th October 2016) further compounds these concerns. In particular, as a matter of principle, critical healthcare activities need to revert back to state ownership in terms of its financing, operation and management. This is to ensure that no commercial interests and constraints determine lifesaving decisions.

On the other hand, we will strive to see the BARTS Medical School project come to fruition in the shortest time possible, and we are committed to facilitate this process as much as possible.

Community care in Gozo is highly inadequate if not inexistent. Various healthcare management studies have shown that the most cost- and socially-effective healthcare system is one that provides extensive community care. This relieves a lot of pressure from acute care activities

In particular, the community care clinic in Victoria is currently unfit for purpose and is from a bygone era depriving patients and clients from any dignity. The Victoria health care centre is in a desperate need of a revamp. Albeit central, it is practically inaccessible to people from outside Victoria. We are thus proposing to revamp and relocate the Victoria health centre clinic closer to the bus terminus and repurpose its function to provide primary healthcare service and other ancillary services, such as geriatric medical care,



simple screening activities, health promotion, disease prevention and immunisation. This new health centre would also house two resident consultant-led care clinics for diabetes and cardiovascular patients.

Moreover, we will extend the fully subsidized ferry trips to ALL patients and an accompanying carer, be it next of kin or a caring friend, requiring medical services at Mater Dei hospital not available here in Gozo.

Tertiary healthcare activities, generally referred to as non-urgent specialist care such as dermatology, rehabilitation, advanced orthopaedics, ophthalmology and other areas, have a wide ranging scope of being promoted as a niche market and as a means to attract national and foreign medical tourism in Gozo. Specialist care in Gozo is limited if not inexistent, and often requires patients to commute back and forth from Mater Dei or, worst, abroad. We will facilitate a paradigm for private operators to provide ultraspecialist care to local nationals and foreign tourists alike. This needs to be achieved by attracting the top local and foreign medical and surgical consultants to be offer their services in Gozo. A service level agreement for tertiary services will be sought with private operators to deliver such services free of charge in Gozo to local taxpayers. The private operator will be provided with the opportunity of attracting foreign medical tourists who would contribute to the wider Gozitan economy.

#### A LONG-LASTING FREE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

- 11. A PN-led adminstration will take back full ownership of the only Hospital on the island Gozo.
- 12. We will ensure that BARTS Medical School in Gozo is completed without delay.
- 13. We will upgrade and re-purpose the Victoria health centre to adequately serve the primary healthcare and other ancillary outpatient needs for Gozitans.
- 14. We will extend the fully subsidized ferry trips to ALL patients requiring medical services at Mater Dei hospital not available in Gozo. The subsidy will also apply to an accompanying carer, be it next of kin or a caring friend.
- 15. We will set up a Diabetes-Endocrinology Clinic and a Cardiovascular Clinic offering resident consultant-led care in Gozo

# ACCESSIBILITY: THE KEY TO GOZO'S SUCCESS

Gozo's accessibility or lack of it comes in different shapes and forms. The most readily apparent form of accessibility is the permanent link. The previous PN-led administration seeded off the technical process and studies to deliver the permanent link. The current Labour administration has stalled the process at every turn and as yet it has not produced any tangible progress regarding the project. The Nationalist party has the political will and drive to deliver the permanent link between Malta and Gozo. Provided a positive outcome from the outstanding studies, we are asserting our political will by starting the works on the link immediately.

Gozo can be made more accessible whilst the permanent link is being delivered through other projects and measures. The first few measures are to undo the damage done by the current Labour administration and reinstate the cargo ferry between Mgarr and the Grand Harbour area within the first six months of a PN-led administration. This would alleviate the pressures incurred by the Gozitan commercial community, the road infrastructure and



### ACCESSIBILITY: THE KEY TO GOZO'S SUCCESS



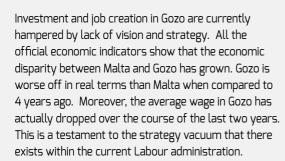
Gozo Channel alike. We will also secure the digital accessibility of the island region of Gozo by delivering the second fibre-optic cable within the first year of a PN-led administration. The lack of the fast ferry service is a testament to the long list of broken promises for this administration. We will deliver a fast ferry service within the first year of a PN-led administration.

There is also a raft of small measures that would make a huge impact in improving the accessibility of the island of Gozo. Revision of the bus route timetable such that it is synchronous, with the ferry would encourage more use of the public transport in conjunction with the ferry. We are also proposing the introduction of a multi-modal Gozo transport ticket that can be seamlessly used across public and private transport operators namely buses, ferries and pleasure boats. This would also go a long way to improve the tourist package offered on the island of Gozo.

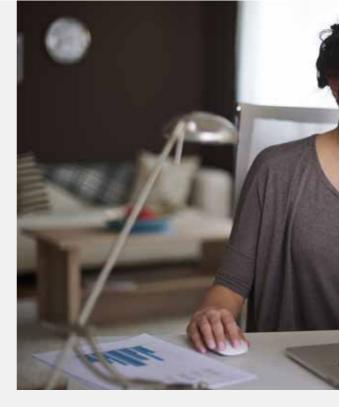
- 16. We will start working on the permanent link project immediately.
- 17. We will deliver an operating fast ferry service within the first year of a PN-led administration.
- 18. We will reinstate the Gozo Channel cargo ferry service to the Grand Harbour within the first six months of a PN-led administration.
- 19. We will secure the digital accessibility of Gozo by installing the second fibre-optic cable within the first year of a PN-led administration.
- 20. We will revise the bus route timetables on both islands to be synchronous with ferry service.
- 21. We will introduce a multi-modal public and private transport ticket that can be used seamlessly across various forms of transport namely, buses, ferries and pleasure boats.

"We will start working on the permanent link project immediately"

# GOZO: AN ISLAND OF OPPORTUNITY AND INVESTMENT



For the Labour administration, Gozitans are second class citizens who are easily swept off the agenda with short term measures that are unsustainable and lead to nowhere. A PN-led administration would lay out a very clear strategy for Gozo. The strategy provides a mix of incentives and measures to businesses and employees alike that yield a long term sustainable economic outlook for Gozo. These set of incentives would truly transform the government into a partner with businesses to stimulate job creation, and not their adversary as is currently the case.



The role of the Gozo Regional Development Agency (GRDA), earlier on introduced as a means to strengthen the Ministry for Gozo, is central in attracting the necessary national and foreign investment to Gozo. The GRDA needs to be equipped with the tools to package Gozo as the ideal investment destination. We are thus proposing a raft of incentives and measures that the GRDA can package up to attract the investment that Gozo really yearns for.

To make up for the double insularity of Gozo, we will grant an exemption of income tax of up to €200,000 over a period of 3 years to every kind of business that opens in Gozo. Jobs are a major issue on the island of Gozo. Good, well paid, sustainable jobs are hard to come by on the island. In order to attract labour intensive companies that stimulate job creation here on the island we will launch the Gozo Sustainable Jobs Tax Credit that would enable companies to declare twice the wage bill incurred in their annual tax return. This would encourage employers to employ more people with better wages. This tax credit is estimated to cost a maximum of €31.5 million over the course of 5 years.

Starting up a business in Gozo is never an easy undertaking. Nonetheless, statistics routinely show that Gozo possesses a comparative advantage in its talent pool of human resources. That talent is shackled by the lack of opportunity. We want to make Gozo the



"We will provide incentives and measures to businesses and employees alike that yield a long term sustainable economic outlook for Gozo"

island of opportunity, the island where one can secure his or her own future. We are thus putting forward the proposal of giving a €25,000 grant that starts up the engine of a new business. On top of the €25,000 grant we will provide a €75,000 bank guarantee to every start up on the island of Gozo so that they can secure the financial aid and instruments to get them started on a sound footing. The combined cost of these two measures is a maximum €10 million over five years. Apart from securing the right financial assistance, start-ups need to engage the right employees that will help them enact their vision. We are thus proposing a full reimbursement of the employer's national insurance contribution over the first two years of an employment contract.

This is part of our vision for Gozo. An island that is not a drag on the wider nation, a fleeting afterthought, but an island region that has a lot of potential that is yet to be fulfilled, an island region central to the national interest, an island region that will thrive.

We truly believe that this suite of targeted and specific measures and incentives together with wider policies for Gozo would truly develop its potential as island of opportunity.

## GOZO: AN ISLAND OF OPPORTUNITY AND INVESTMENT

- 22. We will grant an exemption of income tax of up to €200,000 over a period of 3 years to any kind of business that opens in Gozo.
- 23. We will create The Gozo
  Svustainable Jobs Tax Credit to
  stimulate job creation in Gozo
  in the first budget of a PNled administration. Through
  this measure, the wage bill
  expense of Gozitan based
  companies will have a double
  consideration in the annual tax
  return.
- 24. We will provide up to €25,000 as a start-up grant to those who decide to open a new business or commercial activity in Gozo.
- 25. We will consolidate the €25,000 euro start up grant with a €75,000 guarantee on any new business or commercial activity in Gozo.
- 26. We will reimburse the employers contribution of the national insurance to Gozobased start-up businesses during the first two years of their operation.

## MODERNISING GOZO'S INFRASTRUCTURE

The management and project execution of Gozo's infrastructural projects are at best chaotic if not inexistent. Roads feature as one of the top concerns for Gozitans and for good reason. Routinely we make use of roads that are substandard and wonder why no benefit is being reaped within a context of what is supposedly an expanding economy and why no investment is being done in what is an essential part of the package we call 'Gozo'. Indeed the current state of the infrastructure is harming Gozo as a brand both nationally and abroad. They are a monument to mismanagement, overruns, dereliction and dilapidation.

Within the context of enhanced regional identity, discussed earlier on, one can draw lessons from other regional agencies operating within the European Union that maximise their efficiency and efficacy. Various regions have developed bespoke regional development agencies whose mission is to upgrade, maintain and develop the infrastructural projects of specific regions and locations. Such development agencies have a wider scope and leverage to tap a variety of European funding than central governmental entities.

Hence we are proposing to task the Gozo Regional Development Agency (GRDA) whose objective is to facilitate ALL "social infrastructural" projects in Gozo, from road infrastructure, housing projects, open spaces and standardising and implementing country lanes. The scope of the agency is NOT to prioritise projects but to act at the behest and will of democratically elected governing entities in Gozo, specifically the local councils and Ministry for Gozo.

Moreover, no main thoroughfare has been fundamentally re-constructed during the term of the current administration. Many road projects are a consequence of crisis management rather than proactive thinking and planning. We are thus proposing to ring fence a €60 million budget (compared to the current allocation of €1 million) spread over five years to upgrade Gozo's main thoroughfares that are in desperate need of reconstruction namely Xaghra-Victoria, Żebbug-Victoria, Marsalforn-Victoria and Nadur-Victoria.

A commitment to main thoroughfare upgrade should not translate into an exclusion of residential road upkeep and improvements. Currently, residential road infrastructure projects are subject to a multitude of factors that condemn a project to fail from its inception phase. These include either one or a combination of local council budget deficits that are dysfunctional and not proportional to the duties expected from the council and interfacing boundary responsibilities of various local councils and central government responsibilities that create a responsibility



vacuum. A mission focused GRDA would normalise executive and physical boundaries, erasing the currently existing responsibility vacuum. We are thus proposing an increased annual allocation of €3 million, over and above the current local council allocation, for the GRDA to dispose of to build, re-surface and maintain residential roads in Gozo.

Gozo has never had an island-wide infrastructure master plan. Inconsistent local master plans have been drafted and shelved many a time. An island-wide coordinated drafting of an infrastructural and amenities masterplan that involves all the stakeholders from business operators, NGOs, local councils and inter-governmental entities will be considered as a matter of top priority. Hence we will commission the GRDA to draw up a Gozo masterplan within the first year of its existence.

Marsalforn being lashed by waves during stormy weather making it to the national news has become a tradition: a tradition that no one during the current Labour administration sought to put to an end to through appropriate action. Local residents and businesses have to go through damage clean-up every time stormy seas hit the area, resulting in inconvenience, added shabbiness and lost business activity during clean-up. A wave-attenuating breakwater planned for many years is long overdue. There is lack of political will to see the project through. Joseph Muscat himself publicly declared that it is not a priority. We are thus making a commitment to deliver the project, estimated to cost some €6 million.



### MODERNISING GOZO'S INFRASTRUCTURE

- 27. The Gozo Regional Development Agency will have the objective to administer infrastructural services to the Ministry for Gozo, Regional Council and Local Councils.
- 28. We will rebuild Gozo's main arterial roads Marsalforn-Victoria, Nadur-Victoria, Xaghra-Victoria and Żebbug-Victoria.
- 29. We will allocate an additional €3 million a year for the building, re-surfacing and maintenance of residential roads in Gozo.
- 30. We will prepare a Gozo Infrastructural Master Plan to radically improve the island's infrastructure and facilities within one year.
- 31. We commit to design and build a wave attenuating breakwater in Marsalforn
- 32. We will immediately start addressing the parking shortage problem in Victoria by building a multi-level car park in the centre.

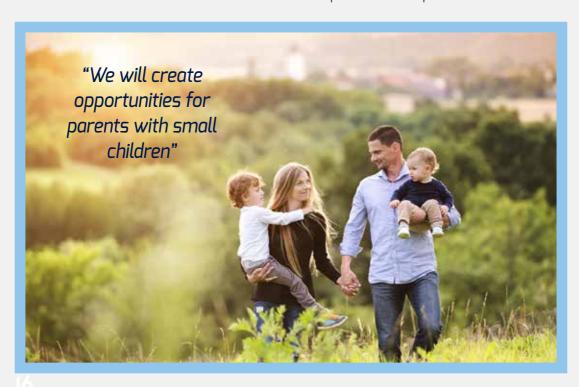
# SO THAT YOUNG FAMILIES CAN THRIVE AGAIN IN GOZO

Raising a family in Gozo is what many young Gozitans yearn for. Be it the safety, the close-knit extended family, the less frenetic lifestyle or other reasons, people want to raise their children here.

Yet, demographic indicators show that for the past years Gozitan young families have reluctantly been leaving Gozo for greener pastures. The Gozitan population is ageing rapidly; the very existence of a Gozitan community and society in the next 50 to 100 years is seriously put into question. This very same process has been witnessed in many small island communities around the world.

For Gozo's identity to survive it requires its people. Ensuring that they are here to stay is what will secure the Gozitan identity in the first place. A reversal of the ongoing haemorrhage is indispensable so that the Gozitan society regains vibrancy and seeks opportunities to grow. Investors have many times pointed out that Gozo lacks the necessary human resources for a medium sized business to be viable.

To incentivize families settling in Gozo, we will waive all of the stamp duty for first time buyers of property in Gozo. We are also proposing a €10,000 Young Family Support Grant to stimulate a re-balancing of the Gozitan demographics. This grant will be provided to couples who decide to pursue their career and



base their family in Gozo and to families living in Malta deciding to re-locate to Gozo. Various requirements of effective residency such as contract of property ownership, rental agreement, utility bills, and children school registration amongst others will be utilised to give this grant to those who really show a commitment to Gozo. Moreover, the grant scheme will be staged and capped to a maximum of 1500 families over 5 years. The scheme is estimated to cost €15 million over five years. This policy complements other proposals for job creation and social/cultural sustainability in Gozo.

Reconstitution of the demographic balance would naturally lead to a multiplier effect in the Gozitan economic and social landscape. Schools which are currently undergoing a rapid decline in population would see a reversal of this trend, leading to the requirement of more educators many of whom travel to Malta on a daily basis. The property market would re-discover a new segment of local residents seeking to make Gozo their home. Moreover, a positive impact on the retail, socio-cultural landscape and the voluntary sectors will also ensue.

The demand for childcare services will continue to increase. According to official statistics, Gozo has the largest share of informal childcare services. Together with existing and proposed larger setups, there is a wide scope for the creation of home-based childcare services catering for a small number of children per unit. Regulation and standards to cover such an activity are already in place. We will provide incentives to attract people currently outside the labour market to start this new type of service, creating an opportunity for - among others - mothers with small children and grandparents who already care for their grandchildren.

Gozo also needs to invest more in the development of additional recreational and family-time facilities in order to become more attractive for young families. While setups of this style have been very successfully implemented on mainland Malta, (for instance at Ta' Qali and Wied il-Ghajn), similar facilities in Gozo are lacking. These recreational amenities are indispensable to retain and attract young families on the island.

The previous PN-led administration had invested around €1.5 million in the development of a Child Development Centre - a hub of child-related services on Gozo. This centre was intended to house a regional childcare centre providing a service to parents working

#### SO THAT YOUNG **FAMILIES CAN THRIVE AGAIN IN GOZO**

- 33. We will waive all property stamp duty for first time buyers in Gozo.
- 34. We will provide a €10,000 Young Family Support Grant to rebalance the population of Gozo.
- 35. We will provide incentives to create home-based childcare services.
- 36. We will open a Regional Childcare Centre that will also cater for parents who work in Malta by opening for extended hours.
- 37. We will invest €4 million to create new family parks targeting youth, children and families in Gozo. 📀
- 38. We will deliver the Child Development Centre project and group all child-related social, educational and health services there, thus creating a multidisciplinary team working with children on Gozo.

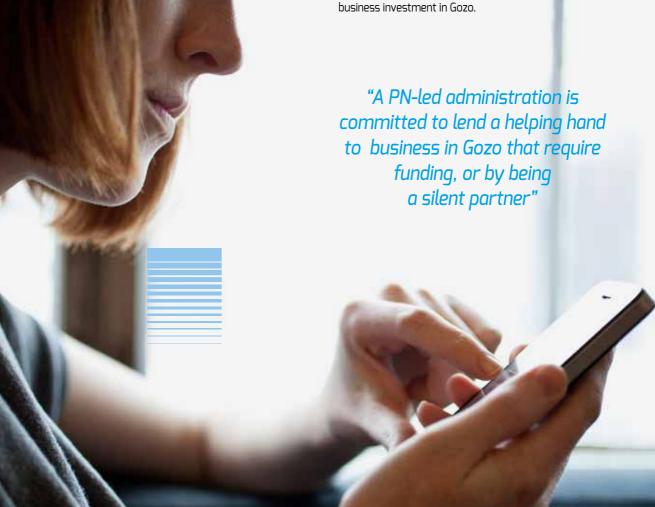
in Malta, all health and developmental services provided to children at the Gozo General Hospital, (with the exception of overnight recovery), and social and educational support. The Labour administration scrapped this good work and handed the completed building to the Vitalis Health Group, putting an end to this project. A new PN-led administration would reverse this, and deliver the project.



# NURTURING INNOVATION IN GOZO: INVESTING IN OUR BUSINESSES

Setting up a business, keeping it afloat and making a success out of it is every entrepreneur's aim. However, doing so in Gozo is challenging. A PN-led administration will help businesses operating in Gozo not only with specific legislation, but also introduce a raft of administrative and financial measures that enable businesses to grow and expand.

Banks are very sensitive about providing finance and at times those entrepreneurs who really need financing are unable to secure it. Therefore, a PN-led administration is committed to lend a helping hand to business in Gozo that require funding, or by being a silent partner. This will be achieved by allocating a special provision from the Malta Development Fund for business invertment in Gozo



## NURTURING INNOVATION IN GOZO: INVESTING IN OUR BUSINESSES

Gozo needs to stand out and to offer distinct job opportunities from Malta. Thus, Gozo should not compete with Malta for industries but shall complement these industries. A PN-led administration will develop a Creativity and Innovation hub at the former site of the Malta Dairy Products, whereby new business ventures operating in Gozo will be allocated space freely within such a hub for the first 3 years, thereafter at subsidised rates. This measure in conjunction with other policies will ensure further job creation.

Gozo needs to invest and promote its products and goods distinctively. The Labour administration has neglected Gozitan made products. Thus, we will set up the 'Made in Gozo' Foundation, which will bring together all producers and manufacturers of Gozitan made products, and will work for better promotion of these products and goods.

Another existing hurdle businesses face is the lack of adequate premises where to operate from in Gozo. In fact, a number of small and medium enterprises have failed because of such a handicap. Hence, an SME Hub is to be developed in Gozo, comprised of garages and units, where SME's can base themselves in this Hub. Unlike previous policies, where an industrial unit was offered to SME's producing a product, such policy is to be eradicated. Moreover, such units are to be offered on a subsidised rate to those SME's for the first 5 years.

Those SME's operating in Gozo that opt to operate from their private premises, a PN-led administration will grant a tax credit on the investment to upgrade their current premises, which shall be redeemable on 5 years to businesses that opt to upgrade their premises.

- 39. We will allocate a special provision of the Malta Development Bank for business investment in Gozo.
- 40. We will develop a Creativity and Innovation hub at the site of the former Malta Dairy Products in Xewkija.
- 41. We will set-up a "Made in Gozo" Foundation, which will bring together all producers and manufacturers of Gozitan made products and encourage cooperation.
- 42. We will develop a Hub for Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) that will be comprised of garages and units.
- 43. We will grant a tax credit of 25% on the investment to businesses operating in Gozo that opt to upgrade their current premises...
- 44. A PN-led administration will open a Malta Financial Service Authority (MFSA) office in Gozo which will offer the same services as those in Malta.



# TOURISM: SAFEGUARDING A PILLAR OF THE GOZITAN ECONOMY

Tourism makes up half of the total economic activity on the island of Gozo. Whilst we seek to expand and diversify the Gozitan economy, it is important that the fundamental basis remains strong. The tourism sector on the island has evolved throughout the years, requiring Gozitan operators to adapt constantly through personal sacrifice and good planning.

Gozo tourism is still largely based on the traditional sun and sea attraction. The tourism sector in Gozo suffers greatly from seasonality. We are thus introducing a raft of measures to diminish the impact of seasonality whilst at the same time promoting and incentivizing travel to Gozo during the shoulder months. We are also laying down the various infrastructural masterplans to diversify the revenue stream within the tourism and propose to expand niches such as "Gozo the island of adventure". Such niches are less prone to seasonality.

The Gozo Institute of Tourism Studies will seek strategic alliances with international hospitality brands and tourism operators on the island in order to ensure that its programme of studies meets the appropriate levels and the industry's expectations, while providing its students an international experience.

These measures are consolidated through various strategies that enable a sustainable growth of the tourism sector whilst the economy of Gozo is undergoing diversification.



### TOURISM: SAFEGUARDING A PILLAR OF THE GOZITAN ECONOMY

- 45. Between the beginning of November and end of February we will refund the social security paid for employees and the MTA license fee in the tourism sector in order to compensate for the problem of seasonality.
- 46. We will ensure that Gozo is the destination of excellence for diving in the region by implementing the Diving Masterplan for Gozo.
- 47. We will give a new lease of life to the Institute of Tourism Studies in Qala so as to support once again the development of the human resource in the tourism sector.
- 48. We will introduce a scheme for small rural tourism operators to offer rural experiences and improve their infrastructure.
- 49. We will complete a permanent Cruise Liner Berth in Mgarr Harbour and launch an international campaign to attract boutique cruises to Gozo.

- 50. We will launch a continuous programme of maintenance and upkeep of country lanes and the countryside.
- 51. We will double the budget allocation for the international promotion of Gozo to €1 million, part of which is to be used to draw up Public-Private Partnerships to advertise Gozo abroad.
- 52. We will commission new floating berths in sensitive maritime areas to reduce environmental impact from seabed mooring and protect the diving tourism sector.
- 53. We will introduce new Marine
  Protected Areas in Gozo to
  stimulate fish population growth to
  help the diving tourism sector.
- 54. We will establish a calendar of cultural events including international initiatives running over the course of the whole year funded by the Gozo Culture Development Fund.aimed at drawing a stream of visitors during the year

"Whilst we seek to expand and diversify the Gozitan economy, it is important that the fundamental basis - tourism - remains strong"



# EDUCATION: PROVIDING THE RIGHT TOOLS

Education is the cornerstone of the continued development of our island of Gozo, and in this regard Gozo has been in the forefront of providing the necessary environment for its young people to develop and flourish. Education in Gozo is by all means a story of great success, with quality schooling and a vast proportion of Gozitan students moving on to post-secondary and tertiary education.

There is however no space for complacency. This nurturing atmosphere needs to be strengthened in order to remain effective and we will see that the development of the people of Gozo remains the foundation for a truly successful island economy and society.

Gozo boasts all the necessary infrastructure for the establishment of a strong life-long educational system. Yet in the past few years, some of the institutions present on the island have lost their lustre and have either become irrelevant or else are not meeting



#### **EDUCATION: PROVIDING** THE RIGHT TOOLS

- 55. We will deliver the new Victoria Primary School in the shortest possible time, thus also opening up the possibility of the modernisation of the Gozo Central Library and the National Archives - Gozo.
- 56. We will make a strong investment in the University of Malta – Gozo Campus, which will look out for International Strategic Alliances in order to become relevant for the Mediterranean Region.
- 57. We will continue investing in the MCAST Gozo Campus and assist it to develop its educational offer further, e.g. international scuba diving academy for maritime sector including gas and oil 🚭 with a view of opening up also to Maltese and foreign students.

- 58. We will offer tax rebates for parents of Gozitan students attending educational institutions in Malta. thus assisting families in the supplementary expenses they incur.
- 59. We will undertake a strong investment in the Gozo Visual and Performing Arts School so that it recovers the assets it has lost under the present administration, thus being able to support the development of skills that will ensure the long-term success of the art and craft industry in Gozo.
- 60. The Ministry for Gozo will create a framework for the promotion of science learning and will develop a state of the art Language Lab to foster multilingualism. All state and private schools on the island will benefit from these two measures.
- 61. We will continue to sustain the video conferencing facilities offered at the Gozo Campus of the University of Malta

Gozo's expectations for the creation of a better human resource base and a sound, sustainable economy.

The University of Malta - Gozo Campus will engage with the Ministry for Gozo and other Economic and Social institutions to draw up innovative programmes of study required by Gozo, and others that could draw students from Malta and foreign countries. The Campus will choose strategic areas in which it will develop into a Centre of Excellence.

We will see that all the assets that Gozo prides itself with in the Educational sector will be fully active in helping a new Government take Gozo forward into a strong, stable economy and a society that celebrates the skills and knowledge of all its members. The Ministry for Gozo shall once again become an important and active stakeholder in the Educational Sector in Gozo. Once again, we will put in this sector all it takes so that we will ensure a bright future for the island of Gozo.

# TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE LIVING IN GOZO



"The long term vision is to have Gozo as a zero carbon island region by 2030 where clean energy measures would be heavily incentivised"



Over the years the Gozitan lifestyle evolved in ways that adapted to a variety of needs. No matter what course the evolution of the Gozitan lifestyle has taken, it always sought to be sustainable. Many constraints and pressures have hampered this evolution to fully express itself. We are thus seeking to launch a set of proposals that go towards alleviating some of these pressures and constraints.

The true character of the Gozitan identity and social dynamic comes to life in the various town centres. Over recent years the local village/town square has been re-discovered by the younger generation as a place to socialise and integrate. This has been somewhat hampered by traffic flow pressures which need to be accommodated. As part of an overall sustainable living strategy we are thus proposing a pilot project of pedestrianisation of local squares during the course of weekends: from late Saturday evenings to Sunday late afternoon. This would create a dynamic for the local village/town core to become vibrant again during the weekends where families can be provided with a safe environment for them to entertain themselves and where young people can gather without the impending need to make way for traffic. Such an exercise would form part of a wider holistic traffic management plan that encourages reduced car use and an active lifestyle.

#### **TOWARDS** SUSTAINABLE LIVING IN GOZO

- 62. We will renew the Local Sustainable Development Strategy for Gozo, putting Gozo once again at the forefront for the attainment of sustainable development goals on the island for a better quality of life.
- 63. We will launch a pilot project for the pedestrianisation of town centres during weekends.
- 64. A new Water Management strategy for Gozo will be developed in the context of the National Water Plan. This strategy will implement pilot projects on water conservation and management in Gozo.
- 65. We will provide new green lungs in urban areas.

- 66. We will embark on a wholesale revision, upgrading and promotion of cycle lanes and other related infrastructure, e.g. bicycle parking racks to enable an active lifestyle and a partial modal shift.
- 67. We will set up a €10 million Sustainable Gozo Fund that partially draws funds from tax receipts in Gozo to incentivize businesses and industrial operators to invest in energy- efficient machinery and equipment.
- 68. We will provide a plan for Gozo to become a zero carbon island region by 2030 by strongly incentivising renewable forms of energy e.g. solar energy, free electric car charging.

Gozo's urban areas need to complement the wider landscape of the island. We are thus proposing an injection of green lungs within urban area by providing a balance between soft and hard landscaping. Such measures contribute partly to the traffic impact mitigation plan and also provide a means of embellishment and improvement of Gozo's urban areas.

As part of the active healthy lifestyle promotion, a wholesale revision, upgrading and promotion of cycle lanes in Gozo shall be implemented. These measures shall be incorporated within projects of new thoroughfares namely from Victoria to Xaghra, Nadur, Żebbug and Marsalforn respectively. This also augments the vision of promoting Gozo as an island of adventure.

An infrastructure that accommodates cyclists would also promote a partial modal shift of transport around the island of Gozo.

The long term vision is to have Gozo as a zero carbon island region by 2030 where clean energy measures, such as solar energy, would be heavily incentivised on the island. Moreover the island should be promoted as a niche market for small and medium renewable energy operators to test novel technologies. Apart from fiscal incentives, the nationalist party proposes the setting up of €10 million Sustainable Gozo Fund, aimed at providing an incentive to businesses and industrial operators to invest in energy efficient machinery and equipment.

# A SUCCESSFUL FUTURE FOR OUR FARMERS AND FISHERMEN



The agriculture and fisheries sectors are of strategic importance and contribute significantly to the sustainable development of Gozo.

Leading experts suggest that apart from providing the livelihood or additional income for many Gozitan families, the agricultural and fisheries sector provide various services that have significant growth potential and other synergies to be fully tapped.

The farmers' contribution to the economy and quality of life goes beyond profit and commercial interests. Farmers play a central role in managing the Gozitan countryside and landscape that has direct impact on tourism and our quality of life as Gozitan citizens. Moreover, farmers are protagonists in conserving and managing soil resources, water and the genetic heritage of our island's ecosystem.

Given the current context, the Nationalist party recognises that the agriculture and fisheries sector are at a crossroads whereby bold political decisions require urgent consideration.

In the first 100 days of a PN-led administration, we will launch a consultation process with co-operatives, farmer unions, livestock farmers and fishermen to lay out a clear strategy for agriculture and fisheries in Gozo.

Diversification in the fisheries sector is central to ensure new sources of income that complement the traditional fishing activity.

It is imperative that Gozo aims to be a centre of excellence in the region for agriculture and sustainable environment. Agriculture offers Gozo huge opportunities and interesting possibilities of synergies with other activities such as tourism, pharmaceutics and products not intended for the food industry amongst others. A new PN-led administration will be committed to see this sector develop into a new and successful niche market. Moreover, a commitment will also be made to inject new human resources into agriculture especially from the upcoming generation. Meanwhile, there are impending issues that need a resolution without any further delay. Amongst other issues, we commit ourselves to draw up an agreement with livestock farmers about animal waste management that would ideally yield a new revenue stream for them; distribute processed water from the sewage treatment plant to the farmers; retrospectively compensate those farmers who have been encouraged to invest in renewable forms of energy and have been delayed considerably due to unnecessary bureaucracy; commission without delay an ambitious project of land parcelling that will seek to consolidate existing units rather than fragment land. We will also seek to launch a Centre for Innovation and Research in Agriculture and the Environment in Xewkija, for it to become a Centre of Excellence in this area. Moreover, we will promote the concept of "zero kilometre" enhancing the use of local produce locally on the island. This would complement the "Made in Gozo" label that would be applicable to the processes local agricultural products such as cheeselets, honey, wine and other locally processed foods.

The Nationalist Party believes that the agricultural and fisheries sectors can thrive in Gozo if the proper incentives and creativity is instilled in the local farmers and fishermen. The Nationalist Party believes that these sectors are here to stay and their contribution to the Gozitan socio-economic fabric go beyond the economic factors. Hence the PN-led administration is committed to give a new lease of life to these sectors so that they are sustainable and able to secure a successful future.

### A SUCCESSFUL FUTURE FOR OUR FARMERS AND FISHERMEN

- 69. We will settle payments to honour past agreements drawn up for the modernization of livestock farms.
- 70. We will create an agricultural innovation investment fund for Gozo to encourage new products, processes, grading and innovative ideas.
- 71. We will launch a voluntary pilot project of land re-parcelling in collaboration with local farmers so that the issue of agricultural land fragmentation is addressed.
- 72. We will open a science institute within MCAST Gozo and launch a programme of studies aimed at Agribusiness and technology.
- 73. We will introduce a compensation mechanism to those farmers who invested heavily in sustainable and renewable forms of energy and have been delayed by unnecessary

- bureaucracy to be connected to the distribution grid leading to considerable financial loss.
- 74. We will create a special fund to help a young generation of farmers, to invest in the agricultural sector.
- 75. We will launch various projects and incentives, so that local farmers and fishermen can diversify their product e.g. convert to organic farming or integrated resource management, offer touristic experiences as part of their product.
- 76. We will launch a campaign with restaurants and local Gozitan establishments to promote local Gozitan produce.
- 77. We will draw up a distribution framework of New Water produced from the sewage treatment plant amongst the farming community without any further delay.





# ELDERLY IN GOZO: WE OWE OUR PRESENT AND FUTURE TO THEM

The true moral compass of a society is gauged by its attitude towards those who are most vulnerable. Our culture promotes and empowers the role of the elderly in society beyond the status of a population segment that needs help and care. They are an active and important part of our communities and an unfailing support to our younger generation. Our elderly are the standard bearers that handed down to us the culture, identity, experiences and knowledge to help face the challenges we encounter on a day to day basis, providing a formation to our children.





### ELDERLY IN GOZO: WE OWE OUR PRESENT AND FUTURE TO THEM

Our elderly are not a burden. They form our values and conscience. Whilst we honour their contribution, Gozo, as a civilized society, shows gratitude towards its elderly, and appreciates their past and present contribution in developing a strong society as we know it.

The nationalist party recognises the strength and resilience of our elderly that are capable of being our moral and social compass for times to come. Meanwhile, we feel that we should commit ourselves to provide whatever is necessary to improve the quality of life and support our elderly.

We will introduce a range of measures that support the elderly whilst at the same time stimulate their contribution to the wider society.

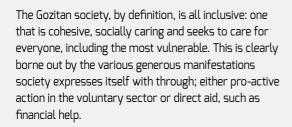
In terms of support, we are proposing a gerontology service led by resident specialists; the completion of the current elderly home project in Ghajnsielem, whilst upgrading and earmarking new community care homes. We shall encourage the elderly contribution by various means that value their validity in a tangible manner. We will facilitate mobility by giving free transport passes for the elderly in Gozo.

- 78. We will develop comprehensive community-based services for the elderly that enable wellbeing as one grows older.
- 79. We will encourage elderly persons to use public transport by making all public transport in Gozo free for elderly persons.
- 80. We will deliver the new old people's home in Ghajnsielem as quickly as possible.
- 81. We will upgrade existing care and nursing homes to ensure that the elderly people who need them get the best possible service and to ensure that the demand is met without compromising the quality of the service.
- 82. We will ensure that all new buildings adopt a universal design and a dementia friendly approach, as part of an integrated plan to develop Gozo into a fully accessible and dementia friendly community.

# GOZO: A SOCIETY THAT CARES FOR ALL



"We will seek to facilitate in every way possible the introduction of community mental health and palliative care services in Gozo"



Society in Gozo wants to see that help being encouraged and consolidated by the state, so that everyone is really taken care of.



We are thus committing ourselves to introduce a suite of measures across various functions in Gozo to stimulate a more inclusive society and environment. So that disabled people feel that they belong to the community we will encourage disabled people who want to set up their own home with the provision of suitable, secure, accessible and functional housing. Moreover, we will develop within the proposed Child Development Centre a specialised service for disabled infants and children to support families and to ensure the earliest possible intervention according to the

### GOZO: A SOCIETY THAT CARES FOR ALL



- 83. Within the proposed Child
  Development Centre we will
  develop a specialised service for
  disabled infants and children to
  support families and to ensure
  the earliest possible intervention
  according to the needs identified.
- 84. We will provide all the schools in Gozo with the resources they need, in particular Learning Support Assistants (LSA), to ensure the effective inclusion of all students within mainstream education.
- 85. We will review the service agreement with the Arka Foundation to enable the Foundation to expand its services.
- 86. We will enter into agreements with interested NGOs for the development of Community Mental Health and Palliative Services in Gozo.

needs identified. This is complemented by providing the resources to schools to ensure the effective inclusion of all students within mainstream education.

Often the social NGOs are best placed to take the lead and deliver the adequate and tailor services for the vulnerable in society. We are thus committing ourselves to review existing agreements with the ARKA foundation to enable the Foundation to expand

its services according to the needs identified by the service users. Moreover, we will seek to facilitate in every way possible the introduction of community mental health and palliative care services in Gozo. Currently these services are missing and need introducing without further delay. We are thus proposing to enter into agreements with interested NGOs for the development of Community Mental Health and Palliative Services in Gozo.

## GOZO: A CRUCIBLE OF CULTURE

Gozo is alive and well. It is surely a sector where Gozo punches much above its weight. Investment in Culture in Gozo is significant, coming from a variety of sources, maintained through public funds and funds raised by voluntary organisations.

The Gozitan cultural scene is brimming with initiatives and activities. Gozo is strong when it comes to heritage.

Gozo is truly a crucible of Culture, where different elements, genres and expressions merge together to

create a unique and wonderful experience. Culture in

The Gozitan cultural scene is brimming with initiatives and activities. Gozo is strong when it comes to heritage, history and cultural resources. Our vision is to foster this environment to see it develop and grow further, to see our talented children and young people develop their creativity further.

Culturally, Gozo is truly a rich place. Yet this richness still does not contribute as much as it should to the island's Economy. We want to see Gozo develop further as a hub for Creativity and Innovation in the cultural sphere, attracting more quality visitors, not just for holidays, but also to perform, teach, learn, exchange experiences and network. Gozo has the potential of becoming a cultural centre of excellence for the Mediterranean and for the European continent.

Life on these islands revolves around cultural and artistic expression; our churches, traditions, band clubs, crafts, theatres and organisations, patronal feasts, Christmas, Easter and more. These form an amazing backdrop against which Gozo can transform itself into an Island of Culture.

For this to be achieved, most assets are already in place and a substantial amount of activity already takes place. Our proposals provide the framework to bring all this effort and activity together, see it flourish further and translate it into economic benefit for Gozo.

Amongst other initiatives we will create a Culture Development Fund partially funded from Gozitan tax proceeds to foster and support Festivals, Operas, private museums and cultural centres in Gozo. This



"We want to see Gozo develop further as a hub for creativity and Innovation in the cultural sphere"



### GOZO: A CRUCIBLE OF CULTURE

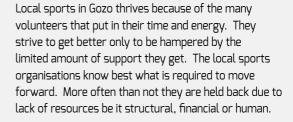
- 87. We will deliver and open the Gozo Museum.
- 88. We will create a Foundation for the conservation and management of Cittadella and the Victoria historic core.
- 89. We will set up a fund to assist in the conservation of heritage in private hands and its accessibility to the public.
- 90. We will create a Culture Development Fund to foster and support Festivals, Operas, private museums, budding artists and craftsmen and cultural centres in Gozo.
- 91. We will transform the whole village of Xaghra into a Prehistoric Heritage Trail, and open the Brochtorff Circle site to the public.

- 92. We will resume the Public Art in Gozo project and continue to commission and install artistic works in public areas.
- 93. We will provide the adequate environment for young artists to thrive and establish themselves locally and internationally.
- 94. We will set up the Mgarr ix-Xini
  Heritage Park and restore the Mgarr
  ix-Xini Pumping Station which will
  be dedicated to activities related to
  adventure and nature-based sport,
  water conservation education and
  cultural expression.
- 95. We will develop at Cittadella a
  Centre for Creativity on the lines of
  St James' Cavalier in Valletta. This
  centre will link up and be responsible
  for the creation of a network of
  already-existing cultural facilities in
  Gozo.

would strengthen further these important attractions for quality tourism on Gozo. Within this context, the PN-led administration is committed to provide a professional specialised team in Gozo to market effectively established Festivals and operas in the appropriate international for a, thus tapping the pool of high end cultural tourism. At present the sterling work of voluntary organizations in producing high calibre Festivals still lacks appropriate focused

marketing strategies which could be instrumental in establishing Gozo as a fantastic cultural destination. There is nothing like high Culture to turn nowhere into somewhere with the diversified spinoffs on multiple levels. High end products need to be adequately marketed. The PN-led administration will provide the necessary marketing tools in situ thus implementing the public-private partnership as an articulation of the principle of subsidiarity to the benefit of Gozo in the cultural sector.

# SPORT: OUR PLAN FOR AN ACTIVE GOZO



We will deliver the Gozo national pool yet to see the light of day under the current Labour administration.

Some sports organisations have the facilities that have untapped potential in them. We will incentivize in any way the sports organisations to generate a revenue stream from their facilities such as the partial conversion to commercial spaces, where permissible, an the use of roof space for the sake of renewable energy generation.

We will set up the Gozo Sports Fund as a means to provide support to the various organisations and clubs to partially fund the set up of new facilities. Moreover, the Gozo Sports Fund will help various local sports organisations to nurture the upcoming generation to have a sports culture.

Many times the facilities of club organisations are not up to standard due to the lack of maintenance and human resources. We are thus proposing to set up a sports facilities management co-operative that sports organisation clubs can opt to make use of its services.

"We will incentivize sports training camps breaking a new niche in sports tourism"



### SPORT: OUR PLAN FOR AN ACTIVE GOZO



- 96. We will deliver a Gozo regional indoor pool.
- 97. We will allow commercialisation of sports facilities to help sports organisations and clubs so that they can secure their future.
- 98. We will set up a Gozo Sports Fund to support sport nurseries and the setting up of new facilities in Gozo.
- 99. We will incentivize sports training camps breaking a new niche in sports tourism.
- 100. We will set up a sports facilities management co-operative to oversee the upkeep of sports facilities managed by organisations.

"the Gozo Sports Fund will help various local sports organisations to nurture the upcoming generation to have a sports culture"



