

Comment & Letters



Proposal for a new Sliema waterfront

While the recent upgrading of Tower Road and Qui-Si-Sana is commendable, one should now consider the upgrading of the Sliema waterfront on The Strand side. Before a master plan is developed for this prestigious location, one has to take into consideration the needs of this location, together with its long-term potential.

This is without any doubt a fantastic location with the potential to develop a super yacht hub which would be the envy of other competing marinas in the Mediterranean. For this to materialise a local breakwater would need to be constructed where the depth of the sea is not considerable, rendering the area a safe harbour all year round. The cost for a local breakwater in a depth of only 10 metres should not be exorbitant. The availability of many retail shops and restaurants in the vicinity is ideal to develop a marquee-type waterfront which is an idyllic environment for super yachts' users.

Those who have been to the famous St Tropez in the south of France can realise that this super yacht hub for the summer season only, offers similar attractions, but has established a name for the rich and famous who visit this old town on a regular basis.

However to compete and offer similar attractions, the Sliema area

needs to be upgraded with improved infrastructure and facilities, as better explained in the attached plan. Part of the sea, especially the area opposite St Anne Square needs to be reclaimed and developed into an attractive public garden, wide promenade, children's play area, a small ferry terminal with proper public conveniences, slipway for water buses, terminus for buses, tourist coaches, mini cabs, taxis, ticketing booths and other uses.

Once the reclamation is complete it will have multi-benefits for other areas in the vicinity as well. These include the need for the church of Jesus of Nazareth to have its own parvis, like all main churches in other towns and villages; the need to widen the pavement opposite the buildings on the seafront, thus having more free pedestrian access; the need to increase car parking facilities threefold; the need to widen the main road with less crossings which are creating bottlenecks in the traffic junctions.

This would accommodate a "weave-in" system and turn around junctions before and after this stretch of the front so as to avoid traffic congestion.

If the upper part of the road leading to the Fortina Hotel is widened, a large two-storey under-

ground car park beneath the road could be constructed. I calculate the whole area could accommodate more than 1,000 car spaces. Wherever possible, we should consider more underground car parks beneath wide roads like we find in central congested European cities like Paris and Monte Carlo.

With a proper master plan, this new magnificent Sliema waterfront could accommodate the existing facilities for harbour cruises, ferries, etc. in a more organised manner, plus a number of berths for super yachts and a small yacht marina towards the higher part, close to the new local breakwater.

A water feature opposite St Anne Square will continue to embellish the whole waterfront.

It is recommended that the investment should be done through a public-private partnership scheme. I feel confident that after my successful endeavour in creating the Valletta waterfront into a magnificent location, with my proposal we can have another magnificent Sliema waterfront that will be one of the most elegant in the Mediterranean and which will be admired by this and future generations.

Angelo Xuereb
Tal-Virtu

Of giant buses and great expectations

The Times article Arriva's Buses - Never Mind The Width, See The Quantity (October 3) reports that dimension-wise the Arriva buses are in line with the local regulations and legislation. Yet all can see that the Arriva buses are too big for Maltese roads. In certain areas even the old buses (which had able and experienced drivers) had difficulties in manoeuvring. For the new buses in many of the local roads, let alone villages and village cores, this is an impossibility.

That they are in line with the local rules and regulations is irrelevant. If they are unsuitable, they are unsuitable - even if within the parameters of the law. The size of the Arriva buses indicates a conceptual error, which is then compounded by the routes and times chosen.

The bendy buses have been rejected elsewhere - yet are now seemingly dumped on us. It is of course possible to send them back or to other countries with wider roads and which after turmoils in their land urgently require such buses. Only the smaller-sized buses should be used - with a well-thought-out timetable, I dare say mainly based on the old routes and with greater frequencies and hubs or centres from which to operate more easily and readily.

The Arriva debacle is a real pity because many people looked forward to having a better service than the old one. That the old buses needed to be changed, including the attitude of the drivers, was a foregone conclusion. But the change had to be to the better and not to the worse. Great expectations have ended in great

delusions, for tourists as well as locals. The repercussions are substantial to both.

Admittedly the tourists had a rather enjoyable ride on the unique, quaint, old bus (even if smoke- and noise-emitting) - they now find a service which wastes precious time on their short holiday. Commuters now spend extra time in reaching their destination - recreative or workplace - often arriving late and being punished for such a late arrival. It is felt that such disciplinary action - lost pay or leave - against commuters should be passed on to Arriva.

Something must be done radically, quickly and efficiently. If it is not, the Arriva buses will be an ever-present testimony to a waste of taxpayers' money and to a great fiasco.
Hugh Peralta
Valletta

Need for amendments to Notarial Act long felt

I refer to the report Bad Apples Lead To Change In Notarial Act (October 5).

The need to amend the Notarial Profession and Notarial Archives Act (chapter 55 of the Laws of Malta) has been felt for a considerable number of years.

During the three terms I served as president of the Notarial Council I presented various amendments to chapter 55, however, these never saw the light of day, notwithstanding that the minister agreed to the great majority of these amendments. Today, the amendments proposed by the Notarial Council under my presidency have all been incorporated in the Bill number 20/2011. Not only amendments formally presented to the government are incorporated in the Bill, but one also finds the policy adopted by the Notarial Council under my presidency, where notarial practice and the examination leading to the granting of a warrant to practise the profession are concerned. This policy had been adopted to have better-trained notaries and hence offer a better guarantee to the public.

I also feel I have to comment on José Herrera's valid and interesting contribution in Parliament as reported in The Times.

Dr Herrera states that "... it had become a custom that after having obtained University qualifications, the warrant exam became more of a formality". This implies that up

The Times of October 5 carries a report of a debate in Parliament on changes in the Notarial Act, where the presence of bad apples was cited as a reason for a necessary reform in the regulation of the notarial profession.

In the same issue but of far greater importance the leader discussed the dire need of having a judiciary above reproach, and as a corollary, of the requisite of a proper procedure for the "selection of judges and magistrates and for removing the bad apples".

It went on to concede that at present "selection is very much in the gift of the Prime Minister".

Considering the fact that the recent and most notorious incident in the history of our judiciary

till today this examination was just a formality. I formed part of the notaries examination board several times and I categorically state that the warrant exam is not "a formality"; in fact whenever I served on the examination board several candidates failed.

The warrant examination is a tough examination and is intended to be such.

Dr Herrera makes reference to the Italian notariat. The level of preparation of an Italian notary is very high. The "warrant" examination is also tough and, as the number of notaries are limited, only the very best are granted a warrant to practise the notarial profession.

Dr Herrera rightly states that "... a notary was as important as a magistrate". Yes, this is so; in fact, when there was a backlog of civil cases regarding civil matters in the Italian Courts, the ministry of justice asked notaries to volunteer to act as temporary judges - the notary, just as a judge, always acts impartially to the persons who appear before him in the course of his notarial practice.

Having mentioned the courts, I submit that Maltese notaries can take some of the work performed by the courts today. Work carried out by the Court of Voluntary Jurisdiction can be done by a notary public. The courts will ease their workload and the public will be served faster and cheaper.

Joseph Henry Saydon
Valletta

involved a Chief Justice, and that this disaster was the outcome of political preferment to this supreme office by a former Prime Minister, it should be obvious that such appointments should no longer be "in the gift" of any politician, be he on the government or the opposition benches.

The lesson to be learnt is that political patronage must be kept at arms' length in any proposed new selection procedure for judges or magistrates.

It is here that the President can play a primary role, acting on the advice of the Commission for the Administration of Justice after consulting the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

Joseph A. Muscat
Ta' Xbiex

Traffic lights and cyclists

The traffic lights that control Park and Ride buses allowing them to join St Anne Street in Floriana were not devised initially for cyclists as implied by Dennis A. Darmanin (October 6) but were set up solely for the Park and Ride service. This included a cycle hire scheme, but far from facilitating cyclists in general, these were part and parcel of the Park and Ride scheme.

Mr Darmanin quite rightly points out that the detour for other traffic is about a kilometre (I suspect it is actually longer) but such extended routes and even bigger deviations to get around one-way systems are *de rigueur* for the island's commuting cyclists. There is the saying that bicycles save you money and run on fat, cars run on money and save you fat! There isn't one village or town where large one-way systems don't exist (not to mention tunnels) and are proof that little thought has gone into

planning how cyclists, who as stated above circulate one-way systems under their own power, cope with such geographical barriers.

While I feel Mr Darmanin's pain and agree it may seem silly to stop normal traffic using the lights, cyclists have a far rougher time of it, navigating one-way systems designed purely as a methodology of coping with the sheer volume of cars. Of course the trade-off is some pretty impressive benefit.

If cyclists were included in the St Anne's traffic lights I can assure Mr Darmanin it was a totally unintended outcome. If we want to help traffic flow and use cyclists as a way to reduce traffic queues and increase parking availability, this country's town and urban planners need to start thinking about and talking to cyclists.

James Craig Wightman
St Julians