

A vision... an illusion

The government's latest vision for Malta's Grand Harbour is yet another illusion. Over the past 20 years the government has not been capable of implementing one single project of this magnitude. So, how can anyone believe and trust its vision? Who can honestly believe that it is serious in its vision?

The only two projects which have been implemented were initiated by the Labour government. These were the Valletta Waterfront and the Cottonera Waterfront.

In the government's presentation of its latest proposals a very important statement was missing. It would have read "The past is not a guarantee of the future".

How many reports, local plans and proposals has the government presented over the past 20 years? Here are a few:

- Grand Harbour Local Plan commissioned in 1994. By October 1996 it was already in its seventh version!
- The expensive Howarth and Howarth tourism masterplan which was never released to the public for reasons which only the government can explain.
- Tourism and Recreation Trade surveys in September 1997.
- The 2000 development brief for "The Regeneration of Cottonera".
- The development brief for the Crown Works/Hornworks site in Floriana.
- The Connections project which should have linked the two harbours.
- The Draft Sustainable Development Strategy for Malta issued in 2004.
- Two separate plans and tenders issued for the redevelopment of City Gate, the bus terminus and the rebuilding of the Opera House.
- The masterplan for Fort St Elmo.
- The masterplan for Fort Riccasoli.
- Many promises to restore Fort St Angelo.
- Many promises to close down the Marsa power station.
- None of the above projects/proposals have materialised. So how can anyone believe that the present government has the vision and will to implement



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the proposed 20 projects in the next eight years?

Most of the proposals make sense and should have been implemented a long time ago. But I ask, why were Fort St Angelo and Fort St Elmo not included? Why was there no mention of sea and land transportation connecting both harbours and the surrounding towns? Why was Marsamxett Harbour not included? There are synergies between these two harbours which should be included in one masterplan. As an example, the Gozo Channel commercial berth in Marsamxett should be relocated to Grand Harbour in line with similar activities and relieve this bottleneck in Pietà.

Azzjoni Nazzjonali firmly believe that we can implement these projects as well as make Malta a hub for superyachts. There is no doubt that both harbours have to be linked by sea transportation for use by both locals and tourists. I have put forward various proposals on this issue, some of which were the following:

- On October 29, 1989 I presented A proposal for the Valletta masterplan.

- On April 14, 1991 – Masterplan on How to improve public transport in Malta.

- December 1996 – A proposal for an underground monorail system for mass transportation.

- May 1998 – Proposal for the redevelopment of City Gate, the Opera House and bus termini.

- January 8, 2001 – A masterplan for an integrated public transportation system

- December 19, 2002 – A plan to restore Fort St Elmo and other historical buildings on a public private partnership (PPP) basis.

- October 31, 2004 – "Another proposal for the redevelopment of the Opera House, City Gate and the Bus Termini".

- April 24, 2005 – Another plan entitled Let us revive Valletta.

I have consistently put forward my views and proposals related to Valletta, as well as the surrounding harbours and towns as a patriotic citizen who has proper planning at heart and who has a practical vision and more importantly the will to make things happen. *Azzjoni Nazzjonali* believes in action, not just words.

Given its record, the present government cannot really claim that it is the guarantee of the future. Indeed if this is not the case, then the vision for the Grand Harbour will end up being another unfinished plan, just another report which will be covered in dust by 2015!

Azzjoni Nazzjonali will not only improve on these proposals but will tackle them one by one, in order of priority. My personal vision as the promoter of the Valletta Waterfront and the cruise liner facilities, coupled with my achievements in making things happen in business and as Mayor of Naxxar, are "my guarantee for the future".

To achieve success requires hard work. To be unsuccessful requires no effort whatsoever. *Azzjoni Nazzjonali* is committed to turning proposals into reality.

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