

Chairman's report

When the Board of the Planning Authority was appointed on 1st November, 1998, it received a clear mandate from Government to reform the organisation and address public concern over its performance. The reform was to be three-pronged: an internal reorganisation of the Authority, a review of its policies and amendments to the Development Planning Act. It is with satisfaction that I end my term as Chairman with achievements in each of these areas.

As a first step we commissioned the Management Efficiency Unit at the Office of the Prime Minister to carry out an Operational and Organisational Review of the Planning Authority. The report completed, we appointed a change agent to facilitate the implementation of the main recommendations. The Planning Directorate's nine functional units were regrouped under three assistant directors responsible for Development Services, Forward Planning and Corporate Services. The new organisation structure has enabled us to concentrate our resources on our statutory obligations and the required deliverables.

The Board approved a Business Plan for the period October 2000 to September 2003 that contains clear targets, deadlines and a business strategy that aims to increase efficiency, clarify priorities and foster an entrepreneurial culture among employees.

The past year has been one of consolidation for the Authority. The Board has closely followed the implementation of the Business Plan and generally, our targets are being achieved.

The restructuring exercise within our Development Control Services is giving the desired results. The staff were regrouped and a dedicated team now handles major development applications and the interfaces with the Authority's corporate clients. Another team deals with applications in urban conservation areas. This streaming of applications is ensuring consistency and expediency in development application procedures. Meanwhile, on the decision-taking front, the Development Control Commission put in an extra effort during the review period to bring down the number of pending applications to 2,742 in September, the lowest figure registered in the last three years.

Performance in the enforcement area has also increased significantly. We have diversified and intensified our operations and have been carrying out at least one direct action operation per week. The nature of some of the illegal development, such as the removal of extensive scrap yards, meant that some operations took days and even weeks to complete.

In the forward planning area our main focus remained on the preparation of local plans. During the review period the North West Local Plan was published for public consultation bringing the number of local plans published to four. We anticipate that the remaining three plans for Gozo and Comino, Central Area and Malta South will be published during the next financial year.

The Structure Plan review process continued with the publication of topic papers on retail, tourism, demography, coastal and leisure and recreation. More topic papers and subject plans are being finalised to complete the first phase of the review process.

Last year saw Government approving the Crown Works/Horn Works Action Plan. The Authority meanwhile published development briefs for the Qawra Coast and for a commercial park in Luqa, proposing planning parameters for development in the area.

On the information technology front, the Authority's revamped website and ecommerce services are proving to be an ideal tool for information dissemination among an increasingly discerning public. Our decision to put all policies, case officer reports, decisions and enforcement notices on-line has opened the Authority to constant public scrutiny at every stage of the decision-making process. I believe this is the way forward to increase public participation in, and awareness of, land-planning issues and decisions.

The past year saw the coming into force of the Development Control Policy and Design Guidance 2000, a new legal notice on development notifications and new Environmental Impact Assessment procedures. The next major step is the implementation of the amendments to the Development Planning Act which will be both a challenge and an opportunity for the Authority to increase its effectiveness and service delivery.

The setting up of the Planning Authority in 1992 generated a wealth of corporate knowledge which helped us implement the necessary reforms of the past three years. The Authority has had its fair share of controversy, an inevitable fate for any organisation with a transparent decision-making process such as ours. The stakes in planning are high indeed and there are always conflicting interests which must be balanced.

I believe that people will judge us fairly only if we continue to improve our communication and participation to ensure the public is informed, involved and aware of the choices that need to be made.

Being the end of my term as chairman, I must thank Hon Dr Tonio Borg, Minister for Home Affairs and Hon George Pullicino, Parliamentary Secretary for their support throughout my tenure. I must also thank the Deputy Chairman, the Board Members and Secretary, the Director of Planning, the Assistant Directors and all the staff at Chairman's Office and the Directorate. I am indebted to them all for the hard work they have put in.

Director's Report

Sustainable development is a major objective resulting from the amendments to the Development Planning Act and the provisions in the new Environment Protection Act. What can we learn from elsewhere to strengthen our current planning mechanisms to achieve this objective?

Sustainability, defined as “meeting the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”, can be attained through a wide range of alternative strategies. In essence though it requires the balancing of competing economic, social and environmental interests through negotiating trade-offs, building consensus for a way forward and integrated management with government.

Land use planning is an accepted activity for facilitation and conflict mediation in the development of land and property, the creation of local economic development and community regeneration opportunities, environmental enhancement and protection and the provision of infrastructure. Internationally, its role and nature is changing with the growing desire for ‘joined-up government’ with emphasis on co-ordination of sectors and the involvement of communities as stakeholders. This is echoed in the European concept of ‘spatial planning’, which broadens the approach to issues across a wider perspective than ‘town and country planning’. Underpinning this is the EU encouragement of the development at European, national and regional levels of government, of systems of spatial planning - which explicitly seek to bring together territorial, social, economic and environmental planning in one integrated process - as an instrument of sustainable development.

This new approach calls for strategic management of spaces and territories in ways which organise land uses with a wider regard for the balance between developmental and environmental objectives. This is working through in practice in the UK where there has been a significant shift towards viewing the planning system as a means of achieving sustainable development. Changes in organisational structure and functions of local planning authorities in the UK are bringing together key services (Strategic Planning, Transport Planning, Environmental Management and Economic Development), integrating planning and environmental protection. At a broader level the emphasis in the legal context now reflects the environmental role of planning so that, for example, the achievement of sustainable development is now an official objective of the planning system. All development plans must have regard to ‘environmental considerations’ and should include policies for improving the physical environment, the management of traffic, the natural beauty and amenity of land.

Elsewhere, within and outside Europe, sustainable development objectives are now common. Planning is becoming less a system of land use regulation and more a process of managing spatial and environmental change. A number of key trends can be identified, including improvements in the integration of plan making and environmental protection/management and the bringing together of environmental issues as distinct from a sectoral approach. Increasingly national objectives or ‘visions’ are recognised as a means of providing strategic direction and for improving opportunities for public participation. Five other broad directions of change are:

Reducing the compartmentalisation of environmental planning and regulation especially in relation to land use, environmental protection and transport planning; adopting a more comprehensive view of planning - spatial planning - in addition to land use planning at national and regional levels; reducing fragmentation and complexity in institutional and legislative frameworks; synchronise environmental planning instruments and procedures to cover the same geographical areas; and improving the information base for environmental planning.

So there are clear lessons to be learnt from this international experience. The Netherlands' non-statutory 'national vision' is a particularly important example. The formulation and adoption of such a 'vision' can be the vehicle to bring together the various stakeholders building into the process public participation across all levels of society and integrating the different sectoral issues, such as spatial planning, as well as economic development and environmental/socio-economic effects. The current review process of the Structure Plan can play a major role in this exercise.

The need for integration of policy making, decision-making, implementation and action suggests that existing organisational structures, rather than a new agency, should adopt the new roles and responsibilities arising from the Environment Protection Act. In so doing, the overlap between the functions of the Planning Authority and the Environment Protection Department should be reduced rather than potentially increased. This needs to be done within the context of a clear national vision, which sets out clear goals to be attained and perhaps a complementary action plan, which indicates the institutions and their areas of responsibilities to work towards achieving this vision.

Building upon the strengths of the expertise of the Planning Directorate integrating those areas of environmental planning, which would contribute strongly to an integrated approach to environmental protection and planning is highly desirable. For the Planning Authority to undertake positive interventions in improving the general environment would extend its role beyond the purely regulatory function, which by itself gives the Authority a negative image. Environmental standards need to be established to improve the quality of life and the necessary mechanisms to measure those standards are required.

Beyond this there is a clear need for a greater lead to be provided at government level, from Cabinet, for the attainment of sustainable spatial planning and indeed for more recognition of the principles of sustainable development and their translation into concrete action. The institutional arrangements enacted in the Environment Protection Act will help towards this if adopted with the above concepts in mind but there is also the danger of further fragmentation.

In conclusion the lessons from elsewhere point to the need to reduce fragmentation and complexity (of legislation, of institutional frameworks, etc.) and these lessons should be taken on board in developing mechanisms to implement the Environment Protection Act - the opportunity exists for moving towards a wider view of spatial planning through closer working at a variety of levels within clearly defined frameworks of responsibilities and actions.

Planning Authority Board

Chairman Mr Christopher Falzon BSc (Eng.) Mphil, Grad.Dip (Maths), MICE, C.Eng., A&CE, Eur.Ing.

Deputy Chairman Mr Victor Torpiano BA(Arch) B.Arch(Hons) A&CE

Independent Members

Mr Peter Zammit BE&A (Hons) A&CE (appointed on 5 January, 2001)
Profs Victor Ferrito BSc MSc, PhD (Wales) FIFST, FRSH
Mr Alfred Mangion B.Pharm.
Mr Salvator Mousu'
Dr Tania Sciberras Camilleri LLD (resigned 10 November, 2000)
Dr Sandra Sladden LLD (appointed on 14 December, 2000)
Mr Ronald Azzopardi
Mr Paul Gauci BE&A (Hons), A&CE,M.A. (Reg. Plan.) (resigned 3 January, 2001)

Public officers as Members Representing Ministries

Mr Joseph Aquilina Mr Lawrence Buttigieg BE&A (Hons),M.A., A&CE
Mr Edwin Muscat (resigned on 20 August 2001)
Mr Saviour A Farrugia D.P.A. (appointed on 20 August 2001)
Mr Moses Azzopardi A.C.I.S. Dip.(M)
Mr Louis Vella BSc, MSc

Members of Parliament

Hon Michael Bonnici MP
Hon Joe Mizzi MP

Secretary

Mr Francis Tabone

The Planning Authority met 30 times during the review period, providing strategic guidance to the organisation in line with the Authority's Business Plan which covers the period October 2000 and September 2003.

At the beginning of its three-year term, the Board had initiated a reorganisation of the Directorate, ensuring effective use of the organisation's resources with a clear focus on the responsibilities arising from the Development Planning Act. The Directorate was reorganised under three divisions and, with the internal reform in place, the past year was a period of consolidation.

In line with the approved Business Plan, the Board approved the Crown Works/Horn Works Action Plan and the Ta' Qali Crafts Village Development Brief and approved for publication for public consultation the North West Local Plan, the Luqa Park Development Brief and the Qawra Coast Development Brief.

During its third year the Board continued with the revision of the Authority's planning policies. The Policy and Design Guidance 2000 came into effect in November 2000 and a new legal notice regulating development which does not require a full development permit came into effect in June 2001.

The Planning Authority Board, meeting in public, determined 30 development applications, many of which concerned major projects. These included, among others, outline permits for the cruise passenger terminal and for a new ferry terminal in Mgarr, Gozo, the redevelopment of Villa Sans Souci into a four star hotel, the conversion of Scamps Palace on the Vittoriosa sea front into a casino, several applications concerning the new hospital project and extensions to the Solemar and Eden Beach hotels.

On the heritage front the Board approved the scheduling of the 12-kilometre long, 19th century Victoria Lines, the fortified hilltop towns of Mdina and the Cittadella, 25 kilometres of harbour fortifications, Wied il-Lunzjata and Tas-Sellum, Mellieha.

Chairman's Office

The Chairman's Office is the point of reference for Government ministries, departments and agencies. During the review period the Office regularly organised meetings between the Authority's clients and the Directorate in order to facilitate solutions to issues concerning policies or development applications. The office provides all the secretarial support to the Chairman and the Planning Authority Board.

Complaints Office: A total of 262 complaints were received during the review period, a slight decrease on the previous year's 285 complaints. 46 of the cases originated from the Ombudsman's Office which liaises with the Chairman's Office when investigating complaints concerning the Authority. 22% of the complaints were dealt with within 5 working days, 14% within 10 days and 10% within 15 days. 110 of the complaints received from the public concerned enforcement issues, up from 92 complaints the previous year.

Communications Office: During the review period the Communications Office issued 71 press releases and organised 19 press conferences and launches. The Office handles all press queries, organises interviews and participation on radio and television programmes. Media reports are monitored and clarifications issued where necessary.

Public consultation initiatives are also co-ordinated through this office. A major public consultation exercise was undertaken in summer on the North West Local Plan. A newspaper style publication was distributed door to door and a series of public meetings organised with the help of local councils.

The office also liaisons with local councils, keeping them regularly informed on development applications received, board agendas and decisions.

Open Doors: The major event co-ordinated by the Communications Office was the Open Doors activity in May. Politicians, local councillors, government department heads, representatives of constituted bodies and non-government organisations and members of the public joined organised tours around the Authority's offices. Over 700 school children participated in a special programme. Prime Minister Eddie Fenech Adami paid an official visit during this activity.

Planning Authority Awards 2001: Innovative development proposals are to be awarded through an award scheme launched by the Authority. The Authority has called for nominations in the following categories: access for all; energy efficiency; engineering solutions; urban design; conservation and environment enhancement. The nominations will be evaluated for their originality, quality, design principles, problem solving and public participation.

Director's Office

In October 2000 the Director of Planning represented the Maltese Government in Marseille, France at the European Union Spatial Development Committee and at an inter-regional forum which preceded the committee meeting. In December the Director joined a Ministerial delegation to the UK Department of the Environment and the Regions. In April the Director attended a symposium of experts convened under the umbrella of the Swedish Presidency as part of the European Spatial Development Perspective Action Programme on the setting up of a European Spatial Development Observatory Network. In June the Director attended a CEMAT seminar in Greece to discuss the integration of the greater European space. This was followed by the 76th senior officials meeting of the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (Council of Europe).

During the review period a range of new or amended policy guidance was developed and approved:

Parking Requirements for Hotels: The Authority revised the parking requirements for hotels, pending the completion of a full review of the parking standards contained in the Structure Plan Explanatory Memorandum. The standard for hotel guest bedrooms was revised downwards.

Policy and Design Guidance - Fish Farming: Adopted in May 1994, this policy was amended and six search areas for marine aquaculture units were deleted as they proved to be unacceptable on environmental grounds.

National Aquaculture Policy: Work is to be undertaken on this policy in collaboration with a number of government departments and agencies. Apart from applications currently being processed, no further applications from farms close to shore (less than 1 nautical mile or less than a water depth of 50m, whichever is the lesser) will be considered by the Planning Authority until this policy has been formulated. The Authority shall require that remedial action is taken by all existing fish farms to secure compliance with development permissions.

Development Control Policy and Design Guidance 2000: A new policy on stairwells has been added to this guidance document to fill a gap which has caused difficulties. This policy deals with all stairwells on all buildings except detached and semi detached dwellings. As a consequence, Policy 10.7 which deals with stairwells in terraced residential development has been amended.

Other Policies are in the process of being reviewed. Topics include petrol stations, industrial development in residential areas, shooting ranges, development outside built-up areas and parking provision for local shops, offices and catering establishments.

Structure Plan Review

Work continued on the preparation of topic papers examining issues and strategies that could be adopted through the review of the Structure Plan.

TOPIC PAPERS

Retail: The state of existing commercial centres, the estimated demand for floorspace until 2020 and an evaluation of Structure Plan policies related to the sector were among the issues examined in this study. The study has been approved by the board following public consultation.

Tourism: This study is an analysis of trends, facilities and the tourism product with a view to revising Structure Plan tourism policies. It identifies various scenarios for the future and assesses land-use issues related to this major industry. The study was approved by the Board following public consultation.

Demography: This paper provides 20-year projections for population and households on a nation-wide basis as well as by local plan area. Coastal: A multi-disciplinary study, this paper identifies the main issues affecting the coast and marine environment with the aim of formulating a strategic policy direction within the Structure Plan review process. The Planning Authority has approved its publication for public consultation.

Leisure and Recreation: This paper examines the land-use implications of land-based and nautical sports, outdoor rural and urban recreational areas and catering, entertainment and cultural establishments. It has been approved by the Board for publication for public consultation.

Other topic papers: Work continued on 8 topic papers dealing with housing, employment, transport, social facilities, urban conservation, rural conservation, landscape and utilities.

Collaborative role: The Authority also collaborated with MDC in the compilation of a study on land requirement for industry and jointly funded, with MDC and IPSE, a micro-enterprise study.

SUBJECT PLANS

Waste Management Subject Plan: Following the publication of the plan, comments received during the consultation process have been incorporated in the Plan which now awaits Board approval. The Plan provides a regulatory framework for waste management covering land-use aspects. A position paper on dumping of waste at sea has been approved by the Board.

Minerals Subject Plan: A plan providing a comprehensive framework for the future supply of minerals was published for public consultation in August. It identifies opportunities for development in the minerals sector, introduces the principle of sustainability at all stages of mineral extraction, prevents the sterilisation of resources, minimises waste, promotes re-use of mineral resources and aims to protect the amenity of residents living nearby.

Local Plans

The Planning Authority has been working in earnest to provide complete local plan coverage for the Maltese Islands. So far four local plans have been drafted and are going through the statutory stages of preparation. Three plans remain to be published for public consultation: the Central Zone, Gozo and Comino and the Malta South local plans.

North Harbours Local Plan: Submissions received during the public consultation exercise on this plan are being analysed and the Plan amended as necessary. *North West Local Plan:* This plan contains a 10-year strategic plan and 360 policies aimed to sustain social and economic development in this area of Malta. It proposes measures to protect and enhance those characteristics which help make the north west a popular resort and recreational centre. The Plan was published in June and the consultation exercise involved public meetings, information distribution door to door and a stand at the International Trade Fair. Around 800 written submissions have been received and currently being reviewed.

Gozo and Comino Local Plan: Around 300 meetings were held in the preparation of this local plan which is expected to be presented to the board later this year before publication for public consultation. *Malta South Local Plan:* A Report of Survey on the south of Malta will be published later this year and will complement a public consultation exercise aimed at identifying the issues to be addressed through this plan.

Central Malta Local Plan: A second round of consultations with local councils was held as work was finalised on the area policies for central Malta. This plan is to be presented to the board later this year before publication for public consultation.

Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan amendment: An amendment to designate 13,000 square metres for housing development at Birzebbuga was published for public consultation. The site was designated as a green area to protect an underground cave of ecological and scientific importance. But recent studies have established more accurately the location of the cave, permitting some development on site, subject to further investigations.

Grand Harbour Local Plan amendment: A public consultation exercise to amend a draft policy in the Grand Harbour Local Plan concerning Kalkara valley drew a wide and varied response. The proposal aimed to find a solution to conflicting interests in this area arising from the fact that it lies within the 1988 Temporary Provisions Schemes but is partly a site of ecological and scientific importance. The submissions made by the public are being analysed. Other amendments to the Plan were discussed with the Ministry.

Development Briefs

Development Briefs set out the planning requirements, limitations and opportunities for a specific site. The brief would prescribe all matters affecting the form, content and design of any development in that area.

Ta' Qali Crafts Village Development Brief: Over 99,000 square metres of land in Ta' Qali are proposed to be redeveloped into a crafts village and for sports and cultural activities. The Plan, approved by the Authority, provides clear guidelines on landuse, design, traffic, parking and embellishment to ensure that the site is upgraded to a major attraction.

Crown Works/Horn Works Action Plan: A park and ride scheme for Valletta and Floriana, a Carnival Centre and a heritage trail around the fortifications outside Floriana are the main proposals of this plan. The brief provides for the re-development of the area in a way that would enhance and protect the rich heritage to be found there. The plan was approved by Government and an inter-ministerial committee was set up to oversee the implementation.

Qawra Coast Development Brief: A long stretch of foreshore along the Qawra coast has been proposed for development as a family oriented, leisure centre. The 31,250 square metres of coastline from the New Dolmen Hotel to the area around Qawra Tower (Fra Ben) are proposed to be developed by government in conjunction with the private sector. The brief was published for public consultation in September.

Luqa Park Development Brief: This development brief proposes a commercial park and a recreational facility in a derelict area on the outskirts of Luqa. Commissioned by the Malta Development Corporation, the brief aims to turn 103,000 square metres of land into a trailer park, a centre for small and medium sized enterprises and a leisure park for the locality. The development brief was published for public consultation in September.

Gozo Communal Centre Development Brief: Originally prepared in 1998, this development brief for a communal centre in Gozo was revised over the past year and provides new or improved community facilities and create new job opportunities in Gozo's capital. Financial feasibility studies indicated that greater flexibility is needed in the brief. Government direction is now awaited.

Information and Research

Research and information services within the Forward Planning Division is being rationalised to maximise resources and avoid work duplication.

Urban Capacity Study: This study has been completed for 61 local councils. It identifies the possible additional capacity for dwellings within the existing urban fabric.

National Protective Inventory: The web-mapping of the National Protective Inventory continued during the period under review with the completion of the Mdina and Pieta' areas. The information has been made available on the Authority's website.

Databases: Work continued on a Dwellings Database which includes all dwellings approved by the Authority. The employment database was reviewed and the property price database was finalised. Creation of other databases is an on-going process covering all aspects of land-use planning.

Surveys: A number of surveys were carried out for internal and external purposes. The research process - survey design, implementation, analysis and presentation - is carried out in-house.

3-D Mapping: Modelling techniques are being developed and innovative studies carried out such as 3-D mapping and visualisation.

Library: The Planning Authority library had around 2,600 users during the review period. The majority were staff members but there is an encouraging number of university students making use of the Authority's library facilities.

Integrated Heritage Management

Scheduling: The 19th century Victoria Lines, the fortified towns of Mdina and the Cittadella, 25 kilometres of harbour fortifications, Pieta', Wied il-Lunzjata and Tas-Sellum, Mellieha have been scheduled.

Urban Conservation Areas: During the review period the urban conservation areas of the following localities were identified: Safi; Gudja; Qrendi; Ghaxaq; Zurrieq; Mqabba; Santa Venera; Mosta; Birkirkara; Zabbar; Xghajra; Fgura; Sta Lucia; Kirkop; Pieta'; Qormi; Naxxar; Hamrun and Marsa. The designation, which will be finalised through the local plans, serves to promote the conservation and proper management of the traditional urban fabric.

Conservation Order: Villa Alhambra in Sliema is undergoing extensive restoration following a conservation order issued by the Authority. Works on this 19th century villa designed by Architect Emanuele Luigi Galizia are being carried out under the supervision of the Authority.

Balconies Restoration Scheme: 81 wooden balconies in Valletta and Floriana are being restored through a grant scheme financed by the Planning Authority and Valletta Rehabilitation Project. A total Lm42,000 are being made available through the scheme intended to protect and enhance the streetscape in Valletta and Floriana.

Mdina Management Plan: Through this plan all buildings in Mdina were listed, conservation issues were identified and mitigation measures for degraded aspects were proposed. The plan also contains guidelines for interventions on buildings, according to their heritage value. The Heritage Management System has been produced on CD and is available on-line.

Buskett Conservation: This project involved the categorisation of all cultural heritage assets to be found at Buskett, the formulation of a conservation and restoration programme and a management report.

Environmental Management and Assessment

New Environment Impact Assessment Regulations: These regulations came into effect in September and are set to increase public participation and transparency throughout the whole EIA preparation process. The regulations bring Malta in line with EU directives and address problems which have arisen since the EIA process was introduced into Malta in 1993. A registration scheme for consultants undertaking EIAs will come into effect following appropriate training. Details on all applications requiring an EIA are available on-line at www.eia-malta.org.

National Policy on Aquaculture: There was significant progress in the formulation of this national policy that would provide policy direction to all government agencies involved in the aquaculture industry and planning guidance for the Authority. The objective is to ensure sustainable development in the sector.

Dwejra Management Plan: A steering committee was set up to co-ordinate a management plan for the area. The preliminary work completed, the project is to be launched in the coming financial year.

Conservation Projects: The Authority is seeking to obtain a heritage gain from particular development applications. Conservation projects identified include a geological park in Qala, the restoration of Fort Madliena and of part of the Victoria Lines, a marine conservation area at Cirkewwa and the restoration of Wied Ghollieqa.

Trees and Shrubs: The Planning Authority approved Guidelines on Trees, Shrubs and Plants for Planting & Landscaping in the Maltese Islands and presented them to Government for approval. Revisions to the guidelines are being considered following further consultations with the industry.

Mgarr ix-Xini clean-up: Planning Authority employees volunteered to clean up the pebble beach at Mgarr ix-Xini, Gozo after crushed quarry stone was dumped on site, posing a danger to the marine environment. The prompt action was followed up by a clean-up work by beach cleaners under the supervision of the Authority.

Quarries: New procedures on the monitoring of blasting activities in hard stone quarries were introduced during the review period.

Environmental Monitoring: A number of development projects require specialist monitoring of potential environmental impacts arising from construction or operation works. Monitoring included aquaculture operations, marine projects, projects next to valleys and quarries.

Transport

Transport Model: This computerised model of Malta's road network was finalised and is being utilised in the preparation of local plans, particularly in relation to junction upgrading. Data on forecasts on housing and employment will now be utilised to make a transport prognosis for the next 20 years as part of the Structure Plan Review.

Traffic Volume Survey: Using traffic counters, the Planning Authority has continued with its on-going traffic survey programme which calculates traffic growth and assists the preparation of forecasts for future growth. Another four permanent counters are expected to be installed during the next financial year.

Commuted Payment Parking Scheme: This scheme has been updated and studies are underway to include more areas. A scheme prepared for parts of Victoria, Gozo was presented to Government. Transport Strategy for Valletta and Floriana: The Planning Authority has joined other local institutions and partner institutions in Leicester, UK seeking to benefit from the EU Fifth Framework Programme for Funding Research. The Maltese part of the bid relates to the operation of electric buses as part of the park and ride scheme planned for Valletta and Floriana.

Traffic Management Plans: The Authority has continued to assist local councils in the preparation of traffic management plans for their area. During the review period projects included a traffic management scheme for Mosta, junction improvements at Pembroke and a management plan for the Kappara-Manoel Island link road.

Planning Control Applications: A total 129 planning control applications were determined during the review period, up from 105 the previous year. The caseload in September stood at 75, reflecting a 36% decrease over September 2000.

Development Services

Following the appointment of an Assistant Director responsible for both the development application process and enforcement, the Authority's Development Control services were reorganised to ensure greater accountability, expeditiousness, transparency and consistency. A Major Projects Team was set up to handle applications for large projects and another team was set up to process applications in urban conservation areas. This process of streaming applications is achieving the desired results.

Joint technical committees were set up with the Housing Authority and the Malta Development Corporation to discuss development proposals submitted to the Major Projects Team. A similar committee was set up with the Malta Tourism Authority - Planning and Product Development Directorate to review proposals for tourism related projects.

Caseload: The Planning Authority determined 6,385 applications between October 2000 and September 2001, pushing down the number of pending applications to 2,742, the lowest figure to be registered in the last three years.

The pending caseload decreased steadily after April 2001 when it stood 3,588. The Development Control Commission held longer and more frequent sessions in the second half of the financial year to cut down on the case load. The effort paid off as between May and September the Commission determined 777 applications more than were received. In September alone the Commission determined 881 applications, 403 more than were submitted.

The pending caseload was reduced to 1998 levels, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

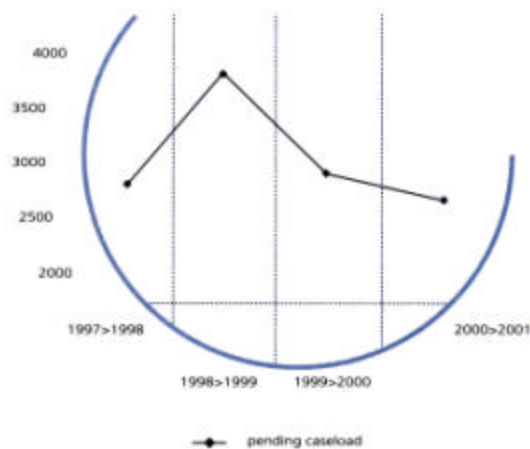


Table 1 shows the number of applications received and determined on a monthly basis during the review period.

Table 1

	<i>Validated</i>	<i>Determined</i>
October 2000	484	442
November	559	496
December	352	359
January 2001	573	467
February	475	386
March	674	416
April	682	500
May	634	715
June	484	601
July	457	548
August	420	574
September	478	881
	6272	6385

Decision-making bodies: Table 2 shows the number of decisions taken by each decision-making body of the Planning Authority. The Planning Authority Board determined 30 applications, a slight increase over last year's 27. The Development Control Commission determined 4,928, which is a marginal increase on last year's figure. The number of delegated decisions dropped from 2,190 last year to 1,103 this year. This was reflected in an increase in the proportion of decisions taken by the Development Control Commission which went up from 65.8% last year to 77.18% this year. In all 6,385 applications were determined during the review period. The proportion of approved, refused or withdrawn applications has remained stable.

Development Control - Policy and Design Guidance 2000: 115 new policies and design guidelines covering all aspects of building development came into effect on November 2000.

	<i>Number of applications</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Planning Authority Board</i>		
Approved	27	0.42
Refused	3	0.05
Total	30	0.47
<i>Development Control Commission</i>		
Approved	3507	54.93
Refused	1421	22.26
Total	4928	77.19
<i>Delegated (Case Officers)</i>		
Approved	1103	17.27
<i>Summary</i>		
All approved	4637	72.62
All refused	1424	22.30
All withdrawn	324	5.07
<i>Total</i>	<i>6385</i>	

Table 2

Notifications

A new legal notice regulating development for which no formal application is required came into effect on June 1. The notice, Development Notification Order 2001 regulates notification procedures for a wider variety of development than the previous 1997 legal notice. The types of development which do not require a formal application have been extended to include, among others, extensions at roof level, basements and certain development in non-residential buildings. Table 3 shows the notifications received and processed during the review period.

Table 3

	<i>Received</i>	<i>Processed</i>
October 2000	438	188
November	386	388
December	252	515
January 2001	424	174
February	402	514
March	420	425
April	487	364
May	568	532
June	252	385
July	459	575
August	483	201
September	267	278
<i>Totals</i>	<i>4838</i>	<i>4539</i>

Enforcement

The Planning Authority issued 1,369 stop and enforcement notices during the review period, up from 1,232 the previous year. This upward trend, already registered in 1999, reflects the increasing effectiveness of the Authority's enforcement section, particularly with the introduction of a weekend emergency service which has significantly improved the effectiveness and expeditiousness of the enforcement service. The geographical distribution of the stop and enforcement notices issued is shown in Table 4.

<i>Area</i>	<i>Number of Enforcement Notices</i>
North	311
South	398
Central	320
Gozo	340
<i>Total</i>	<i>1369</i>

Table 4

A total of 994 enforcement cases were closed during the review period, generally maintaining last year's levels. 520 were closed after they were sanctioned by a development permit, 337 cases after the owner complied with the enforcement notice, 61 cases were withdrawn and 76 infringements were removed by the Planning Authority.

Direct Action

Picking up on the momentum of the previous year, the Planning Authority had steadily stepped up its direct action operations removing illegal development at the owners' expense. With the help of a private contractor and Administrative Law Enforcement Police, the Planning Authority's enforcement arm carried out a total of 44 direct action operations to remove 76 illegal developments. Some operations took days or even weeks to complete because of the extent or nature of the development. The Authority has also been particularly vigilant and swift with regards to billboards, removing 44 billboards without a permit during the review period.

One major initiative concerned the removal of illegal boathouses at Armier, an operation held jointly with the Land Department. Over 80 boathouses were removed.

The Authority also undertook a clean-up campaign of illegal scrapyards around Malta. A scrapyards in the middle of a residential area in Naxxar was first to be removed. This was followed by similar operations at Birkirkara, Zebbug, Marsascala, Zurrieq, Dingli, Buskett and Bugibba.

Another major operation was carried at Dingli cliffs where a villa was pulled down following long drawn out legal procedures. Other illegal development removed through direct action included a three-storey building in the heart of Zejtun's village core, an extension to a World War II gunpost at Ghajn Tuffieha, kiosks, garages and a farmhouse.

76 enforcement cases were closed following direct action by the Authority, up from 49 the previous year. This figure does not include the boathouses removed at Armier.

Co-operation agreement: A co-operation agreement was signed with the Association of Local Councils under which local wardens shall be able to assist the Authority in enforcing development control regulations. Wardens are to undergo training before the agreement is activated.

Land Surveying

Setting-Out/Civil Engineering surveys: In line with the Authority's Standards of Service, additional effort was made to meet survey requests within 5 working days. Nearly 50% of requests were met within this target and 40% within 6 to 10 working days. During the third quarter a thorough review of the surveyers' workload was carried out with a view to improving on this performance.

Housing Projects and Road Surfacing Works: Extensive setting-out works were undertaken in relation to housing projects in Qawra, Pembroke and Zurrieq. The Roads Department and Local Councils forwarded 158 requests for setting-out of scheme alignment and road formation levels in 48 localities.

Topographic surveys: 109 topographic surveys were carried out during the review period, 47 of which were commissioned by external clients. The area covered was 1.36kms. These included survey works for the extension of the Addolorata Cemetery for the Health Department and 10 surveys covering 8kms of distributor roads for the Roads Department. Two topographic surveys covering large areas at Mtarfa were also carried out.

Control Surveys - Densification of Vertical Control: Work continued on a project to establish second order benchmarks within urban areas. 63 benchmarks were established along 40.3kms of road. To date more than 186 benchmarks have been established in 22 localities.

Control Surveys - Horizontal Control: The objective of this project is to establish a network of co-ordinated points allowing consistent grid reference between diverse survey and mapping activities. A reconnaissance exercise over a test area spanning 12kms is nearing completion. This test case will help formulate all field and office operational procedures.

Local Council	Number of Secondary benchmarks	Distance covered in km
Siggiewi	10	7.0
Zebbug	9	9.2
Mtarfa	8	4.8
Qrendi	13	4.8
Iklin	5	3.2
Swieqi	9	6.5
Pembroke	9	4.8
Total	63	40.3

Formation levels and alignments for schemed roads: Levelling schemes are being reviewed and updated indicating road surface levels, proposed road formation levels and the direction of the surface water run-off. 4.6kms² were covered during the review period.

Mapping

Large Scale Topographic Map Production: In the Mapping Unit's long-term role as a National Mapping Agency, the key deliverable is large-scale mapping. The production of the vector base map continued on schedule and Madliena, Pembroke and part of San Gwann were mapped at 1:1000 scale. Photogrammetric capture of the rest of San Gwann was underway by the end of the review year. The ground control work for Birkirkara and Qormi was finalised. In total almost 10km² of large-scale mapping were produced. Quality assurance procedures were improved to validate the accuracy of large scale data. During the past year the Unit also embarked on the development of a consolidated mapbase by integrating the 1:2500 and 1:1000 topographic data sets into one product to maximise the use of the latter.

Precise Levelling: Densification and maintenance of the existing precise levelling network continued with the observation of 62 levelling sections summing up to a total of 28km and the fixing of 4 new benchmarks. Field observations to establish the primary levelling network of Gozo were also finalised. The network comprising 40 benchmarks was set up following a series of tests made to evaluate the accuracy and time saving attained by the application of G.P.S. equipment in levelling.

New Products and Services: In the last quarter of the review year the Mapping Unit launched an on-line Geographic Information System enabling Internet users to browse, query and print base map and planning data. The Mapping Unit continued to augment its portfolio of spatial products by introducing an orthophoto data of Malta and Gozo. This new product integrates seamlessly with the mapbase and complements the organisation's current geographic datasets and information systems.

International Projects: Over the past 12 months the Unit continued its involvement in various international projects particularly the participation in the United Nations funded CAMP project on coastal area management.

External Services: This year the Unit concentrated on improving its service to its major and corporate clients. A mapbase licence fee structure based on the use of Mapping Products by the clients was introduced to provide a more flexible approach to corporate clients implementing Geographic Information Systems. New service agreements have been signed with the Public Transport Authority and EneMalta Corporation. The Unit was also contracted to develop a geographic dataset of agricultural land parcels for an Integrated Agricultural Control System, a critical aspect for accession to the EU.

Internal Services: The unit continued to maintain, develop and provide technical support for the organisation's Geographic Information System. A significant portion of the unit's resources went to meeting internal requests arising from the Authority's operational, contractual or statutory obligations. These demands included, among others, the fieldwork and plotting of the Northwest Local Plan Area land use survey, the preparation and production of the Northwest Local Plan maps, a GPS survey of tuna pens, control surveys for Land Survey Unit to link surveys to the National Reference System and the photogrammetric capture and 3-D volumetric analysis of quarries for the Minerals Subject Plan.

Information Technology

Web Site: The Planning Authority's website was radically overhauled through the introduction of e-commerce services and search facilities that have enormously improved public access to information related to planning. The Authority's Geographical Information System (GIS) was placed on line allowing users to browse maps and aerial photography. Planning applications, enforcements, notifications and scheduled sites may be located through the GIS system on internet.

Building Calculator Update: Following a review of the building levy and other Planning Authority fees, the Building Levy Calculator software was updated and distributed to registered users.

Software Development: New in-house systems created during the review period included a Complaints Handling System, a Compliance Requests system, a revamped IT Hardware Inventory and a Time & Attendance Viewer.

Upgrade of Networking Infrastructure: The Authority's networking equipment was replaced with new technology in order to support current and future requirements. The new infrastructure will reduce bottlenecks in data flows and upgrade the backbone to Gigabit Ethernet. A number of new workstations were also installed to meet the operating requirements of software used within the organisation.

Client Operating System upgrade: Windows 2000 Professional is now the selected client operating system. New and advanced workstations have been installed to provide a more stable and advanced environment. Office Automation Software upgrade: The office suite has been upgraded to Microsoft Office 2000. With all workstations running this software, problems of compatibility between different document version types have been resolved.

MAGNET: A direct link was established between the Authority's network and MAGNET (Malta Government Network), enabling direct e-mail links with Government Departments without using the Internet backbone. E-mail communication with Government has increased, security improved and turn-around time for communications decreased.

ISO 9000 Quality Standard: The Information Technology Section continued to maintain the ISO 9000 quality certification. On-going internal audits were carried out to assess the total operation of the section and in November 2000 the British Standards Institute certified the Office for another year.

Human Resources

Recruitment: The changes introduced last year in the selection methods are ensuring the organisation attracts and selects the best people on the market.

Corporate discipline: An electronic time and attendance system was implemented, providing direct debiting for late attendance. A number of policies regulating work practices were adopted. These regarded lecturing at university during office hours, local council duties and full-time employment with reduced hours.

Competencies audit: This comprehensive audit was completed and a training plan will be developed for the next 18 months. The plan will include a management development programme, a training strategy that addresses the technical skills of employees and other initiatives aimed to address competence shortages within the organisation.

Industrial relations: The collective agreement for professional staff was concluded following an industrial tribunal decision. The next financial year is expected to see the renegotiation of collective agreements with the two unions representing the employees.

Leonardo Programme: During the review period efforts were made to seek foreign partners in anticipation of submitting a proposal for short attachments of staff with UK local authorities under the EU Leonardo programme.

Training: Agreement was reached with the University of Malta to launch a first degree course in planning studies under the auspices of the Foundation for International Studies. The University of Central England is expected to give its input and recognition by the Royal Town Planning Institute will be sought.

Boards and Committees

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMISSION

The Commission met 135 times and determined 6,385 applications. The number of pending applications decreased to 2,742, the lowest figure to be registered in three years. In the last months of the review period the Commission held longer and more frequent sessions and between May and September determined 777 applications more than were received.

Mr Victor Torpiano BA(Arch) B.Arch(Hons) A&CE is Commission chairman and Mr Paul Borg BE&A (Hons) A&CE, Mr Saviour Borg BE&A (Hons) A&CE, Mr Andrew Ellul BE&A (Hons) A&CE, Mr Carmel Ellul BE&A (Hons) A&CE, Mr David Pace B.Arch A&CE and Mr Anthony Mifsud HND Agric. are members.

HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

This independent committee of experts appointed by the Planning Authority to advise on heritage policy, the scheduling of natural and built heritage sites and the designation of rural and urban conservation areas, met 155 times during the review period. A total 2,957 applications were discussed by the committee and 611 sites were visited. Following the reorganisation of the Directorate, the need for a close liaison between the HAC and the newly established Urban Conservation Area Team within Development Services was felt and the HAC is now supported by the team. It has continued to give its expert view on individual development proposals affecting designated and scheduled areas and sites. The emphasis, this year, has been on improving the quality of advice given and to meet this aim, many more site inspections were carried out.

The members of the Board are: Perit Konrad Buhagiar BE&A (Hons), Dip. Cons (Rome), A&CE (chairman); Perit Michael Ellul BE&A (Hons), Dip.Arch. (Rome), F.R.Hist.S. (London), A&CE M.Q.R. (vice-chairman); and Perit David Mallia BE&A (Hons), L.R.S.M., Dip Cons. (Milan), A&CE, Perit Joseph Bondin BE&A (Hons), A&CE, Prof Godfrey Wettinger, BA (Hons), M.A. (Oxon.), PhD. (London), MOM, Dr Albert Ganado B.A. LLD., KM, MOM, Dr Vincent Depasquale B.A., LLD, Mr Ray Bondin B.A., M.A. (Bar. Stud.), Mr Joseph C Sammut KM, Mr Joe Attard Tabone, Mr Anthony Pace B.A., M.Phil (Cantab.), FCCF and Prof Patrick J Schembri B.Sc, M.Sc Ph.D (Glasgow) Cbiol FIBiol, members.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Inter-Departmental Planning Committee was re-constituted in April 1999 in terms of Section 38 (3) of the Development Planning Act, 1992. The primary function of the Committee is to consider applications for development submitted to the Planning Authority by Government Departments or similar agencies, in the case of rejection of proposal or imposition of conditions deemed unreasonable by the applicant department; and to act as intermediary between departments and the Authority to try to reach agreement. During the review period the Committee considered applications related to a proposal for a new road in St. Paul's Bay and to the construction of a monument in Victoria, Gozo. The Committee also reviewed the future role of the IDPC in relation to the amendments to the Development Planning Act discussed in the House of Representatives. Representatives of departments or body

corporates considered to be relevant to planning are nominated to sit on the Inter-Departmental Planning Committee, which is currently composed as follows:

Mr Anthony Mifsud Dip Bus Law & Accty, FCIPD (Office of the Prime Minister) is chairman; Mr Marco Abela (Malta Development Corporation), Mr Anton Camilleri BE&A, A&CE (Housing Construction & Maintenance Department), Mr Vincent Cassar B.Arch, FIHEEM, A&CE (Works Division), Mr Albert Mamo (Land Department), Mr Antoine Riolo B.Sc (Eng), M.Eng, MI Mech.E, C.Eng (Water Services Corporation), Mr Victor Rizzo (Local Councils Department), Mr Franco Serracino Inglott B.A. (Hons) Econ, M.A. (Agriculture) (Leeds) (Department of Agriculture), Mr Victor Torpiano B.A. (Arch Studies), B.Arch (Hons), A&CE (Planning Authority) and Mr Louis Vella B.Sc, M.Sc (Environment Protection Department) are members.

USERS' COMMITTEE

This committee is autonomous from the Planning Authority and is appointed by the Minister to whom it reports and makes the necessary recommendations on a regular basis. The Committee is empowered to supervise the general functioning of the Authority and in particular to ensure an expeditious and fair process and transparency and uniformity in the Authority's decisions and acts. The recommendations of the Committee need not be implemented. During the period under review, the committee met 13 times and discussed and made recommendations inter alia on the following subjects: Amendments to the Development Planning Act; fees payable by applicants in urban Areas; tendering and purchasing procedures; the Planning Authority web site; wells and preservation of rain water. The committee monitors the complaints received by the Planning Authority. Particular attention is given to cases involving issues of a generic nature.

Mr Albert P Mamo (Chamber of Commerce) is Chairman. The members are: Mr Emanuel Abela (Consumers' Union); Mr Charles Busuttil (Association of General Retailers and Traders); Mr Anton Zammit A&CE (Chamber of Architects and Civil Engineers); Mr Joe A Doublet Dip Env Sci (Wales) B.Sc PGCE M.Sc (Environment and Heritage Groups); and Mr Joseph Borg (Local Councils Association).

PLANNING CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The Planning Consultative Committee is made up of representatives of organisations representing various aspects of life in Malta. The members of the Committee are appointed by the Prime Minister. The Committee advises the Government and the Authority on any policy or proposal contained in a development plan on which its advice is sought and on matters the Committee believes it should draw attention to. During the period under review the Committee met four times and discussed, among other items, the Tourism Subject Study, Proposed Policy Changes, Proposed Replanning of Kalkara Valley and the Minerals Subject Plan.

Mr Andrew Ellul BE&A (Hons) A&CE (Chamber of Architects) is chairman and Mr Francis Tabone (Planning Authority) is Secretary. The members are: Mr Louis Apap Bologna (The Malta Chamber of Commerce), Mr Lino D Abela L.P. (Malta Federation of Industry), Prof Edward Mallia PhD (Oxon) (Moviment għall-Ambjent), Mr Darrin Stevens (Arbor, Student's House), Mr David Dandria B.Sc (Zoology) Hons. (Lond) ARCS (Society for the Study and Conservation of Nature) Mr David Mallia BE&A (Hons), LRSM, Dip.Cons (Milan), A&CE (Din l-Art Helwa), Dr. Mario Buhagiar B.A.(Hons), M Phil (Lond), PhD (Lond) (Grupp Wirt Storiku), Ms Blanche Martin (National Council of Women), Mr Maurice Tabone (Association of Estate Agents), Mr Joe A Doublet B.Sc (Birdlife Malta), Mr

Victor Mamo (Ghaqda Kaccaturi Nassaba u Konservazzjonisti), Mr Joseph Bugeja (National Commission for Persons with Disability), Mr Giovanni Buttigieg (Ecological Society), Mr Godwin Vella (Wirt Ghawdex), Ms Marie Louise Mangion (Malta Tourism Authority), Mr Stephen Borg (Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna), Mr G A Fairclough (The Archaeological Society), Mr Anthony Zammit (National Youth Council), Mr Vince Farrugia (GRTU) and Mr Charles Zammit (Local Councils Association).

MINERALS ADVISORY BOARD

In the review period the Minerals Advisory Board met twice to discuss, among other issues: landscaping and restoration; Water Services Corporation insurance requirements; minerals development applications; the Minerals Subject Plan; existing quarry operations; a fund for aquifer protection; the Minerals Resources Assessment; and a report from (Geomed) Digital Terrain Models Survey.

The Board is appointed by the Planning Authority. Dr Godwin Cassar, BArch, Dip BIE (R'Dam), A&CE, FRTPi, FIMgt, D.UNIV. is chairman and Dr Dimitrio Duca D.Geol. (Milan), FGS, FIAEG, deputy chairman. The members are: P.C. Vincent Mifsud and P.C. Lawrence Cachia (Police Trade Department); Mr Peter Gatt (Ministry for the Environment); Mr Anthony Pace BA, Mphil (Catab.), FCCF (Museums Department); Mr Annetto Portelli (explosives officer); Mr Franco Serracino Inglott BA (Hons), MA (Leeds), Mr Anthony Mifsud and Mr Anthony Borg (Agriculture Department); Mr Vince Gauci MSc, Mr Joe Sammut and Mr Mario Farrugia (Environment Protection Department); Mr Vincent Farrugia BA(Hons) Econ., D.Econ.FITD and Mr E Aquilina (Association of General Retailers and Traders); Dr John Mangion D.Geol. (Milan), F.G.S., Eng. P. Micallef and Mr A Mallia (Water Services Corporation); Mr Carmelo Muscat P.H.I., Mr J Attard Kingswell and Ms Miriam Grech (Department of Health). Mr Franco Pisani is acting secretary.