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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and General Objectives

- 1.1.1 Leisure and recreation, whatever their scale or nature, have become an undeniable fact of modern life. The amount of free time, the quest for open spaces and the level of disposable income have increased over the last decades in Malta, in line with prevailing trends in the western world. Indeed, it has resulted in increased demand for leisure facilities, especially within urban areas. A higher standard of living has enabled people to become more mobile, which in turn led them to seek recreation away from their home. Quite clearly, the need for the provision of recreational facilities increases as more people get involved in recreational activities.
- 1.1.2 Leisure activity includes both tourism and recreation and tourism is, in fact, a form of recreation. Recreation is a very general term derived from the Latin word “recreatio” meaning that which refreshes or restores. It is mainly used to describe “the activities that people carry out in their leisure time, which may be active or passive, and take place inside or outside the home”(Youell R., 1996). The validity of this concept is echoed in Baud-Bovy and Lawson’s definition that recreation covers any pursuit taken up during leisure time other than those to which people have a high commitment, such as overtime, a second job and maintenance jobs around the house.
- 1.1.3 Recreational activities can be broadly grouped into six categories, namely those taking place around the home (such as watching television or reading), leisure tourism (like weekend breaks), those activities having a high social content (like eating out and entertainment), those with cultural, educational and artistic interests (like visiting museums), pursuits of sports (either as spectators or participants) and informal outdoor recreation (such as picnicking in parks or walks in the countryside) (Baud Bovy M & Lawson F, 1998). The first two categories are a major constituent of leisure time yet are not treated directly in this study due to their insignificant land use connotations (in respect of the first category) and overlap into other studies (such as the Tourism Topic Paper).
- 1.1.4 In this perspective, the Leisure and Recreation Topic Paper gives an overview of recreational development in the Maltese Islands whilst evaluating the existing leisure related Structure Plan policies and the determinants of recreational demand. Leisure and recreation facilities are broadly subdivided into five categories, namely land-based/nautical sports, outdoor rural recreational areas, outdoor urban recreational areas, catering establishments and cultural/entertainment attractions. The distribution of such recreational facilities is examined

from a predominantly strategic (albeit also local plan) perspective, and gives way to a detailed assessment on the need or otherwise for future provision per recreational activity. Within this framework, the key issues are identified which set the basis for the development of leisure/recreation related policies in the Structure Plan Review. Moreover, the study also proposes to secure acceptance of recreational standards for certain facilities.

1.1.5 The topic paper incorporates the leisure and recreation related findings of the Tourism and Recreation Surveys which were undertaken over the years 1996/97 and 2000/01. Some of its conclusions will also serve as a valid input into other topic papers including those relating to Tourism, Coastal Management and Rural Strategy. As far as the paper on tourism is concerned, for example, sports such as diving and sailing are of particular relevance since all these niche recreation activities overlap into the tourism field. The Coastal Management and Rural strategies are on the other hand expected to be respectively influenced by issues relating to nautical recreational activities and parks/public recreational spaces, as discussed within this topic paper.

1.1.6 The overall objectives of the Leisure and Recreation topic paper include the following:

- to evaluate current Structure Plan policies and examine whether these policies provide an adequate framework for the consideration of proposals affecting the leisure sector over the plan period;
- to examine the current distribution pattern and adequacy of existing recreation facilities, and whether such facilities would be adequate to cater for the needs of the growing population of the Maltese Islands;
- to examine current recreation trends vis-à-vis existing demands and expectations of tourists and local residents alike;
- to assess the land use implications of the provision of recreation facilities, and their impacts on the surrounding environment;
- to assess the pattern and level of future demand besides examining the feasibility of meeting the potential demand.

1.2 Definition of Study Areas

1.2.1 As highlighted in Section 1.1, the Leisure and Recreation Topic Paper broadly tackles five categories of recreational activity, namely outdoor rural recreational areas, outdoor urban recreational areas, catering establishments, land-based/nautical sports and cultural/entertainment attractions. The following is a brief definition and description (where appropriate) of the above categories.

Rural Recreation

Countryside Recreation

- 1.2.2 Rural (or countryside) recreation is defined by the Devon County Council as “any pursuit or activity engaged upon during leisure time, or as part of provision for education and training, which makes use of the natural resources of the countryside”(Devon County Council, 1994). In this context, this topic paper will examine particular aspects relating to rural recreation, such as parks, hunting/trapping, camping and caravan sites, whilst other forms of rural recreation like hiking, picnics and walking will be tackled in the Rural Strategy Topic Paper within the broad Structure Plan Review context. This is being done due to the implications of the above three activities on country walks and heritage trails, which will feature prominently in the Rural Strategy.

Regional Parks

- 1.2.3 Regional parks (Gold S.M., 1980) are spacious areas of scenic or natural character in which a variety of recreational experiences and facilities are provided for the purpose of making the out-of-doors available for public enjoyment and education. The standard areas adopted overseas for regional parks normally contain approximately 500 acres (202 hectares) or more, either in a single block of land area or in a series of smaller units with each unit measuring approximately at least 100 acres (40.5 hectares) in size and with the potential for linking the units with a trail, scenic road or transit system.
- 1.2.4 International standards for regional parks specify that 70 - 90 per cent of the total area is usually devoted to open areas with scenic/natural character; by nature of their size, such parks usually lend themselves suitable for planning and management purposes. Typical activities undertaken in these parks include hiking, fishing, picnicking, nature study, and horse riding. Around 10 - 30 per cent on the other hand is usually used for a variety of more formal recreational activities which would also form part of the overall management plan. Facilities in this category would include campgrounds, picnic areas, snack stands, nature interpretive facilities and play areas.

Recreational Parks

- 1.2.5 Recreational parks are defined as open areas of natural or semi-natural character where locals and tourists can go for informal recreational activities which may include picnic areas, walks, jogging and cycling, amongst other activities. These parks may house small

scale developments like restaurants, cycle hire, jogging tracks and picnic areas, to service such recreational activities.

Hunting and Trapping

- 1.2.6 Hunting and trapping are considered more of a pastime and leisure activity, rather than a sport. Both pastimes are a source of significant conflict with a range of other legitimate interests including conservation. The land take of these activities is also considerable due to the very nature of such leisure pursuits.

Camping and Caravan Sites

- 1.2.7 Camping and caravan sites are popular outdoor activities that usually require a surrounding, well managed infrastructure to include toilets and showers. At times, they are regrettably haphazardly located within parks or in coastal areas.

Urban Recreation

- 1.2.8 Urban Recreational areas refer to those formal areas such as public gardens, playing fields and open spaces developed for the purpose of providing for varied and intensive forms of outdoor recreational activities in an urban setting. Public gardens are defined as heavily landscaped man-made or semi-natural environments with or without seating provision. They exclude regional recreational centres/parks. Playing fields are those play areas which include children's facilities such as swings, merry-go-rounds, shoots and other types of play facilities. Furthermore, open spaces are here defined as open areas within the urban environment having some seating provision and landscaping where the general public can relax. Open spaces exclude non-landscaped piazzas and promenades.

Catering Establishments

- 1.2.9 A catering establishment is defined as any establishment, building or premises, howsoever described, purveying for reward food and refreshments for consumption in such establishments, buildings or premises (Malta Hotels and Catering Establishments Act). Catering establishments, as licensed by the Hotels & Catering Establishments' Board (HCEB), include Restaurants, Snack Bars, Speciality Restaurants and Take-Aways. Establishments which will not carry out any cooking need not be approved by the HCEB.

Attractions: Cultural and Entertainment Facilities

Cultural Facilities: Visitor Attractions and Museums

- 1.2.10 Visitor attractions and museums form part of the core leisure product and generate the need for interrelated services, being amongst the main motivators for tourist trips. An attraction is defined as “a designated permanent resource which is controlled and managed for the enjoyment, amusement, entertainment and education of the visiting public” (Middleton & Inskeep, 1995).
- 1.2.11 Visitor attractions can be both primary and secondary attractions. The former refers to a main attraction which attracts a considerable number of visitors, like theme parks and national museums. The location of such attractions will be of strategic importance in the development of the tourist product and in attracting leisure activity to specific areas. Secondary attractions are, on the other hand, defined as low key attractions which do not attract the same high numbers as primary attractions but are nonetheless important components of the overall tourism product (small audio/visual attractions, secondary museums and historic sites). Usually these attractions are visited as part of a touring circuit whereas with primary attractions visitors, generally, specifically seek such attractions.
- 1.2.12 Swarbrooke (1995) states that attractions can be split into four main types, namely:
- features within the natural environment
 - man-made buildings, structures, and sites that were designated for a purpose other than attraction of visitors, but which now attract substantial number of visitors who use them as leisure amenities
 - man-made buildings, structures and sites that are designated to attract visitors, and are purposely built to accommodate their needs, such as theme parks.
 - special events. These attractions are temporary (as opposed to the permanent attractions listed in the first three categories) and usually have a limited lifespan which is known in advance.
- 1.2.13 Table 1 illustrates a variety of different attractions within the pre-established categories. Although the table is not comprehensive, it still shows how difficult it is to treat the various attractions as mutually exclusive. Country parks, for example, rely on the natural environment to attract visitors but the ultimate aim of the agencies responsible for these parks is not solely confined to maintaining them as parks but to increase visitation and at times accommodate guests as well. Open air and historical museums, on the other hand, utilise old buildings that

were designed as places to live and work in order to create popular attractions. Furthermore, many cathedrals were built on the site of religious shrines and/or on pilgrimage routes. Nowadays they find it difficult to accommodate the needs of the modern leisure tourist since they were not purposely built as attractions (see also Chapter 5).

TABLE 1 : THE FOUR CATEGORIES OF ATTRACTIONS

Category	Attraction
Natural	Beaches, Lakes, Flora, Fauna, Caves, Rock faces.
Man made structures not purposely built for tourists	Cathedrals, Churches, Wayside chapels, Historic houses, Stately homes, Ancient monuments, Archaeological sites, Historic gardens, Reservoirs, Historic City Centres.
Purposely built for tourists	Amusement parks, Theme parks, Open air museums Heritage centres, Country parks, Marinas, Exhibition centres, Entertainment complexes, Craft centres, Factory shops, Working farms, Garden centres, Casinos, Health spas, Leisure centres, Picnic sites Museums & galleries, Leisure retail complexes, Waterfront developments
Special events	Sporting events, Arts festivals, Re-enactments, Markets, Fairs, Traditional customs, Folklore events Historical anniversaries, Religious events

Source: Adapted from Swarbrooke (1995)

Entertainment Facilities : Leisure and Theme Parks

- 1.2.14 Entertainment facilities like cinemas, theatres, leisure parks, theme parks and nightclubs are all considered as part of this topic paper. Whilst the entertainment concept associated with most of the above facilities is self-explanatory, it should nonetheless be highlighted that leisure parks are areas for leisure enjoyment with no connecting theme of the attractions proposed and no element of education. Such parks consist of facilities which may include adventure playgrounds, roller coasters, carousels, merry-go-rounds and other similar facilities. Leisure parks can either be permanent (a year-long, unmovable attraction) or temporary (seasonal with reversible physical interventions)
- 1.2.15 Leisure parks differ from theme parks, since the main objective of the latter is to stimulate, educate and entertain visitors. This is achieved through a number of attractions having a common theme (such as at Disneyland: USA, Gardaland: Italy, Alton Towers: UK and Chessington World of Adventure: UK) and could include indoor and outdoor

presentations, displays, activities, amusements with animation and other facilities like catering, retail and visitor services. Themes can be historical, cultural, geographical/environmental, social, technological and/or futuristic, or even a combination of these.

Sports Facilities

Land Based Sports

- 1.2.16 The Leisure and Recreation Topic Paper segregates land based from nautical sports facilities since the associated land-use implications are considered to be different. Land based sports refer to those indoor and outdoor sports facilities located in urban areas or possibly even outside scheme, depending on the particular discipline. A distinction is made between public sports facilities, those sports facilities owned/managed by the private sector and others within state and non-state schools.
- 1.2.17 Public sports facilities are those formal local/regional/national facilities on Government land that are used by the general public and/or sports practitioners in order to practice competitively or otherwise their favourite sport. Such facilities could be managed by the public sector, private clubs/associations or local councils. A wide variety of sports like football, hockey, bocci, basketball and regatta facilities are catered for in this list, which includes national/regional facilities such as those at Ta' Qali, Corradino and Marsa, and local facilities such as the football ground at Lija. Due to their widespread use and catchment, indoor and outdoor sports facilities at the University of Malta (such as the national pool, the squash/tennis courts and football ground) are also being included in this category, and are subsequently omitted from the "sports facilities in state schools" list.
- 1.2.18 It should also be pointed out that the land requirements of specific sports activities are examined per discipline, with emphasis being on the number of practitioners, facilities and the distribution, rather than on whether the sport is practiced indoors or outdoors (since facilities in the Maltese Islands are predominantly provided outdoors). Major impact sports such as motor racing and clay pigeon shooting are on the other hand tackled separately, being particular sports requiring large tracts of land and which in many instances are practiced legally or illegally outside the development boundaries.

Nautical Sports and Coastal Recreational Activity

- 1.2.19 Nautical recreation encompasses a wide variety of tourist and leisure activities linked with the sea. The activities of associations and clubs

involved in the practice of waterpolo, sailing, diving and other nautical sports have generally led to the alteration of the coastal configuration or to have permanent facilities on the foreshore, that is an area which in principle should not be tampered with and which should remain in public domain.

- 1.2.20 The notions of beach concessions, beachrooms and boathouses are also raised. Beach concessions are those areas along the foreshore that are not accessible to the general public, being areas managed commercially by private companies. Beachrooms are on the other hand intended to provide managed, holiday accommodation for temporary periods for Maltese residents, as opposed to those illegal structures (incorrectly referred to as boathouses) that have created serious adverse coastal impacts. This is a new concept requiring comprehensive layouts to consist of linked terraces or clusters of accommodation with adequate car parking and refuse disposal. Moreover, boathouses are (as the name implies) intended exclusively for the storage of boats.

1.3 Study Activities

- 1.3.1 The Leisure and Recreation Topic Paper will predominantly draw on the information gathered from the various surveys carried out by the Planning Authority. Other data is also extracted from the first two Structure Plan Monitoring Reports (relating to 1990-95 and 1996-97) and from the Planning Authority's Development Control Information System (DCIS) and Acolaid databases, which provide a valuable source of information with regard to development applications for recreation-related projects.
- 1.3.2 The following is a brief outline of the surveys undertaken by the Planning Authority (key findings of some of the above-mentioned surveys are presented in Appendix A).

Public Attitudes Survey

- 1.3.3 The Public Attitudes survey was formulated upon analysis of the issues highlighted by the Planning Authority's Structure Plan Monitoring Reports, and following extensive internal consultation and specialist external advice. The final version of the questionnaire consisted of 46 closed statements that included 5 statements reproduced from the 1990 Public Attitudes Survey, two open-ended questions and a section requiring socio-economic information about respondents.
- 1.3.4 The survey was undertaken in June/July 1999 by post. To ensure an adequate response, a sample of approximately 15,000 (i.e. circa 1.5

per cent of the total population) was randomly generated from the electoral register, structured so that it included 5 per cent of each age cohort and 5 per cent of the population of each locality in the Maltese Islands. The same questionnaire was also distributed to 600 persons between 10 and 19 years of age at secondary, pre-university and private (church and state) schools. A total of 5719 valid responses were received, representing over 38 per cent of the 15,000 sample.

The Household Travel Survey

1.3.5 The Household Travel Survey was carried out on Wednesday 25th November, 1998. The survey served as a backbone for a Maltese transport model, giving a snapshot of Maltese household travel patterns (covering all activities) at a particular time. Survey forms were sent to 15,165 households well in advance of the survey day with guideline sessions and telephone reminders undertaken during the approach to the survey day. Forms were received from 7855 households, reaching 33 per cent in each locality. This represents 51 per cent of the sample.

1.3.6 Data presented in this topic paper is factored to reflect the entire (not sample) population of the Maltese Islands.

Schools Survey

1.3.7 A Schools Survey was undertaken in 1999 to estimate the footprint and typology of existing indoor and outdoor sports facilities in local state schools. The database includes information such as whether the sports facilities are accessible to the disabled and for use by the general public. Furthermore, a similar exercise was also held in September 2000 vis-à-vis non-state (i.e. Church and private) schools. Respondents were asked to indicate the footprint of sports facilities together with information on the type of facilities provided, indoor/outdoor facilities and the level of accessibility allowed to the general public.

1.3.8 Feedback from both state and non-state schools was excellent at over 95 per cent in each case.

Open Spaces and Visitor Attractions Surveys

1.3.9 A questionnaire was distributed to all local councils in December 2000, requesting feedback to ascertain the accuracy of the list of facilities on the Planning Authority's database. An update was also requested in

respect of information on additional open spaces (i.e. public gardens, playing fields and areas with landscaping and/or seating provision) and visitor attractions within the local council area.

- 1.3.10 Data on visitation patterns, site management, land-use pressures and constraints, amongst other information, was also collected. A total of 53 and 51 local councils (including those stating that no attractions were available in their area) participated in the Open Spaces and Visitor Attractions Surveys respectively, that is a reliable 78 per cent and 75 per cent respectively. Frequency distributions were generated for all questions.

Surveys of Tourism and Recreation Facilities

- 1.3.11 A programme of site visits to map all tourism and recreation facilities was carried out during 1997. This exercise provided a GIS based database that included accommodation establishments, restaurants, sports facilities, playing fields and public gardens. Such databases were also used in connection with other surveys coordinated by the Planning Authority (ex. Open Spaces Survey).

Gyms/Fitness Centres Survey

- 1.3.12 The main objective of this survey, carried out in January 2001, was to assess the land take up of licensed gymnasia and fitness centres. A site plan was sent to 24 gymnasia and fitness centres licensed by the Malta Police, whilst a request was made to gym operators, to calculate the floor space area whilst indicating the exact footprint of the facility. 58 per cent of operators sent their feedback.
- 1.3.13 The list provided by Malta Police excludes facilities within hotels and other tourist establishments. Such facilities are provided for in the Accommodation Establishments' Facilities Survey.

Accommodation Establishments' Facilities Survey

- 1.3.14 A list was compiled from the official HCEB guide regarding those accommodation facilities that have indoor and outdoor sports facilities within their premises. The aim of the survey, carried out in October 2000, was to calculate the overall footprint area dedicated to sports/leisure facilities within licensed tourist accommodation establishments.
- 1.3.15 A total of 28 out of 76 operators sent their feedback, that is 37 per cent. Additional feedback was obtained subsequently through telephone interviews.

Tourism and Recreation Community Survey

- 1.3.16 This survey consisted of 3500 personal interviews with local residents aged fifteen and over, and was carried out between October and December 1996. It obtained information, amongst others, on the residents' attitudes towards tourism activity, recreational habits, use and demands for the provision of recreational facilities.

The Tourist Survey

- 1.3.17 This survey was carried out between July 1996 and June 1997 involving personal interviews with around 2500 tourists prior to their departure from Malta. This survey sought to obtain information mainly relating to travel expectations, profiles and activities, although the use of and satisfaction with recreation facilities and the growth potential of specific recreation activities were also dealt with as part of the survey.

Tourism and Recreation Trade Surveys

- 1.3.18 These six surveys, carried out by the Planning Directorate between 1996 and 1997, were addressed to key players in the tourism and recreation sectors. These included self-catering apartment owners, accommodation establishments operators, restaurateurs, local councils, sports associations and clubs, travel agents and tour operators. The aim was to obtain the views of the industry and those directly involved in the leisure field with regard to their operations and types of clients, patronage profiles, demand for facilities, upgrading/embellishment projects and to identify problem areas in the two sectors.

The Schemes Monitoring Database

- 1.3.19 The aim of the Planning Authority's Schemes Monitoring Database was to monitor whether there is adequate land supply in the Temporary Provisions Schemes to meet the levels of development identified in the Structure Plan. The study focused on setting the context, the methodology used for estimating the take-up of schemed land, presenting the findings and general comments about the place of schemes monitoring assessments in the planning process.

Consultation Meetings

- 1.3.20 Other information was obtained through a number of interviews and meetings held with key associations in the recreation field. These include Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna, Friends of the Earth (Malta), Din l-Art

Helwa, Malta Playing Fields Association, Birdlife (Malta), the Malta Olympic Committee, the Committee for the Selection of Sports Complexes and the National Council for Sports. A preliminary consultation exercise was also held with key players on a number of issues pertinent to the topic paper. Such major players include the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of the Environment, the Malta Tourism Authority, the Departments of Culture and Agriculture.

- 1.3.21 The scope of these meetings and consultation exercise was to obtain feedback and comments from the various associations in respect of their specific fields. The meetings and interrelated correspondence also served to introduce the Structure Plan review process and the role of the topic papers to the various associations, departments and ministries. They were all informed that they will be consulted once again at a later stage and that their input would help to ensure the development of an appropriate recreational policy framework for the Review.

Limitations of Study

- 1.3.22 The quantitative and qualitative data collected definitely gives a clear indication of the existing distribution regarding recreational facilities in the Maltese Islands. Feedback from various public and private sector agencies was sought to verify and/or build upon the existing data sets. Although feedback received was very encouraging, not all agencies responded; subsequently, some of the areas quoted in the various tables and maps might be marginally incomplete since certain facilities might have been inadvertently omitted.

General Annotation

- 1.3.23 It must also be stated that the endorsement of the findings and recommendations of the Leisure and Recreation Topic Paper at this stage by the PA Board should not in any way imply that the recreation strategy and the direction the study recommends cannot be altered in the Structure Plan Review. This is simply because the Subject Plan's findings need to be looked at in the context of the findings of other topic studies to arrive at a coherent strategic land use strategy for the Maltese Islands.
- 1.3.24 This paper has been compiled by Alan Vella, who may be contacted at the Planning Authority (e-mail: Alan.Vella@pa-malta.org)

2. Recreational Facilities in the Maltese Islands

2.1 Overview of Recreation Development

2.1.1 The Technical Report: Leisure, Recreation and Tourism, which was compiled as part of the first Structure Plan in the late 1980's stated at the time that there existed an 'absence of any readily available information on distribution and patterns of use' with regards to recreation and sports facilities. A small survey that examined the provision of recreational facilities, undertaken prior to the Structure Plan, however showed the following results:

- the scarcity of facilities on Gozo
- the prevailing urban character, due to hard landscaping, of recreational facilities in the Maltese Islands
- the lack of facilities in areas of tourist concentration.

2.1.2 Due to the absence of data, a serious attempt has been made to plug the gap in the level of information on recreation. It emerges that during the initial years following the adoption of the Structure Plan, a number of recreation facilities were given the green light, as reported in the first Structure Plan Monitoring Report 1990 - 1995. Most of these facilities were developed by the private sector and consisted mainly of cinemas and leisure complexes in Malta's main entertainment spots. Yet Government also funded a number of projects such as the Tal-Qroqq Sports Centre. Local Councils have also upgraded existing recreational facilities besides providing new public gardens and playgrounds. Indeed, since the establishment of Local Councils in 1993, there has been a marked increase in the development and provision of playgrounds and public gardens.

2.1.3 It should be pointed out that the various activities related to recreation in the Maltese Islands fall under different bodies/agencies which are responsible for promoting the cause of specific activities. The recreation sector is therefore considered to be a fragmented sector, and there is hardly any integrated planning management.

2.1.4 Various Government departments play a key role as agencies responsible for the provision of particular recreation facilities. Sports activities, for instance, fall under the responsibility of the various sports organisations and the sports section of the Parliamentary Secretariat for Sports. The informal recreation product, to include activities like walking, BBQ's and picnicking, is on the other hand usually dealt with by Local Councils, yet the approach to the provision of such facilities is rather ad hoc and hardly ever strategic.

- 2.1.5 Furthermore, the Agriculture Department is responsible for public gardens like San Anton and areas like Buskett and Chadwick Lakes, whilst the Department of Culture sees to the cultural side of recreation (such as theatres, exhibitions, museums and other forms of art). The Local Councils are responsible for a number of playgrounds and playing fields whilst non-governmental organisations like the Playing Fields Association are responsible for certain playing fields.
- 2.1.6 The private sector, on the other hand, provides a number of commercial facilities to cater for recreational needs in the form of nightclubs, restaurants, bars, cinemas, water sports facilities and diving equipment, amongst others. A number of sports associations and clubs, especially the more established ones, also provide sports facilities for their members.
- 2.1.7 Besides the issues highlighted above, it should be pointed out that it is generally difficult to obtain relevant information in respect of leisure and recreation. Indeed, being the first exercise of its kind, it is difficult to determine trends for each and every recreational activity.

2.2 Existing Facilities: A Strategic Perspective

- 2.2.1 A physical study has been carried out in 1997-99 to determine the distribution of recreational facilities and more specifically the existing amount of land allocated as open space, public gardens, public sports facilities, beach concessions and playing fields in the Maltese Islands. This has been complemented by additional surveys carried out in 2000-2001 on the usage, footprint area and/or site location of existing recreational areas/facilities managed by the private sector or in public hands. The following are the total approximate footprint areas per land use and per category. This data was obtained from surveys undertaken by the Planning Authority, from Police records (gyms/fitness areas) and from tourist accommodation establishment estimates (sports facilities in tourism accommodation establishments). Footprint areas were not available for other recreational facilities like catering establishments and visitor attractions.

public gardens	499,524 m ²
playing fields	133,068 m ²
open spaces	161,261 m ²
beach concessions	123,715 m ²
public sports facilities	1,692,244 m ²
Indoor/outdoor sports facilities in state schools	334,865 m ²
sports facilities in private/church schools	112,597 m ²
gyms/fitness centres excl. those in tourist accommodation	2,900 m ²
indoor/outdoor sports facilities in tourist accommodation may include swimming pool area and sun deck areas	108,555 m ²

- 2.2.2 The Planning Authority's Tourism and Recreation Community Survey shows that practically all the population (over 99 per cent) is engaged in recreational activities in summer and winter (to include catering activities). Local residents enjoy swimming/sunbathing and a picnic/walk in the countryside in summer and winter respectively, whilst public gardens and playing fields are often the ideal rendezvous for neighbours and extended families to enjoy an informal, relaxing environment.
- 2.2.3 The above complements the findings of the National Tourism Organisation's study on "The Economic Impact of Tourism in Malta", which highlighted the fact that 88 per cent of tourists visiting Malta in 1998 reported expenditure on recreational activities, whilst practically all tourists (over 99 per cent) spent money locally on catering, that is food and/or beverage. Furthermore, recreational facilities are also sought by cruise passengers and domestic users (Planning Authority, 1997). The main visitor attractions and museums are a must in the cruise passengers' short but eventful itinerary, whilst such tourists also constantly make use of facilities such as public gardens especially in the summer months (as a protection against excessive heat), since it transpires that generally, they prefer walking and exploring a destination rather than booking an organised tour.
- 2.2.4 Furthermore, the Tourist Survey indicated that whilst most foreigners visit the main tourist localities and resorts (such as Valletta and Sliema), their destinations also included other less touristic areas that are however also associated with recreational activities. These areas include Zurrieq, Dingli, Floriana, Victoria, Kalkara, Mosta and Rabat. Zurrieq is attractive to divers whilst Rabat, Victoria, Floriana and Mosta are visited for sightseeing and theatrical activities. Dingli attracts those tourists who enjoy the countryside and walks in natural areas, whilst Kalkara is popular with sailing enthusiasts, especially during summer. Yet local residents in the Tourism and Community Survey also expressed some concern over the number of tourists making use of beaches during the summer months (due to overcrowding in a restricted area). There is similar concern over the use of restaurants during the summer period whilst local residents would like to see more use of restaurants by tourists during the winter months.
- 2.2.5 In the above context, Table 2 shows that the most popular activity amongst locals seems to be dining out at restaurants (61 per cent of the local community, that is 231,000), followed by a visit to the cinema (125,500 people), bars/beverage outlets (109,300), museums/historic sites (72,600) and sports (65,000 practitioners). The land-use implications and trends vis-à-vis such Maps will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Yet most locals prefer recreational activities in the winter as opposed to the summer season, although a significant number also seek recreational activities like catering establishments and cinemas all year round. Cultural recreational activities like visits to

theatres and/or museums on the other hand seem to be more seasonal.

TABLE 2: NUMBERS ENGAGED IN DIFFERENT RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL POPULATION

Recreational Activity	Summer Only (%)	Winter Only (%)	Both Seasons (%)	Total (%)	Locals Participating (No.)
CULTURAL					
Theatre	0.3	14.6	2.9	17.8	67,300
Library	0.7	2.2	7.0	9.9	37,400
Museums & historic sites	3.3	10.0	5.9	19.2	72,600
ENTERTAINMENT					
Cinema	1.0	17.9	14.4	33.2	125,500
Discos/Nightclubs	1.3	2.2	9.3	12.8	48,400
CATERING					
Restaurants	7.3	9.9	43.9	61.1	231,000
Bars	3.3	2.5	23.1	28.9	109,300
SPORTS					
Practitioners	N/A	N/A	17.2	17.2	65,000

Source: Planning Authority, 1997

Notes:

1. Percentages and figures in the above table reflect the total population less the age group 1-15 years.
2. The "Both Seasons" column refers to those respondents who were engaged in recreational activity in both summer and winter. Other respondents who sought recreational facilities only in summer or winter were included in one of the respective columns.
3. For the purposes of the last column, the population of the Maltese Islands is calculated at the Census '95 figure of 378,132. Figures have been rounded up accordingly.

2.2.6 Moreover, it emerges from the National Tourism Authority study that the total annual expenditure by tourists on recreation and catering amounted to Lm19.5 and Lm53.6 million respectively (total of Lm73.1 million), that is an overall per capita expenditure per tourist of Lm18.6 and Lm45.6 respectively. Table 3 gives a breakdown of such figures.

TABLE 3: EXPENDITURE BY TOURISTS ON RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN 1998

Activity	Revenue spent locally	Percentage tourists engaged in activity	Weighted average: expenditure per person	Weighted tourist per capita expenditure
	Lm Million		Lm	Lm
F&B in Accommodation	9.88	59.4	8.35	0.88
F&B Restaurants	24.81	89.7	20.99	2.21
F&B Take Always	10.84	90	9.17	0.97
F&B Groceries	8.04	82.3	6.8	0.72
TOTAL CATERING	53.56	99.4	45.3	4.78
Cultural Recreation	8.89	69.6	7.52	0.79
Entertainment	3.82	40.5	3.23	0.34
Sports Activities	3.01	20.5	2.54	0.27
Other Recreation	3.82	35.9	3.24	0.34
TOTAL	19.54	88.7	16.53	1.74

Source: National Tourism Organisation-Malta, 1999

Notes:

1. "F & B" refers to Food and beverage
2. "Other Recreation" includes walking, picnic and gym activities
3. Average length of stay in 1998 is equivalent to 9.5 days.

2.2.7 The positive effects of recreation are the creation of jobs and income, promotion of intercultural relations and mutual understanding. Its unfortunate consequences are generally associated with ever-increasing traffic, over-exploitation of natural resources and environmental degradation. Overall however, recreation is inherently a positive activity and if adequately planned and managed, should bring positive results.

3. Determinants of Recreational Demand

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Recreational activity is constantly evolving, as a result of both higher standards of living and the increased leisure time of the working classes. The 1980s, for instance, were a watershed in the development of worldwide attractions. Changes in lifestyles, increases in leisure time and disposable income, technological developments and new consumer tastes combined to bring to prominence novel types of attractions in Europe. These include leisure shopping complexes, waterfront developments, cinemas and visits to working factories. Such trends have continued throughout the 1990's.
- 3.1.2 Factors influencing demand for recreation remain complex and their relative importance may vary between countries and geographical regions. The main factors contributing to the growth in recreational demand include the following:

3.2 Economic influences

- 3.2.1 A society's level of economic development is a major determinant of the magnitude of recreational demand because the economy influences so many critical, and interrelated, factors.
- 3.2.2 Without doubt, Malta has experienced significant economic growth in recent years, expanding on average by 5.5 per cent from 1990-95 and by a more sustainable 3.5 per cent in the latter part of the decade. Moreover, the supply of labour in Malta has increased by 8.9 per cent between 1991 and 2000. This increase was broadly in line with that registered in the size of the working-age population. Labour supply growth was however outpaced by the rate of job creation during the period studied, resulting in a drop in the number of people registering for work. The number of gainfully occupied has in fact risen by 11.8 per cent to nearly 140,415 in 2000. Such a figure excludes part-timers who in the year 2000 tallied to around 18,600 persons (Planning Authority, 2001).
- 3.2.3 It is difficult to examine the specific impact of each and every economic factor on recreational demand in the Maltese Islands, yet European trends show that most populations are now healthier and have better employment conditions. Besides, more leisure time in terms of paid holidays, an increase in personal mobility, a two-day weekend for most people and the ability to build up extra holidays through 'flexi-time' systems are also having a positive influence on recreational demand.

3.2.4 Increased disposable income is another important determinant of recreational demand. (Tonna B., 1995) states that the Maltese were consuming more in the mid 90's, in the hope of achieving a higher quality of life. People were after higher standards of living because their jobs provided them with the resources to buy more goods and services than they actually needed. Material goods and services are perceived not just as useful things but also as symbols or communicators of meaning.

3.2.5 From a public sector perspective, the government is keen to increase private sector involvement in large tourism and recreational projects on government land and hence limit direct public sector funding in such spheres. A case in point is the recently announced marine aquarium project forming part of the Qawra Coast Development Brief. Still, the Government recently also announced plans to fund, construct and manage new sports complexes. Smaller recreational projects such as public gardens or embellishments of open spaces are also undertaken directly by Central Government and Local Councils.

3.3 Technological influences

3.3.1 There is no doubt that technology has been a major enabling factor in terms of converting suppressed demand into effective demand. This is particularly the case in transport technology, where the aircraft development of the jet engine in the late 1950s stimulated an increased demand for international travel. Other critical enabling factors in terms of recreation demand include a more widespread access to the motor car.

3.3.2 Generally, technology acts to increase access to leisure activities by lowering the cost or by making the product more accessible. Examples here include developments in 'recreational technology', such as boardsailing and off-road recreational vehicles. Both are practiced in the Maltese Islands.

3.4 Seasonal/Fashionable influences

3.4.1 Natural factors and fashion may also affect recreational demand. Most of the recreational facilities are to some extent dependent on one natural factor, the weather. Some facilities deliberately brand themselves 'all weather' because they recognise how damaging bad weather can be. The climate is certainly a point in Malta's favour especially since sightseeing and sunbathing/swimming, that is two of the main activities which both locals and tourists engage in, are both affected in one way or another by natural factors. As for fashion, habits and tastes, the local population has throughout the years sought new

forms of recreational activity. BBQ's, for instance, have certainly gained in popularity and are nowadays a common sight especially in coastal areas.

3.5 Demographic influences

3.5.1 Population growth is one of the most important determinants of demand in the recreation sector. The population in the Maltese Islands according to the official Census Report stood at 378,132 in 1995, with an annual growth rate of 1 per cent. Population projections by the Malta Planning Authority show that the future population of the Maltese Islands is expected to increase to 414,000 and 434,000 by the years 2010 and 2020. This contrasts with the Mediterranean's share of the total world population, which is decreasing steadily (from 8.4 per cent in the 1950 to an expected 7.1 per cent in the year 2000 and down to 6.7 per cent by the year 2025) (Role T., 1998).

3.5.2 It is relevant to point out that the current population density tops that of most densely populated countries. Indeed, the Maltese Islands stand second in the list of most dense countries around the world, having a population density of 1200 persons per square kilometre, internationally surpassed only by Singapore. Additional demographic projections show that the working age population will also contract by 0.2 per cent per annum between 2000 and 2020. This development should however not lead to any significant drop in the labour supply, until at least 2010, especially since more women will seek remunerated employment. As a result, the labour supply is expected to be about 5 per cent higher than its present level in twenty years time (Planning Authority, 2001).

3.5.3 Furthermore, the Maltese Islands have an ageing population that in the next decades will become even more pronounced. The (Planning Authority, 2001) shows that the number of senior citizens aged 60+ will rise from 16 per cent of the total population in 1995 to 25 per cent in 2020. A higher life expectancy period is also forecasted. In this context, the provision of recreational facilities suitable for older generations, including the provision of quality open spaces and pleasant public garden environments, is however stressed. Moreover, the demand for sports facilities appealing to the elderly (such as bocci/bowls pitches) is also likely to increase.

3.5.4 It is clear that a developed economy like Malta with its relatively high consumer spending tends to enhance the propensity for increased participation in recreational activities. As in other countries, albeit on a smaller scale, the distribution of population within the nation also affects patterns of recreational demand. Where population is concentrated into one part of the country, recreational demand is distorted.

- 3.5.5 The issue of suppressed demand is also important, since this can effectively lead to increased demand for additional recreational facilities. Returned migrants, for instance, may be anxious to engage themselves in activities that require facilities that are currently unavailable or insufficient to cater for their needs. In this perspective, it is important to point out that the Planning Authority's Demography Topic Paper indicates migration at circa 775 yearly over the Structure Plan period, with the great majority being immigrants as opposed to emigrants.
- 3.5.6 It would be opportune, at this point, to examine certain demographic trends from a micro perspective. Such trends are analysed according to the 1995 Census results and are shown in greater detail (i.e. by local plan and by local council area) in Map 1 and Appendix B.
- 3.5.7 Apart from facilities for the elderly, adequate recreational facilities should however also be ensured for the younger adult/middle aged generations, who seem to be moving into relatively new residential areas mainly in the Central and Malta South Local Plan areas. The Central Local Plan area hosts the second largest number of residents and has the fastest growing population, when compared to the other six local plans. The Malta South Local Plan area is also currently experiencing a rapid growth in population, although it is envisaged that the number of schoolchildren under 15 years of age will only increase in the later part of the Structure Plan period.
- 3.5.8 Furthermore, the Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan area hosts a relatively young population that is constantly growing. A continuous growth rate in population is also projected for the future. There is also an increasing albeit ageing population in the Gozo Local Plan area, with an influx of returning migrants contributing to the above.
- 3.5.9 A slow growth in population is being experienced in the North West Local Plan area, although the situation seems likely to become more stable in the future. Likewise, the North Harbours Local Plan area will have a relatively stable population over the next twenty years. The need is likely to be felt in the near future for more services for the elderly in both local plan areas.
- 3.5.10 The Grand Harbours Local Plan area is on the other hand dominated by an ageing and declining population, with people (especially the younger generations) moving out to other residential areas. Kalkara seems to be the only residential area attracting migrants.

3.6 Socio - Cultural influences

- 3.6.1 Cultural trends are also crucial. In recent years there have been a number of changes in culture and consumer behaviour that are influencing recreational trends. For example, many leisure establishments around the world have in the last few years been keen to be seen responding to the growing concern with green issues. The Maltese private sector is slowly also increasingly aware of issues relating to water and waste management, especially since water management can save considerable costs whilst waste management can contribute to lessen pollution within the immediate surroundings of the concerned establishment.
- 3.6.2 Improving educational standards and media channels have also boosted awareness of recreation opportunities. (Tonna B., 1995) suggests that certain Maltese choose to belong to a certain social group, class and rank by adopting the lifestyles (and hence recreational traits, amongst others) of that group. They do this by buying and consuming the material supports and expressions of those lifestyles. Advertisers took care to convince them that by buying such products, they would be buying into that group. In this light, institutions have responded to this increased demand by developing a range of leisure products and services.
- 3.6.3 These trends are reinforced to a considerable extent by the public's desire to escape from the urban environment. This has also contributed to the urge of many locals to spend a whole day or afternoon (mainly on a Sunday) with their family in the countryside or near coastal areas. Locals travel by private car to several rural areas for their recreational activities, in view of the geographical proximity of most recreational areas around the Maltese Islands.

3.7 Summary

- 3.7.1 In synthesis, the above trends and factors indicate that pressures for recreational facilities are likely to continue over the Structure Plan period, although patterns and activities sought might be different when compared to those being currently experienced. Subsequent chapters will hence highlight the provision, distribution and trends relating to specific recreational activities within a planning context, besides recommending a planning strategy for each activity over the Structure Plan period.

4. Evaluation of Structure Plan Policies

4.1 Recreation Policies

- 4.1.1 There are 14 recreation policies in the Structure Plan for the Maltese Islands. The general objective is to encourage the provision of opportunities for recreation in a coordinated manner in co-operation with the range of public and private agencies involved, to ensure that sites for an adequate range of facilities are included in Local Plans, and to reconcile recreation provision with competing interests. The recreation policies refer mainly to recreation in the countryside, coastal areas and relate to various types of sports activities, besides indicating the need for the formulation of recreation standards.
- 4.1.2 A detailed description would be opportune at this stage. **Policy REC 1** seeks to overcome deficiencies in the provision of recreational facilities by defining sites for recreation in the Local Plans. Moreover, the Structure Plan urges Government to prepare and implement management schemes for publicly owned open spaces and water areas, besides encouraging other agencies and landowners to implement similar schemes (**Policy REC 3**). The private sector will also be encouraged to participate directly in recreational programmes in view of the likely financial constraints of the Government (**Policy REC 2**). The PA, on its part, will seek to identify sites for district level recreation centres and co-ordinate publicly provided facilities with commercial and voluntary aided facilities, according to **Policy REC 4**.
- 4.1.3 International standard sports facilities will be located at Ta' Qali, Marsa Park, Pembroke, Marsascala and Victoria according to **Policy REC 5**, possibly linked to potential hotel or apartment accommodation in the vicinity. In line with this policy, recreational facilities feature prominently in the draft Ta' Qali and Pembroke Action Plans. Besides, the PA will also ensure that adequate provision for district-level sports and recreational facilities will be made in Local Plans for both new and existing urban areas (**Policy REC 8**).
- 4.1.4 **Policy REC 6** advocates the need for the existing firing range at Pembroke to be relocated, whilst the Ta' Qali National Recreation Centre is expected to promote the further development of recreation and sports uses with a national catchment area, besides encouraging the relocation of the on site industrial uses (**Policy REC 7**). **Policy REC 11**, on the other hand, indicates that sites at White Rocks and Marfa are designated for overnight accommodation of mobile caravans and tents.
- 4.1.5 **Policy REC 9** stresses the fact that no permanent structures will be permitted in coastal areas, and that the owners of huts and similar

developments on coastlines will be required to remove these structures. Neither will low cost holiday home villages be permitted according to **Policy REC 10**, whilst holiday villages will have to conform to Structure Plan policies. Furthermore, all illegally constructed property will be demolished and the site restored at the occupier's expense if the owner does not comply with eviction notices (**Policy REC 12**).

- 4.1.6 The identification of heritage trails and country parkways is stressed in the Structure Plan as a means to enhance the historical and natural heritage product for recreational and tourism purposes. **Policy REC 13** states that the PA and other Government bodies will seek to identify and establish a network of country parkways and coastal and inland rights of ways for footpaths, cycle routes and horse riding trails, in both Malta and Gozo. Besides, the PA will also designate a series of picnic areas within the country parkway system, to include environmentally friendly support facilities along the routes (**Policy REC 14**).
- 4.1.7 A close examination of the policies shows that the first four **REC policies** in the Structure Plan give due weight to the institutional arrangements for recreation. **Policies REC 1 and 3** are important policies on standards of recreational provision, sites for recreational facilities in local plans (**REC 1**) and management schemes (**REC 3**). To date, hardly any progress or action has been registered regards the standards mentioned in **Policy REC 1** although sites for recreational use have been identified in various local plans. As for management schemes, the only possible exception is the management scheme for the Ghajn Tuffieha area being carried out by the GAIA Foundation.
- 4.1.8 The overall success of **Policy REC 2** is, on the other hand, debatable. The Planning Authority's Monitoring Report 1996-1997 shows that a total of over 63,585 m² floorspace received approval for various recreational uses (sports, catering, entertainment and cultural facilities, attractions and recreation infrastructure) and an additional 72,284 m² floorspace as playing fields and public gardens during these two years. There has to date however hardly been any progress on joint schemes for recreation provision (except some minor sponsorships to local councils for the maintenance of public gardens/rest areas), since private sector investment was primarily related to the provision of commercial catering and entertainment facilities such as bars, restaurants and cinemas.
- 4.1.9 The notion of public-private sector collaboration could however become more effective through planning gain, whereby major project applicants could be asked to contribute by increasing the non-remunerative recreational provision in a particular area. Such a notion could lead to a more effective policy within the spirit raised in **Policy REC 2**, since the private sector is currently concentrating predominantly on the commercial related aspects of recreational provision. A case in point is

the recently launched Qawra Coast Development Brief, which makes provision for additional non-remunerative recreational facilities (ex. leisure walkways, improved access to the sea) and the restoration/interpretation of historical features for public appreciation, alongside commercial facilities such as a marine aquarium.

- 4.1.10 Progress seems to have been made regarding **Policy REC 4** since the district level recreation centres referred to in the above policy seem to be consonant with the Planning Authority's endeavours as part of the local plan formulation, the protection of established recreational areas and the establishment of criteria for the development of sport complexes. Three sites have been identified by Government for the building of sports complexes (in Cottonera, Kirkop and St Paul's Bay), whilst other areas like Ta' Qali, University Grounds, Corradino and Marsa serve a catchment area which clearly goes beyond the local community in the immediate vicinity.
- 4.1.11 The existing policies regarding specific sports activities, such as **Policies REC 6 and 8**, are very much oriented to major impact sports (motorcycle scrambling, shooting and off road vehicle racing). **Policy REC 6** deals specifically with shooting ranges, yet it is too site specific and outdated since there are no official plans to relocate the Pembroke range whilst plans for a site in Marsascula are not being actively considered. A separate policy paper on shooting ranges is in the meantime being prepared by the Planning Authority, due to the impacts brought about by this major impact sport.
- 4.1.12 **Policy REC 8** on the other hand seems to be wide ranging since a number of issues such as recreational provision at a local level, major impact sports, facilities in the countryside and the need for environmental impact assessments are raised. As for major impact sports, the effectiveness of this policy is questionable since scrambling and offroading are still practiced in a number of vulnerable sites, causing severe damage to coastal clay slopes, sandy areas and valley watercourses and sides.
- 4.1.13 It would be best to filter the issues raised in **Policy REC 8** and tackle them at local plan level or else separately in the Structure Plan Review. Policies on major impact sports should however still be embodied within the Structure Plan Review yet a better-focused, clearer strategic direction should be sought. The implications of a wider range of sports activities (not necessarily major impact sports) should also be covered in the Review.
- 4.1.14 It should also be stated that the existing sports policies (like **REC 5** on Ta' Qali, Marsa, Pembroke, North of Marsascula and Victoria) and other recreation-related policies (such as **TOU 10** on Ta' Cenc) are all very much site specific. The above policies have only partly been

implemented (ex. football facilities at Ta' Qali and an athletics track at Marsa) since priorities and choice of localities have changed over the past few years. The stand to link sports facilities with hotel or apartment accommodation (as in Policy REC 5) is also debatable in view of the proximity of several existing establishments located around the Maltese Islands. No such developments in actual fact took place.

- 4.1.15 In view of the above, the emphasis of the Structure Plan Review policies should be to provide strategic direction guiding the preparation of local plans rather than providing policies such as **REC 5** which are too site specific. This, to some extent, prejudices the process of local plan preparation as it reduces the flexibility of proposing local policies which may reflect more the current needs and requirements of the area concerned.
- 4.1.16 Furthermore, **Policy REC 7** on the Ta' Qali Recreation Centre needs to be seen in the light of the Action Plan on Ta' Qali and similar initiatives on country/heritage parks in other areas around the Maltese Islands. The need for such a policy is indeed questionable now that an Action Plan on Ta' Qali has been formulated.
- 4.1.17 Policies **REC 13 and 14** deal with the provision of picnic areas, footpaths, heritage trails and cycle tracks. A number of paths and trails have indeed been identified by specific individuals/organisations as part of the Local Plan process, whilst a report commissioned by the European Union in 1995 identified a number of walking routes/rest areas and tackled the feasibility of cycling paths in the Gozitan countryside. Due to their land use implications on the countryside, such issues will be tackled in greater detail in the Planning Authority's Rural Strategy. Although the policy framework has been in place for quite a few years, it is however pertinent to point out that the implementation stage has hardly ever been reached even though such a provision would undoubtedly enhance the overall recreational product.
- 4.1.18 **Policies REC 9 and 10** propose that the illegal structures on the coast, currently being used for local recreational purposes, should be demolished and removed. A number of structures have indeed been demolished by the Planning Authority's enforcement section over the past ten years, with a particular emphasis on Armier in recent months, yet the coastline remains scattered with various illegal buildings. The need for inexpensive recreational rest areas and facilities near the coast is however acknowledged and indeed existing Structure Plan policies do not provide for adequate alternatives to meet the demand for such recreational activities. Moreover, an overall strategy for camping and caravan holidays is needed, to build on Policy REC 11. Policy REC 12, on the other hand, is a general enforcement policy and is thus misplaced.

- 4.1.19 In synthesis, the thrust of **Policies REC 1 and 3** remains acceptable despite difficulties to secure its implementation, whilst the range of issues covered by **Policies REC 2, 4, 8, 9, 10** also needs to find a place in the Review. Moreover, **Policies REC 5 and 6** are too site specific, **Policies REC 7 and 12** should be omitted because they refer to a specific Action Plan and to enforcement respectively, whilst **Policies REC 11, 13 and 14** treat aspects of recreation which should be strengthened and tackled from a strategic perspective in the Structure Plan Review's various topic papers.
- 4.1.20 It would seem appropriate, in this perspective, for the Review to take a fresh look at the issue of "recreation" and explore whether the overall development of recreation related facilities in the Maltese Islands would benefit from having suitable new strategic policies. In particular, there are no specific policies with regard to the provision of facilities like visitor attractions, interpretation centres, entertainment and cultural facilities (e.g. cinemas, libraries, theatres, nightclubs, restaurants).

4.2 Other Structure Plan Policies

- 4.2.1 Besides the relevant recreation policies, there are a number of other policies in the Structure Plan which impinge on leisure/recreational developments and these relate to tourism, conservation, transport and built environment policies (see Appendix C).
- 4.2.2 It is not the purpose of this report to examine the adequacy or otherwise of these policies. However, as these relate to individual topic areas, it is expected that the implications of these policies covering the subject areas will be closely examined as part of the Review exercise.
- 4.2.3 It should also be stated that since the adoption of the Structure Plan, major studies relating to Yachting Development and Golf Course development were also undertaken. Their findings have been incorporated in this topic paper and are also expected to be utilised when formulating policies on tourism and recreation at a later stage.

5. Recreational Activities in the Maltese Islands (excluding sports)

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 This Chapter seeks to highlight the importance of recreational activities (other than sports, which is dealt with separately in Chapter 6) in the Maltese Islands. Such activities are grouped under separate sub-headings namely outdoor rural and urban recreational areas, catering establishments, cultural and entertainment attractions. Coastal recreational activity is tackled in Section 4.3 and in the Coastal Strategy Topic Paper. This section includes an analysis of the provision, distribution and trends in the Maltese Islands, before highlighting the planning context per activity.
- 5.1.2 Particular attention should also be paid to Appendix D and Maps 10-16 which show the distribution of recreational facilities in the seven local plan areas. Such facilities include snack bars, restaurants, speciality restaurants, take aways/ kiosks, sports facilities, main beach concessions, boathouses, playing fields, open spaces and public gardens.
- 5.1.3 The need or otherwise for future provision of facilities according to the activity area is on the other hand tackled in Chapter 7.

5.2 Provision, Distribution and Trends: Urban Recreational Areas

- 5.2.1 Open spaces are major functional and visual factors in the well-being of Malta's towns and villages, and occupy a central place in the provision of outdoor recreation. Such areas serve as buffers between the built-up areas, instilling a breath of fresh air in an otherwise highly urbanised environment.
- 5.2.2 Open spaces in a Maltese context could include a variety of open places that informally serve as a recreational node or meeting place. Such spaces comprise piazzas (village squares), that is the traditional meeting places for locals, belvederes, promenades and village lanes, which are utilized by locals for informal evening gatherings and as safe play areas. Whilst acknowledging the importance of the above within the local urban recreational framework, it should be pointed out that most of the above are multi-purpose nodes that serve other important functions alongside the pastime notion (ex. tourism sightseeing, commercial uses such as kiosks and hawking, religious activities/paraphernalia, parking). Furthermore, promenades are not

easily identifiable since it is debatable whether coastal strips such as at il-Qajzenza, Marfa/Cirkewwa, Marsa and Valletta should be included in this category. In this light, the definition of “urban recreational areas” is being restricted to playing fields, public gardens and open spaces (which are essentially pockets of land having some landscaping and seating provision), that is those formal recreational spaces where the predominant if not exclusive use is for informal recreation.

- 5.2.3 Map 2 and Appendix E give a strategic overview of the main gardens, open spaces and playgrounds in the Maltese Islands focusing primarily on urban areas. Such information is based on feedback provided by Local Councils on the outdoor recreational areas (excluding sports) available in their council areas. It is relevant to point out that the footprint areas indicated on the maps may also include playing fields within the public gardens’ perimeter.
- 5.2.4 The quality of certain areas has been partly maintained due to the open areas, piazzas and public gardens which are present in these areas. In Floriana, for example, there are extensive gardens (like Argotti, Ganado, Sa Maison, St Philip, the Mall) which decisively contribute to improve the quality of life of locals and visitors alike. San Anton Gardens in Attard provides a green setting in an otherwise densely built area, apart from serving a regional if not national population catchment. Yet there are very few similar recreational areas, apart from the promenade, in areas like Qawra and Bugibba where there is a high influx of tourists alongside the resident population.
- 5.2.5 As highlighted in the first Structure Plan Monitoring report 1990-95, the investment by the central authorities and local councils in the development of amenities such as public gardens and playgrounds has increased over the years. Eight such projects were approved between 1993 and 1995 (Monitoring Report, 1990-1995) whilst 18 projects were approved during 1996 - 1997. These include the construction of new public gardens and/or playing fields at Naxxar, St Lucia, Zurrieq, Qrendi, St Paul’s Bay, and the upgrade of similar facilities at San Gwann, Floriana, Senglea, Hamrun and Zabbar. Such projects are usually developed on Government owned land which is normally quite close to the urban centre and hence residential areas.
- 5.2.6 Other important recent initiatives include the “Sebbah Pajjizek” competition organized by the Local Councils Department. The various local councils are enticed to participate in a number of embellishment competitions which promote visual and aesthetic environmental improvements. These categories include the best public garden with a playing field or other attraction, the best enclosed public garden, the best public garden embellished with trees, plants and flowers, the best maintained playing field, and the best paved/embellished public area.

- 5.2.7 Notwithstanding the initiatives described above, the Planning Authority's Public Attitudes Survey, which was carried out in June 1999, indicated that 83 per cent of respondents agreed that there should be more recreational facilities like parks and public gardens in their respective localities. The same survey also indicates that a high 91 per cent of respondents agreed that "there should be more trees in my locality", especially in the Gozo and Marsaxlokk Bay local plans. Moreover, a relatively high number of respondents in the Tourism and Recreation Community Survey (carried out around the same period as the Monitoring Report in 1997) also indicated the need for new facilities in the form of public gardens (50 per cent of respondents) and playgrounds (40 per cent of respondents).
- 5.2.8 In the same context, the Planning Authority's Open Spaces Survey shows that public gardens and playing fields are visited by a mix of council residents, Maltese from other council areas and tourists (66 per cent, 56 per cent and 36 per cent), in that order. Although residents request additional open spaces (as per results from the Public Attitudes Survey above), visitation to the existing facilities is however relatively low since 51 per cent of local councillors responded that public gardens/playing fields in their council area attract less than 50 visitors daily. This shows that many residents request additional open spaces to improve the quality of life in their neighbourhood rather than specifically to make use of such facilities. Moreover, only 7 per cent indicated that such recreational facilities are visited by 251 people and over daily, and indeed facilities are never overcrowded according to 43 per cent of respondents. When responding to the question "when are facilities sometimes or frequently overcrowded", respondents stated that they are frequently overcrowded mainly in weekends, especially in the afternoon or early evening and in Spring/Summer as opposed to Winter/Autumn.
- 5.2.9 The same Open Spaces Survey reveals that 80 per cent of facilities are maintained by the respective Local Council, with most facilities being "very well/reasonably maintained" (67 per cent) or "in need of upgrading" (26 per cent). In this regard, budgetary constraints are hindering the efforts of local councils to improve the open spaces in their locality, according to 66 per cent of respondents. The facilities are causing negligible impacts vis-à-vis traffic congestion, parking problems or a dirty environment, yet 15 per cent replied that "the facility is creating hostility with locals". 12 per cent also asserted that "residents complain that the facility needs better access for people with special needs".
- 5.2.10 In the same survey, feedback from local councils reveals that areas planned or previously used as open spaces in seven localities (Pembroke, Floriana, San Gwann, B'Bugia, Fontana, St Lucija and Mtarfa) have over the past 10 years effectively been developed into

other land uses such as a garage, housing, office and commercial. The Planning Authority's Schemes Monitoring Database also shows that 19 planning permissions have been granted on sites targeted as Public Open Space and/or Green Areas within the Temporary Schemes. Such sites are located in a variety of locations such as Qormi, Zabbar, Santa Venera, Iklin, Marsa, Zurrieq, Gzira and Ghaxaq and vary from extensions to an existing cemetery to the erection of multi-purpose communal facilities, garages, restoration/relocation of a shrine, advertisements, electricity substation and a swimming pool. Further to the Temporary Provision Schemes, 15 sites have also been replanned by the Planning Authority, with a mix of proposed land uses that may include social, community and recreational facilities.

5.3. Planning Context: Urban Recreational Areas

- 5.3.1 Table 4 and Appendix F highlight the criteria for determining the nature and distribution of parks and recreational areas within or in relative proximity to urban settlements. The existing Malta Structure Plan (Technical Report 3.1) states that within the framework illustrated in Table 4, a district park in small islands can also function as a local park for nearby residents and workers. Whilst acknowledging that the figures presented in Table 4 are still valid, it should however be said that the notions of "district" and "small local" parks are best avoided in the Maltese context since recreational areas fall within the national/regional (parks and the open countryside) and local (gardens and small open spaces) categories.
- 5.3.2 The "maximum distance from home" shows that due to Malta's geographical constraints, practically all local recreational facilities in particular Maltese towns/villages are within reach of residents of the same locality. Certain recreational facilities within a neighbouring village may actually fall within reachable distance of residents of other villages due to urban sprawl and restricted if not inexistent buffer zones between villages.
- 5.3.3 In this perspective, the importance of standards of provision for recreational facilities such as community open spaces needs to be stressed, as also highlighted in Policies REC 1 and BEN 19 of the current Structure Plan. Such standards are useful because they gauge the quality of life of a particular neighbourhood by identifying whether existing open spaces are sufficient in view of the population density of specific towns and villages around the Maltese Islands.

TABLE 4: CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING THE NATURE AND DISTRIBUTION OF PARKS AND RECREATIONAL AREAS

Park type	Function	Maximum distance from home (miles)	Components
National	Weekend type (bus and car travelers)	2 – 5	General recreation areas/playing fields/special facilities
District	Weekend type (mainly pedestrian travel)	0.75	
Local	Everyday type (short visits/workers)	0.25	General recreation areas/court games/children's play areas
Small local	Old people/young children/workers		Gardens/sitting areas/children's play areas

Source: *Structure Plan Technical Report (1991)*

- 5.3.4 If properly used, standards can be a guide for estimating:
- the amount of land and facilities required to serve general and specific populations
 - the number of people a recreational area or facility can be designed to serve
 - the adequacy of an area or facility to accommodate potential users in a service area.
- 5.3.5 The standards for provision of recreational facilities differ from country to country because of the nature, size and characteristics of each nation. The Explanatory Memorandum of the existing Structure Plan lists interim open space standards which are however vague and hence not exhaustive. Standards for recreation provision being applied in other countries are also provided in Appendix F.
- 5.3.6 Due to the complete absence of such comparable data in the Maltese Islands, an exercise was carried out by the Planning Authority (vide Tables 5a and b) to calculate the existing and required urban recreational areas within each local council. As stated earlier, urban recreational areas include public gardens, playing fields and open spaces yet exclude sports facilities, promenades, alleys, belvederes, Church parvises and non-landscaped piazzas with no seating provision. Also not included are those areas designated as public open spaces within the Temporary Provisions Schemes where no specific recreational facilities have in the interim period been developed (ex. site contiguous with Balluta valley and an area within inner Qawra). These are areas currently being replanned (within a

Local Plan framework) that are broadly underutilised by the general public even though having a formal designation as open spaces within the Schemes.

5.3.7 The following data was collected:

- an Open Spaces Survey was carried out amongst local councils. This, together with existing Planning Authority data sets on public gardens, playing fields and open spaces in urban areas, enabled the calculation of the total existing footprint of urban recreational facilities per local council.
- the Census '95 population figures were used to calculate the average recreational space per person per locality within urban areas.
- Qualitative information on the number of squares (piazzas) and availability or otherwise of promenades per local council was listed, to complement the quantitative data on gardens, playing fields and open spaces.
- the average recreational space per person figure (i.e. 2.4 square metres) has been derived by dividing the total land allocated to urban recreational areas in 68 local councils by the total population in the Maltese Islands. It omits Floriana since the inclusion of the considerable level of provision in this locality would distort the per capita estimate for the urban recreational space provision.
- the overall urban recreational areas figure was obtained by calculating the additional recreational spaces needed to reach the 2.4 m² figure in each local council area. The total land allocated to urban recreational areas was multiplied by 2.4 and divided by the respective average recreational space per council (Note: The average recreational space per council has been rounded up to one decimal point in Tables 5a and b. The calculation to obtain the overall urban recreational areas needed per council is however based on the exact average figure. Subsequently, a manual calculation may give a different figure than the one shown in the last column of Tables 5a and b).

5.3.8 Following the above calculations, Table 5a illustrates standards of recreational provision, by local plan and local council area. It emerges that the distribution of formal open spaces in urban areas is quite low, approximately 2.4 square metres per inhabitant (as stated above). A closer examination of the findings also shows that the provision might be insufficient in localities experiencing population growth, a continuous urban sprawl and/or a densely built urban environment. Indeed, 47 out of 68 local councils, or better still 69 per cent, do not reach the existing national average.

5.3.9 Further to the above, Table 5b regroups the local councils into three categories, that is those localities with an established coastal

recreation use, predominantly rural local councils and those local councils with a predominantly urban character (including port areas). Localities were grouped according to the predominant use in the area. Dingli and Sannat, for instance, have an urban settlement, coastal cliffs and a rural environment, yet they were placed in the latter category due to the imposing countryside surrounding both villages.

- 5.3.10 An analysis of the strategic implications of the contents of this table can be viewed in Chapter 7.

TABLE 5A: STANDARDS OF RECREATIONAL PROVISION, BY LOCAL PLAN AND COUNCIL

LOCALITY / LOCAL PLAN	TOTAL LAND ALLOCATED TO URBAN RECREATIONAL AREAS (Year 2000) (m ²)	POPULATION (Census 1995) (no.)	SQUARES (PIAZZAS) IN LOCALITY (no.)	PROMENADE IN LOCALITY (Y/N)	AVERAGE RECREATIONAL SPACE PER PERSON WITHIN URBAN AREAS (m ²)	DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS	OVERALL URBAN RECREATIONAL AREAS NEEDED PER LOCAL COUNCIL (m ²)
BIRZEBBUGIA	12176	7307	3	Y	1.7	Slow Growth	17536.8
MARSAXLOKK	2512	2857	1	Y	0.9	Slow Growth	6856.8
MARSAXLOKK BAY LOCAL PLAN	14688	10164			1.4		24393.6
MDINA	3572	377	3	N	9.5	Slightly Declining	0
DINGLI	6111	2725	2	N	2.2	Slow Growth	6540
MELLIEHA	9547	6221	3	Y	1.5	Rapid Growth	14930.4
MGARR	5324	2672	1	N	2.0	Stable/Slow Growth	6412.8
MTARFA	1660	2200	N/A	N	0.8	Growth	5280
RABAT	20934	10795	1	N	1.9	Slow Growth	25908
SAN PAWL IL-BAHAR	12534	7392	1	Y	1.7	Rapid Growth	17741
NORTH WEST LOCAL PLAN	74030	32382			2.3		76812.2
BIRGU	2695	3069	2	Y	0.9	Ageing & Declining	7365.6
BORMLA	1010	6085	3	Y	0.2	Ageing & Declining	14604
FLORIANA	123323	2701	3	N	45.7	Ageing & Declining	0
ISLA	3072	3528	6	Y	0.9	Ageing & Declining	8467.2
KALKARA	1520	2833	1	Y	0.5	Rapid Growth	6799.2
MARSA	5205	5324	1	N	1.0	Ageing & Declining	0
VALLETTA	27426	7262	4	Y	3.8	Ageing & Declining	0
GRAND HARBOURS LOCAL PLAN	164251	30802			5.3		37236
GZIRA	14311	7872	1	Y	1.8	Ageing & Declining	18892.8
MSIDA	20681	6942	3	Y	3.0	Slow Growth	0
PEMBROKE	23188	2213	1	N	10.5	Rapid Growth	0
PIETA	6620	4307	1	Y	1.5	Stable	10336.8
SAN GILJAN	3277	7352	1	Y	0.4	Ageing & Declining	17644.8
SAN GWANN	1155	12011	5	N	0.1	Rapid Growth	28826.4
SLEIMA	20191	12906	N/A	Y	1.6	Ageing & Declining	30974.4
SWIEQI	4010	6721	N/A	N	0.6	Slow Growth	16130.4
TA' XBIEX	14311	1732	N/A	Y	8.3	Slightly Declining	0
NORTH HARBOURS LOCAL PLAN	107744	62056			1.7		122805.6
SAN LAWRENZ	100	552	1	N	0.2	Stable & Ageing	1324.8
KERCEM	100	1557	1	N	0.1	Slow Growth	3736.8
GHASRI	100	369	1	N	0.3	Stable	885.6
GHARB	100	1030	1	N	0.1	Stable	2472
FONTANA	46	817	1	N	0.1	Stable & Ageing	1960.8
GHAJNSIELEM	4170	2176	2	N	1.9	Slow Growth	5222.4
MUNXAR	8555	780	2	Y	11.0	Slow Growth	0
NADUR	86	3882	2	N	0.1	Stable & Ageing	2064
QALA	7194	1492	2	Y	4.8	Slow Growth	0
SANNAT	2220	1604	1	N	1.4	Stable & Ageing	3849.6
VICTORIA	23288	6524	6	N	3.6	Constant Growth	0
XAGHRA	3486	3669	2	N	1.0	Slow Growth	8805.6
XEWKJIA	4228	3128	1	N	1.4	Slow Growth	7507.2
IZ-ZEBBUG (G)	13221	1446	1	Y	9.1	Slow Growth	0
GOZO LOCAL PLAN	66894	29026			2.3		37828.8
FGURA	950	11042	1	N	0.1	Slow Growth	26500.8
GHAXAQ	21634	4126	3	N	5.2	Slow Growth	0
GUDJA	7880	2882	1	N	2.7	Slow Growth	0
KIRKOP	402	1957	3	N	0.2	Slow Growth	4696.8
LUQA	14948	6150	1	N	2.4	Slow Growth & Ageing	0
MQABBA	2062	2613	1	N	0.8	Slow Growth	6271.2
MSCALA	6882	4770	1	Y	1.4	Rapid Growth	11448
PAOLA	48369	9400	2	N	5.1	Ageing & Declining	0

LOCALITY / LOCAL PLAN	TOTAL LAND ALLOCATED TO URBAN RECREATIONAL AREAS (Year 2000) (m ²)	POPULATION (Census 1995) (no.)	SQUARES (PIAZZAS) IN LOCALITY (no.)	PROMENADE IN LOCALITY (Y/N)	AVERAGE RECREATIONAL SPACE PER PERSON WITHIN URBAN AREAS (m ²)	DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS	OVERALL URBAN RECREATIONAL AREAS NEEDED PER LOCAL COUNCIL (m ²)
QRENDI	13718	2344	2	N	5.9	Slow Growth	0
SAFI	5430	1731	2	N	3.1	Rapid Growth	0
SANTA LUCIJA	6987	3605	1	N	1.9	Slow Growth	8652
SIGGIEWI	6763	7097	3	N	1.0	Slow Growth	17032.8
TARXIEN	11072	7412	2	N	1.5	Slow Growth	17788.8
XGHAJRA	10809	685	N/A	Y	15.8	Slow Growth	0
ZABBAR	6220	14138	4	N	0.4	Slow Growth	33931.2
ZEBBUG	6858	10398	2	N	0.7	Slow Growth	24955.2
ZEJTUN	20974	11379	7	N	1.8	Stable	27309.6
ZURRIEQ	35767	8684	4	Y	4.1	Slow Growth	0
SOUTH LOCAL PLAN	227725	110413			2.1		178586.4
ATTARD	39800	9214	2	N	4.3	Rapid Growth	0
BALZAN	1038	3560	1	N	0.3	Ageing & Declining	8544
BIRKIRKARA	18824	21281	4	N	0.9	Slow Growth	51074.4
GHARGHUR	1218	1991	1	N	0.6	Slightly Declining	4778.4
HAMRUN	4369	11195	2	N	0.4	Ageing & Declining	26868
IKLIN	2043	3098	1	N	0.7	Rapid Growth	7435.2
LIIJA	6318	2497	1	N	2.5	Ageing & Declining	0
MOSTA	28087	16754	2	N	1.7	Rapid Growth	40209.6
NAXXAR	1963	9822	4	Y	0.2	Rapid Growth	23572.8
QORMI	24368	17694	5	N	1.4	Stable	42465.6
SANTA VENERA	10493	6183	2	N	1.7	Stable	14839.2
CENTRAL LOCAL PLAN	138521	103289			1.3		219787.2
AVERAGE PER LOCAL COUNCIL	N/A	N/A			2.4	N/A	N/A
NATIONAL TOTAL	793853	378132			N/A	N/A	697449.8

Notes

- Urban Recreational Areas = Public Gardens, Playing Fields, Open Spaces. Such areas exclude sports facilities, promenades, piazzas and those areas designated as Public Open Spaces within the Temporary Provisions Schemes where no specific recreational facilities have in the interim period been developed.
- Promenade in locality = Availability or otherwise of a promenade for pedestrian recreational activity in the local council area.
- The column 'squares' lists the number of piazzas in each locality that serve as a recreational node, and have landscaping and/or seating provision. This category does not include those squares having only a church parvis with no additional spaces for pedestrian activity. It also excludes those sites which have already been included in the Urban Recreational Areas category, as described above.
- Footprint area of Howard Gardens has been equally divided within the Mdina and Rabat local council areas.
- Footprint area of Yacht Marina Garden has been equally divided within the Ta' Xbiex and Gzira local council areas
- The local council boundaries of Marsa, Siggiewi, Zebbug, Zurrieq, Qrendi and Pieta are located in two separate local plans. For the purposes of this exercise, the above local councils are being included in a specific local plan area where most of the urban population/activity is located.
- Mtarfa's 1995 population is an approximate figure since the locality at the time formed part of Rabat Local Council.
- Population of Mtarfa has been subtracted from the Rabat Census' 95 Population figure. Both localities are included as separate local councils.
- Ghasri, Kercem, Gharb and San Lawrenz Local Councils informed the PA that there are no Urban Recreational Areas in their respective local council area. A nominal figure of 100 square metres is thus being included

Source: Planning Authority, 2001

TABLE 5B: STANDARDS OF RECREATIONAL PROVISION IN RURAL, COASTAL & URBAN COUNCILS

PREDOMINANTLY RURAL LOCAL COUNCILS

LOCALITY / LOCAL PLAN	TOTAL LAND ALLOCATED TO URBAN RECREATIONAL AREAS (Year 2000)	POPULATION (Census 1995)	SQUARES (PIAZZAS) IN LOCALITY	PROMENADE IN LOCALITY	AVERAGE RECREATIONAL SPACE PER PERSON WITHIN URBAN AREAS	DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS	OVERALL URBAN RECREATIONAL AREAS NEEDED PER LOCAL COUNCIL
	(m ²)	(no.)	(no.)	(Y/N)	(m ²)		(m ²)
DINGLI	6111	2725	2	N	2.2	Slow Growth	6540
MGARR	5324	2672	N/A	N	2.0	Stable/Slow Growth	6412.8
MTARFA	1660	2200	N/A	N	0.8	Growth	5280
SAN LAWRENZ	100	552	1	N	0.2	Stable & Ageing	1324.8
KERCEM	100	1557	N/A	N	0.1	Slow Growth	3736.8
SANTA LUCIJA	6987	3605	1	N	1.9	Slow Growth	8652
GHARB	100	1030	N/A	N	0.1	Stable	2472
GHAJNSIELEM	4170	2176	2	N	1.9	Slow Growth	5222.4
SANNAT	2220	1604	1	N	1.4	Stable & Ageing	3849.6
XEWKIJA	4228	3128	1	N	1.4	Slow Growth	7507.2
GHAXAQ	21634	4126	3	N	5.2	Slow Growth	0
KIRKOP	402	1957	3	N	0.2	Slow Growth	4696.8
LUQA	14948	6150	1	N	2.4	Slow Growth & Ageing	0
MQABBA	2062	2613	1	N	0.8	Slow Growth	6271.2
QRENDI	13718	2344	2	N	5.9	Slow Growth	0
SAFI	5430	1731	2	N	3.1	Rapid Growth	0
SIGGIEWI	6763	7097	3	N	1.0	Slow Growth	17032.8
ZEBBUG	6858	10398	2	N	0.7	Slow Growth	24955.2
GHARGHUR	1218	1991	1	N	0.6	Slightly Declining	4778.4
GHASRI	100	369	1	N	0.3	Stable	885.6
GUDJA	7880	2882	N/A	N	2.7	Slow Growth	0
AVERAGE PER LOCAL COUNCIL					1.6		

LOCAL COUNCILS WITH AN ESTABLISHED COASTAL RECREATION USE

LOCALITY / LOCAL PLAN	TOTAL LAND ALLOCATED TO URBAN RECREATIONAL AREAS (Year 2000)	POPULATION (Census 1995)	SQUARES (PIAZZAS) IN LOCALITY	PROMENADE IN LOCALITY	AVERAGE RECREATIONAL SPACE PER PERSON WITHIN URBAN AREAS	DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS	OVERALL URBAN RECREATIONAL AREAS NEEDED PER LOCAL COUNCIL
	(m ²)	(no.)	(no.)	(Y/N)	(m ²)		(m ²)
BIRZEBBUGIA	12176	7307	3	Y	1.7	Slow Growth	17536.8
MARSAXLOKK	2512	2857	N/A	Y	0.9	Slow Growth	6856.8
MELLIEHA	9547	6221	3	Y	1.5	Rapid Growth	14930.4
SAN PAWL IL-BAHAR	12534	7392	1	Y	1.7	Rapid Growth	17741
PEMBROKE	23188	2213	1	N	10.5	Rapid Growth	0
SAN GILJAN	3277	7352	N/A	Y	0.4	Ageing & Declining	17644.8
SLIEMA	20191	12906	N/A	Y	1.6	Ageing & Declining	30974.4
MUNXAR	8555	780	2	Y	11.0	Slow Growth	0
IZ-ZEBBUG (G)	13221	1446	1	Y	9.1	Slow Growth	0
MARSASCALA	6882	4770	1	Y	1.4	Rapid Growth	11448
XGHAJRA	10809	685	N/A	Y	15.8	Slow Growth	0
ZURRIEQ	35767	8684	4	Y	4.1	Slow Growth	0
AVERAGE PER LOCAL COUNCIL					5		

LOCAL COUNCILS WITH A PREDOMINANTLY URBAN CHARACTER - INCLUDING PORT AREAS

LOCALITY / LOCAL PLAN	TOTAL LAND ALLOCATED TO URBAN RECREATIONAL AREAS (Year 2000) (m ²)	POPULATION (Census 1995) (no.)	SQUARES (PIAZZAS) IN LOCALITY (no.)	PROMENADE IN LOCALITY (Y/N)	AVERAGE RECREATIONAL SPACE PER PERSON WITHIN URBAN AREAS (m ²)	DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS	OVERALL URBAN RECREATIONAL AREAS NEEDED PER LOCAL COUNCIL (m ²)
MDINA	3572	377	3	N	9.5	Slightly Declining	0
RABAT	20934	10795	1	N	1.9	Slow Growth	25908
BIRGU	2695	3069	2	Y	0.9	Ageing & Declining	7365.6
BORMLA	1010	6085	3	Y	0.2	Ageing & Declining	14604
FLORIANA	123323	2701	3	N	45.7	Ageing & Declining	0
ISLA	3072	3528	6	Y	0.9	Ageing & Declining	8467.2
KALKARA	1520	2833	1	Y	0.5	Rapid Growth	6799.2
MARSA	5205	5324	1	N	1.0	Ageing & Declining	0
VALLETTA	27426	7262	4	Y	3.8	Ageing & Declining	0
GZIRA	14311	7872	1	Y	1.8	Ageing & Declining	18892.8
MSIDA	20681	6942	3	Y	3.0	Slow Growth	0
PIETA	6620	4307	1	Y	1.5	Stable	10336.8
SAN GWANN	1155	12011	5	N	0.1	Rapid Growth	28826.4
SWIEQI	4010	6721	N/A	N	0.6	Slow Growth	16130.4
TA' XBIEX	14311	1732	N/A	Y	8.3	Slightly Declining	0
FONTANA	46	817	1	N	0.1	Stable & Ageing	1960.8
NADUR	86	3882	2	N	0.1	Stable & Ageing	2064
QALA	7194	1492	2	Y	4.8	Slow Growth	0
VICTORIA	23288	6524	6	N	3.6	Constant Growth	0
XAGHRA	3486	3669	2	N	1.0	Slow Growth	8805.6
FGURA	950	11042	1	N	0.1	Slow Growth	26500.8
PAOLA	48369	9400	2	N	5.1	Ageing & Declining	0
TARXIEN	11072	7412	2	N	1.5	Slow Growth	17788.8
ZABBAR	6220	14138	4	N	0.4	Slow Growth	33931.2
ZEJTUN	20974	11379	7	N	1.8	Stable	27309.6
ATTARD	39800	9214	2	N	4.3	Rapid Growth	0
BALZAN	1038	3560	1	N	0.3	Ageing & Declining	8544
BIRKIRKARA	18824	21281	4	N	0.9	Slow Growth	51074.4
HAMRUN	4369	11195	2	N	0.4	Ageing & Declining	26868
IKLIN	2043	3098	1	N	0.7	Rapid Growth	7435.2
LJA	6318	2497	1	N	2.5	Ageing & Declining	0
MOSTA	28087	16754	2	N	1.7	Rapid Growth	40209.6
NAXXAR	1963	9822	4	Y	0.2	Rapid Growth	23572.8
QORMI	24368	17694	5	N	1.4	Stable	42465.6
SANTA VENERA	10493	6183	2	N	1.7	Stable	14839.2
AVERAGE PER LOCAL COUNCIL					2		

Notes:

- Localities have been segregated into rural, coastal or urban according to the predominant use in the area
- Predominately Rural Local Councils = Councils where the Rural Environment is imposing over the urban settlement and/or coastal activity.
- Local Councils with an Established Coastal Recreation Use = Councils with established coastal uses such as bathing, water sports, promenades, tourism accommodation and activity.
- Local Councils with predominantly Urban Character = Councils with established Urban/built up settlements. Includes port areas that do not have established coastal recreational uses as described above.
- Urban Recreational Areas = Public Gardens, Playing Fields, Open Spaces. Such areas exclude sports facilities, promenades, piazzas and those areas designated as Public Open Spaces within the Temporary Provisions Schemes where no specific recreational facilities have in the interim period been developed.
- Promenade in locality = Availability or otherwise of a promenade for pedestrian recreational activity council areas.
- Squares' = number of piazzas in each locality that serve as a recreational node, and have landscaping and/or seating provision. This category does not include those squares having only a church parvis with no additional spaces for pedestrian activity. It also excludes those sites which have already been included in the Urban Recreational Areas category, as described above.
- Footprint area of Howard Gardens has been equally divided within the Mdina and Rabat local council areas.
- Footprint area of Yacht Marina Garden has been equally divided within the Ta' Xbiex and Gzira local council areas.
- The local council boundaries of Marsa, Siggiewi, Zebbug, Zurrieq, Qrendi and Pieta are located in two separate local plans. For the purposes of this exercise, the above local councils are being included in a specific local plan area where most of the urban population/activity is located.
- Mtarfa's 1995 population is an approximate figure since the locality at the time formed part of Rabat Local Council.
- Population of Mtarfa has been subtracted from the Rabat Census '95 Population figure. Both localities are included as separate local councils.
- Ghasri, Kercem, Gharb and San Lawrenz Local Councils informed the PA that there are no Urban Recreational Areas in their respective local council area. A nominal figure of 100 square metres is thus being included

Source : Planning Authority, 2001

5.4 Provision, Distribution and Trends: Rural Recreational Areas

- 5.4.1 The Planning Authority's Public Attitudes Survey shows that a significant number of respondents specifically mentioned "the countryside" and "all valleys" as meriting protection from development. The woodland area Buskett received the greatest number of mentions among all localities, with almost one in five respondents suggesting that it should be protected from development. Other recreational areas receiving a high rate of mention (between 100 and 200 persons out of 3000) included Chadwick Lakes, Bahrija, Ta' Qali, Wardija, Mtahleb, Mizieb and il-Kuncizzjoni, in that order (see also Section 5.5).
- 5.4.2 Demand also exists by locals for parks and rural recreational areas located outside the boundaries of their direct urban settlement and yet fairly close in time distance. Indeed, respondents of the Public Attitudes survey identified a lack of parks as one of the key environmental problems that concerns them most. Moreover, 84 per cent of respondents stated that better facilities and footpaths are required in the countryside, whilst 70 per cent agreed with removing traffic from rural recreational areas like Chadwick Lakes.
- 5.4.3 From a strategic perspective, there are currently no formal parks in the Maltese Islands although Kennedy Grove and Delimara have been labelled by central authorities as National Country Parks whilst Ta' Qali and Hagar Qim are identified as a National Recreation Centre and an Archaeological Park respectively. Other heritage or country parks are planned in areas such as Ta' Cenc, Zabbar and Dwejra (Gozo), whilst open areas like Selmun, tAhrax tal-Mellieha, Victoria Lines, Bahar ic-Caghaq and Dingli Cliffs are sought by locals for informal recreation purposes.
- 5.4.4 It is the intention of Central Government and the private sector to upgrade the recreational provision in some of these areas. With regard to Ta' Cenc, a draft Heritage Park Management Plan has been prepared by the private sector and is being reviewed by the Planning Authority, whilst certain improvements have also been carried out by the Agriculture Department at Chadwick Lakes. The Works Department and National Country Parks Steering Committee, under the auspices of the Ministry of the Environment, are on the other hand finalising plans for Ta' Qali, whilst discussing the best possible uses for Delimara, Zabbar and Burmarrad/Kennedy Grove.
- 5.4.5 Furthermore, the Victoria Lines Restoration Committee set up in 2001 envisages the restoration, rehabilitation and presentation of Victoria Lines as a heritage trail with accompanying events. The natural ambience and cultural heritage at Buskett are also being protected

with conservation orders where necessary; there are however still considerable pressures on the prevailing resources when such an area is heavily visited, that is in Winter, Spring, Autumn and during specific periods such as the Mnarja festivities.

- 5.4.6 As for hunting and trapping, current licensed practitioners are in the region of 32,000, implying that these activities are amongst the most popular leisure pastimes in the Maltese Islands. It is envisaged that the number of practitioners will increase over a 20-year period ending in the year 2020.
- 5.4.7 The Public Attitudes Survey shows that 66 per cent of respondents agreed that hunting/trapping hinders other recreational activities from being practiced in the countryside. The higher the educational attainment level, the greater the perception of conflict between hunting/trapping and other activities, ranging from 60 per cent agreement among those with primary level education to 78 per cent of those having tertiary level education.
- 5.4.8 The recent announcement that hunters will be allowed to hunt from secondary roads or country lanes provided that the shotgun is not aimed in the direction of the road can also contribute towards additional hostility between practitioners of different activities. Moreover, hunting and trapping was also mentioned by several respondents as constituting an environmental problem.
- 5.4.9 Furthermore, the number of people who go camping or spend a holiday roaming around in a caravan are on the other hand restricted. The Tourism and Recreation Community Survey indicates that 3 per cent and 1 per cent of the Maltese population own a tent and a caravan respectively. Around 4 per cent stated that they prefer camping for four days and over in Summer, as opposed to Winter where camping activity decreases to 1.5 per cent of the population (predominantly short adventures of a day in wintertime).
- 5.4.10 The main camping and caravanning sites are located at Bahar ic-Caghaq, Marfa and Armier, yet the legality of some of these constructions (to include contiguous cement platforms and walls) is questionable. A planning application for a well managed commercially run camping site with facilities at Armier has however just been approved by the Planning Authority. Another development permit has been granted for the construction of a camping site for scouts at Ghajn Tuffieha.
- 5.4.11 Although the Tourism and Recreation Community Survey indicates that people prefer other informal recreational activities (such as watching TV, walking, reading, family gatherings, beach visits, BBQ's, fishing, visits to gardens and even voluntary work), it would still be opportune

to point out that the popularity of camping is on the increase. This is evidenced by the requests for information from overseas clubs/individuals interested in Malta as a camping destination. The opening of new retail outlets specialising in camping gear/equipment, annual camping fairs and regular activities/hikes are additional evidence of this growing popularity.

- 5.4.12 As stated earlier, other forms of rural recreation like hiking, walking and picnics will be tackled in the Rural Strategy Topic Paper. Yet it would still be opportune to highlight the main characteristics pertaining to these countryside activities due to their importance in the overall informal recreation provision. The above three activities are sensitive to the quality of the immediate environment and do not require any formal facilities, although some wooden benches and tables are at times provided in established picnic areas (like Ta` Qali).
- 5.4.13 Moreover, bird watching and nature appreciation activities take place mainly in the North West and Gozo Local Plan areas, especially in a park environment (like Buskett), at the nature reserves of Ghadira and Simar (St Paul's Bay), and around the Gozitan countryside (to include Ta` Cenc). Informal recreation on the other hand also includes country drives; people here explore all corners of the Islands, even though it should be said that the most popular area for this type of activity is the North West (see also section 5.5).
- 5.4.14 Horse riding is another informal recreational pastime that is practiced primarily in the countryside. Contrary to other informal recreational activities, horse riding requires a built infrastructure in the form of stables. Some of the existing stables are located outside scheme (such as Hal Ferh), yet the majority of stables (regarding horse riding for commercial and racing purposes) are located at Marsa, close to the national horseracing track. Other makeshift stables (vis-à-vis the care of horses as domestic animals) are located within a garage environment in a number of towns and villages (such as Qormi).
- 5.4.15 The planning implications of other informal recreational activities like abseiling and sailing are on the other hand covered in the relevant sports chapters, such as section 7.5.

5.5 Planning Context: Rural Recreational Areas

- 5.5.1 Considering the size of the Islands, the standards and mix of activities practiced overseas within parks is hardly applicable locally (see also Appendix F). Indeed, the Ta' Qali, Delimara and Kennedy Grove recreational centres cover a substantial area (that is 1.4 square kilometres, 1.52 square kilometres and 2.69 square kilometres

respectively) which is however still relatively small by foreign standards. Other rural recreational areas such as Chadwick Lakes (0.4 square kilometres) are even smaller.

- 5.5.2 In order to assess the strategic importance of the designated parks, it would be opportune to calculate the population catchment area served by particular recreational areas. In this regard, Table 4 shows that the maximum distance from home for a national park should be 3-8 kilometres (2-5 miles).
- 5.5.3 An average of 5 kilometres is being assumed for this exercise. Six particular areas have been examined, namely Buskett, Ta' Qali, Delimara, Kennedy Grove, Selmun and Bahar ic-Caghaq, although the geographical proximity of Dingli Cliffs and Chadwick Lakes to Buskett and Ta' Qali (respectively) suggests that the catchment of these areas should respectively roughly be equivalent. These six areas feature prominently amongst the most popular rural recreational centres in the Maltese Islands.
- 5.5.4 It results that the designated national park of Ta' Qali has the largest population catchment²⁴ within a 5 km radius (i.e.97,000), covering localities within the North West, Malta South and Central local plan areas. Bahar ic-Caghaq also has a wide catchment (87,000) from the North Harbours and Central local plan areas, followed by Kennedy Grove (48,000), Delimara (45,000), Buskett (34,000) and Selmun (16,000). Being national facilities within a small islands context, the population catchment is however likely to be higher and as such, the above figures should not be treated as a definitive view of the potential population catchment.
- 5.5.5 The Planning Authority's Household Travel Survey, for instance, reveals that traffic movements from southern towns and villages towards recreational areas in the North on Sunday afternoons are considerable. Respondents were asked whether they used their car on a particular Sunday afternoon (between 2.00pm and 7.00pm), how many passengers were with the driver and which locality did they visit.
- 5.5.6 It emerges that established informal recreational areas in the North West local plan are visited by a significant number of people from local councils that are in local plans within relative proximity. A factored analysis shows that 657, 596, 535, 397 and 367 residents of Zebbug, Mosta, B'Kara, Qormi and San Gwann respectively visit Rabat, whilst 626, 504, 443, 382 and 260 residents of Zebbug, B'Kara, Mosta, San Gwann and Qormi respectively travel to Attard, based on a sample indication of traffic movements toward Rabat and Attard on a Sunday afternoon. Such figures exclude movements to other popular neighbouring areas like Bahrija and Dingli.

- 5.5.7 Yet movements from southern local councils such as Zabbar, Zejtun, B'Bugia and Fgura to localities like Dingli, Rabat, Bahrija, Buskett and Ta' Qali also confirm that the latter areas are visited by additional visitors over and above those within the 5 km radius mentioned above. 1772 residents (total figure) of Zejtun, Zabbar, B'Bugia and Fgura travel to Rabat on a Sunday afternoon, whilst 932 and 320 residents of the same four southern localities (in total) choose to visit Attard and Siggiewi respectively. Siggiewi spans two Local Plan Areas, namely the North West Local Plan and the Malta South Local Plan.
- 5.5.8 Additional data from the Public Attitudes Survey further corroborates the importance of Malta's main rural recreational areas for residents from all over the island. Feedback generated by the question "name three areas you would like to see protected from development" shows that Buskett was identified as the most popular area meriting protection. Although the area was mentioned regularly by residents of nearby localities like Mosta, Dingli, Zebbug and Rabat, authorities were also urged to protect Buskett by several residents of densely built towns/villages where an urban character prevails. These include localities in Central Malta like Birkirkara, Gzira, Hamrun, Qormi, Naxxar, Msida, St Julian's, Sliema and San Gwann but also southern towns like Zabbar, Zejtun, Tarxien, Marsascale, Fgura, Birzebbugia, Cospicua and Paola.
- 5.5.9 In terms of location, areas in the North West local plan attracted the largest number of responses, a result which may be attributable to the size of the territory covered and the open rural character of the countryside. Besides Buskett, Ta' Qali, Chadwick Lakes, Bahar-ic-Caghaq, Delimara, Mtahleb and Bahrija are other important areas (amongst others) meriting protection according to respondents of the Public Attitudes Survey. Only Delimara and Bahar-ic-Caghaq are located in a local plan other than the North West.
- 5.5.10 As stated in the previous paragraph, Ta' Qali, Chadwick Lakes and Bahrija also have a central recreational function. Ta' Qali roughly follows the same distribution pattern as Buskett, and is labelled as an important area meriting protection by people from all over the island (albeit on a smaller scale when compared to Buskett). Chadwick Lakes is mentioned mainly by residents from Birkirkara, Fgura, Mosta, Rabat, Zabbar, Zejtun, Valletta. Bahrija is mentioned by residents of Birkirkara, Rabat, Qormi, Msida, Mosta, Fgura, San Gwann and Siggiewi. Responses also came from people all over the island, with responses generated being roughly equivalent to those identifying Ta' Qali as meriting protection.
- 5.5.11 Furthermore, cross tabulations in the Public Attitudes Survey also revealed that there is a tendency for residents of a particular local plan to recommend that areas within their local plan area (or in the immediate vicinity) be protected from development. Residents mainly

of Central Malta (mainly Birkirkara, Iklin, Gharghur, Gzira, Mosta, Naxxar, Qormi and San Gwann) believe that Bahar ic-Caghaq and Mtahleb (Rabat, Mosta, Birkirkara, Naxxar, Qormi and Santa Venera) should be protected, whilst Delimara merits protection mainly for residents of Southern Malta (Birzebbugia, Marsaxlokk, Marsascala, Paola, Tarxien and Zabbar). This shows that an upgrade of such areas could decrease traffic impacts since inhabitants of particular areas could be tempted to visit the nearest regional centre as opposed to travelling across the island towards the open countryside.

- 5.5.12 As for hunting and trapping, a number of bird habitats have been afforded protection under the Development Planning Act (Cap. 356) whilst the existing Structure Plan also provides for the protection of birds habitats or areas of ornithological interest (Policy RCO 11:4 and RCO 13). The identification of important coastal bird habitats has also been completed as part of the Coastal Zone Management Subject Plan. Moreover, the Planning Authority has also afforded protection to all saline marshlands, coastal wetlands, coastal cliffs, several valleys, sand dunes, clay slopes, rocky shores, garigue areas, woodland areas and trees through the scheduling process.
- 5.5.13 The main contention of hunting and trapping is this pastime's potential conflicts with other hobbies, sports or leisure activities such as walking, picnics, cycling and horse riding. Moreover, hunting and trapping effectively preclude multi use of much rural land or at least the use of part of the countryside for informal recreation. It should be pointed out that for ease of analytical convenience, issues relating to footpaths, heritage trails, trekking lanes and picnic areas are however being discussed in the Rural Strategy Topic Paper. This is being done in view of the land use implications of the above activities which are best tackled as part of the countryside strategies.
- 5.5.14 The increasing popularity of hunting and trapping can undoubtedly also lead to problems since the domestic regulations published under the Environment Protection Act (Cap.348) are not in line with the obligations of the EU's Directive for the Protection of Birds. The National Programme for the Adoption of the *Acquis* (NPAA) states that the main divergences concern some bird species that are protected under the EU Directive and which are either not covered in Malta or can be hunted outside open seasons established by the EU Directive. In this light, the NPAA reveals that the areas which the local present regulations do not fully cover include:
- Provisions to be able to control the introduction of species
 - Protection of the habitat of birds, which are subject of special conservation measures
 - Conditions for the taking of birds which can only be taken in member states, and of birds which can be sold, conditions for the transport for sale, keeping for sale and the offering for sale of live

or dead birds and any readily recognizable part or derivatives of such birds.

5.5.15 Impacts emanating from informal recreational activities vary. Walks are not necessarily limited to a country environment as they could take place within an urban setting, a case in point being heritage trails. Hikes and picnics on the other hand mainly take place in the open countryside, with minimal land use impacts due to the reversibility element associated with each of these activities. Bird watching and nature appreciation are low impact, small scale informal activities that however require minimal interference from other recreational activities. Similar to walking, hiking and picnicking, the enjoyment of these pastimes depends highly on the quality of the surrounding environment. Country drives on the other hand generate more impacts, due to vehicular movements and parking manoeuvres that at times degrade the immediate environment (such as garigue) close to established country lanes. None of these activities however require a built infrastructure.

5.5.16 Urban, non-residential quarters are appropriate areas to locate stables for horse riding purposes, due to the lower impacts in view of other established land uses in the vicinity. Such areas are however many a time not located close to the popular horse riding itineraries, and might therefore create some logistical problems. Moreover, improvised stables within residential areas often constitute bad neighbourliness due to odours and the generation of vermin. Stables outside scheme on the other hand add to the urban sprawl, unless they make use of dilapidated sites or other disused buildings (in non-sensitive areas) in need of rehabilitation. Moreover, it should also be stated that a number of paddocks (which are on the increase) generate negative impacts since they alter the natural landscape.

5.5.17 A matrix highlighting the main impacts of countryside recreation has been included in the Rural Strategy Topic Paper.

5.6 Provision, Distribution and Trends: Catering Establishments

5.6.1 Over the years, the overall experience of shoppers and leisure seekers has been enhanced by the opening of varied catering establishments such as cafes, wine bars, bistros or specialised restaurants. There are currently 905 licensed catering establishments in Malta and Gozo as at 1st January, 2001 (Source: HCEB, 2001). These provide 38,214 restaurant covers.

5.6.2 Map 3 shows the distribution pattern of catering facilities in Malta and Gozo. The majority of such facilities in Malta are concentrated around

the established tourist sites (Rabat, Valletta) and in the tourist resorts (Mellieha, Marsaxlokk, St Paul's Bay) along the coast. Catering facilities in predominantly residential areas like Attard, Mosta and Naxxar are indeed quite limited.

- 5.6.3 Furthermore, a closer examination of recreational facilities by local plan area (Maps 10-16) also shows that there is a substantial difference in the provision of catering establishments between the North Harbours and North West Local Plans on one side (that is two local plans where tourism is well developed) and the Malta South and Central Local Plans on the other.
- 5.6.4 As regards Gozo, locational patterns vary since catering establishments are located all over the island. Xlendi, Marsalforn and Victoria are by far the most popular areas for catering developments, offering a reasonable mix of restaurants, snack bars, speciality restaurants and take-aways. Establishments in Gozo's towns and villages are on the other hand smaller in number. They consist predominantly of restaurants that attract non-residents (i.e. not the passing trade as in the capital city and the established resorts).
- 5.6.5 It should be pointed out that the provision of varied establishments within the HCEB structure has land use implications depending on the type and locality of the establishment. HCEB's classification distinguishes between restaurants (1-4 class), speciality restaurants (1-3 class), snack bars (1-4 class) and take-aways. The HCEB Board currently only accepts applications for first class snack bars, first or second class restaurants or speciality restaurants in tourist localities such as Sliema, St Julian's, Mellieha, Qawra, Bugibba, St Paul's Bay, M'Scala, Victoria, Xlendi and M'Forn. In all other localities, applications for any category and any class of catering establishment will be considered for approval by the same Board.
- 5.6.6 It is calculated that around 60 per cent of the population (i.e. 231,000 locals) dine out in restaurants (once or more than once annually) whilst 109,300 visit bars for a drink (Planning Authority, 1997). A closer look at the Restaurants Survey shows that more Maltese frequent restaurants in the winter and shoulder months than their foreigners (61 per cent and 54 per cent as opposed to 39 per cent and 46 per cent respectively), with this trend inversed only in the summer months (55 per cent of restaurant goers are foreigners in Summer).
- 5.6.7 Besides, the Structure Plan Monitoring Report 1996-1997 indicated that practically all permits for catering establishments approved in these two years (total of 106) relate to sites that are within scheme, predominantly in town centres or areas close to the hub of commercial activity. The most popular localities as per permits issued regarding catering establishments are the existing tourist resorts (i.e. St Paul's

Bay and St Julian's). Such permits refer predominantly to extensions, tables/chairs and a change of use according to the Planning Authority's Use Class Order.

- 5.6.8 Additional catering facilities have been approved in other localities on the tourist map (Valletta, Rabat) and in established town centres (like Hamrun, Paola, Zejtun and San Gwann), according to the same Monitoring Report. The 18 permits for catering facilities in Gozo were on the other hand mainly located in popular areas like Xlendi and Marsalforn, although some permits have also been granted in less touristic areas like San Lawrenz, Gharb, Nadur and Xaghra.

5.7 Planning Context: Catering Establishments

- 5.7.1 The Policy and Design Guidelines 2000, Structure Plan policies (such as those on the built environment), the Use Classes Order, the document Access for All, Malta Tourism Authority strategies and Public Health Regulations form the basis of the Authority's existing development control mechanism relating to the processing of applications regarding catering establishments. Indeed, the existing planning framework permits catering developments in residential areas unless the development is deemed to have a deleterious impact (on existing or planned adjacent uses because of visual intrusion, noise, vibration, atmospheric pollution, unusually high traffic generation, unusual operating times), which would constitute bad neighbourliness.
- 5.7.2 The main negative impacts include the high generation of traffic and noise. Catering establishments can indeed also cause inconvenience to nearby residents, unless appropriate measures have been taken into account during planning and construction (e.g. parking, soundproofing). Some of these establishments provide live music, which may add to the noise generated by "dining out" activities. Besides, the concentration of such facilities in areas like Paceville and St Paul's Bay has led to traffic and parking problems in the area. The Planning Authority allows catering establishments in such areas to make a Commuted Parking Payment Scheme (CPPS) contribution in lieu of the parking provision normally required for such development. In the long term, the funds collected through this scheme will be used to develop public parking facilities for the area. In the interim however, the parking problem should not be allowed to escalate further since this might impinge on the attractiveness of such areas. Indeed, the results from the Restaurants Survey indicate that only 24 per cent of the respondents had their own parking facilities.
- 5.7.3 The CPPS was set up in 1994 for the local council areas of Sliema, St Julian's and Valletta/Floriana. The policy has since been reviewed,

and in recent years new CPPS zones have been established for the commercial centres of Mosta, Hamrun and St Paul's Bay.

- 5.7.4 In this context, it is interesting to note that 61 per cent of restaurateurs in the Planning Authority's Restaurants Survey indicated that they would not like to see new restaurant licenses being considered in their area, whilst 58 per cent of Public Attitudes Survey respondents were also against more bars and restaurants in their locality. The latter result was further analysed to identify any differences in opinion between respondents living in tourist areas and those living in areas where tourism activity was limited. It emerges that residents in popular tourist resorts such as Mellieha, St Paul's Bay and Sliema disagreed with the statement "there should be more bars and restaurants in my locality" (90, 88 and 86 per cent respectively) whilst only 22 per cent disagreed with such a statement in non-touristic localities like Cospicua.

5.8 Provision, Distribution and Trends: Attractions, Cultural and Entertainment Facilities

- 5.8.1 Cultural and entertainment attractions within this Topic Paper encompass recreational activities relating to nightclubs, theme/leisure parks, visitor attractions, theatres, cinemas, and/or museums in the Maltese Islands. Libraries are being tackled in the Social Facilities and Community Care Topic Paper, (Structure Plan Review). In this respect, the Tourism and Recreation Community Survey indicated that around 18 per cent of respondents frequented the theatre, mostly during the winter season, whilst around 33 per cent went to the cinema. Furthermore, 19 per cent of respondents expressed a view that they visit museums/historic sites (see also Table 2).

- 5.8.2 The main theatrical venues are located in Valletta/Floriana, although other productions are also regularly put up in village halls and other parish/civic centres. The Manoel Theatre is a gem in acoustic and architectural design whilst the Mediterranean Conference Centre predominantly caters for large productions and events. Other activities are also organised at the Catholic Institute in Floriana and at the MITP Theatre in Valletta. Gozo is also important in this respect, having two important theatres (La Stella, Leone) in Victoria that regularly put up opera and theatrical productions.

- 5.8.3 Around 67,000 locals enjoy and frequent theatrical productions, according to results emanating from the Tourism and Recreation Community Survey. The National Statistics Office (NSO) also shows that theatre attendances have increased by 23.6% between 1997 and 1999, and that comedy and musical attendances are the most popular theatre genres. The weighted average for theatre seat utilisation (for all

theatre genres) however decreased from 77.7% in 1997 to 75.6% in 1999. Moreover, total theatre income from box office receipts, grants, subsidies and other returns stood at Lm0.39 million in 1999.

- 5.8.4 The facilities available are however perceived to be inadequate as confirmed by the Public Attitude Survey which indicated that only 24 per cent of respondents agreed that there are sufficient entertainment facilities like theatres, halls and workshops for cultural events. Not surprisingly, respondents from Valletta and Rabat Gozo showed the highest percentage level of satisfaction with existing facilities at 30 per cent and 39 per cent agreement respectively. In this light, the holding of theatrical productions in existing venues and in those that just came on stream (such as at St James Cavalier in Valletta and at the Bay Street Complex in Paceville) can surely assist in providing added entertainment activity in different venues and areas.
- 5.8.5 The cinema and entertainment mecca is Paceville, although over the last years other cinema complexes have been developed in Fgura, Marsascala, Valletta, Hamrun and St. Paul's Bay. Furthermore, the Planning Authority has approved similar facilities in Mosta (still not built) and is processing another application at Hamrun; an application for a cinema complex at B'Kara has on the other hand been withdrawn in 1999.
- 5.8.5 It should be pointed out that the recent provision of modern facilities has enhanced interest in such venues, and this is indeed reflected in the increase in cinema goers over the past years. Feedback from the Planning Authority's Tourism and Recreation Community Survey shows that 125,500 Maltese nationals currently watch films in local cinemas. Other main enters could benefit by diversifying their entertainment offer and one could certainly mention Sliema in this context. Indeed, such a town has lost all its cinema venues to retail and commercial outlets.
- 5.8.7 Moreover, feedback from consultation meetings shows that various entities feel the need for well-planned leisure park/s. A number of small-scale leisure facilities are currently in operation, as shown hereunder. Other development applications that were submitted to the Planning Authority during the past few years, to include sites in Ta' Qali (catering park and Miniature Malta) Madliena (agro park) and Qawra (water park), have either been refused or withdrawn.
- 5.8.8 The provision of a permanent leisure park which groups a number of mechanised facilities is however lacking on the Island. The demand for such attractions is evident particularly when such facilities are set up during the summer months as these attract a high number of visitors. Development pressures in this regard are usually channelled yearly towards a site in Blata l-Bajda, which usually houses a relatively

small-scale, temporary leisure facility. Even smaller leisure attractions consisting of very basic facilities (predominantly bumper cars) are also set up in Marsalforn (Gozo) and Bugibba.

- 5.8.9 Other forms of leisure parks are located along the coast. Popeye Village in the limits of Mellieha was originally a film set which was eventually turned into a family amusement park. Mechanised facilities have however nowadays mushroomed as accretions alongside the original film set, and are equally if not more important than the film set in determining the viability of the whole project. A Splash and Fun park is on the other hand located at Bahar ic-Caghaq, with facilities including a number of water chutes besides dolphin and seal shows. The emphasis is however on entertainment as opposed to education.
- 5.8.10 Furthermore, theme parks require high visitor numbers to be economically feasible besides being very land intensive. The Rinella Movie Park, for instance, is a permanent visitor attraction which could be defined as a mini theme park. Lately, however, the park's management has encountered some difficulties due to visitation patterns that were lower than as indicated in the economic feasibility study. Subsequently, the movie park (excluding specific commercial outlets) has been closed to the general public. Locating theme parks is even more difficult than finding a suitable venue for leisure parks since a full scale theme park occupies a much larger footprint. A theme park with local historical/cultural overtones was proposed at Fort Ricasoli, yet to date the project seems to be stalled in view of its likely incompatibility with adjacent land uses.
- 5.8.11 As for museums and historical sites, the National Statistics Office advises that the most frequented places are the monuments and archaeological sites. In 1999, the former garnered 32.7% of all admissions while the archaeology and history museums catered for 25.9% of all admissions. It is also opportune to note that the development of visitor attractions has only recently seen some investment from the private sector. Although the Malta Experience has been in operation for quite sometime, the development of attractions like the Mdina Dungeons, Medieval Experience, Mdina Experience, Gozo Heritage and other similar developments have only been around for about a decade. Other private sector funded attractions on the Knights of St. John and on traditions/crafts in the Maltese Islands, amongst others, have also recently come on stream. Secondary museums and attractions, such as Ninu's Cave in Gozo, are on the other hand scattered around the Islands.
- 5.8.12 Practically every local council in the Maltese Islands has landmarks, religious/historic sites, museums and/or particular features which may be of interest to the non-local population. Indeed, there is a heavy

concentration of attractions in the historical areas around the Maltese Islands, with other primary or secondary attractions located practically all around the Islands due to Malta's rich historical, cultural and natural heritage.

- 5.8.13 Local councillors responding to the Planning Authority's Visitor Attractions Survey suggested that 56 per cent of Malta's visitor attractions are never overcrowded. Particular attractions were perceived as "frequently" or "sometimes" overcrowded mainly in weekends (16 per cent and 13 per cent respectively) and in Spring/Summer (13 per cent) as opposed to Autumn/Winter (12 per cent). Such data is similar to the trends established in the Open Spaces Survey as described earlier, yet more people visit attractions in mornings as opposed to gardens/playing fields that are visited predominantly in the afternoon and early evening. Moreover, visitation to attractions in Autumn/Winter is nearly equivalent to that in Spring/Summer whilst the gap between the two periods is more pronounced vis-à-vis visitation to playing fields/public gardens.
- 5.8.14 Feedback from the same survey indicates that visitor attractions are mainly managed by Central Government and the private sector, even if the various local councils do manage a number of smaller attractions within their council area. Although facilities are perceived as being "very well maintained" (37 per cent) and "reasonably maintained" (22 per cent) by local councillors, visitation to the various churches (excluding religious functions) and other attractions is still reasonably low. Indeed, 29 per cent of local councillors believe that particular attractions are visited by 1-10 visitors on a daily basis, whilst only 18 per cent of Malta's attractions attract 101 visitors and over daily. It is the latter sites that create the main land-use problems, consisting of traffic congestion (11 per cent), parking problems (17 per cent), a dirty environment (6 per cent) and hostility with locals (7 per cent).
- 5.8.15 Local Councils however do believe in improving the quality of attractions in the Maltese Islands since 51 per cent highlighted plans to increase the provision of attractions within their council area. It emerges that "Visitor Attractions Survey" respondents are very much aware of the potential of particular sites and would like to provide facilities for the enjoyment of locals and tourists alike. Such sites include potential Transport and Traditional Tools Museums in B'Kara (Gnien l-Istazzjon) and St. Venera (Centru Hidma Socjali) respectively, Paleo Christian Catacombs and a war shelter in Kirkop and Nadur (respectively). When asked "what are the main constraints that hinder your efforts to improve the visitor attractions in your locality?", local councillors replied that the management of attractions does not fall within the Councils' responsibility (53 per cent), although budgetary constraints (32 per cent) also featured highly.

- 5.8.16 Most of the entertainment/nightclub establishments are concentrated in Paceville and Bugibba, although others have been opened in localities such as Rabat (Malta), M'Scala and Xlendi. 53 per cent of Public Attitudes Survey respondents agreed with the statement "there should be more places like Paceville, Marsascala and Bugibba", with the level of agreement decreasing progressively with age.
- 5.8.17 It is calculated that 48,400 Maltese youngsters seek discos and nightclubs for entertainment purposes (Planning Authority, 1997). This figure excludes tourists that frequent such places of entertainment. Moreover, the Planning Authority's Household Travel Survey (undertaken on Wednesday 25th November 1998) shows that 5.8 per cent of locals seek entertainment venues on weekdays. Such a figure increases substantially in weekends and during the summer months.
- 5.8.18 A popular disco operating in Bugibba during the late eighties/early nineties has now been closed, alongside other smaller nightclubs in the same locality. Most of the modern nightspots are nowadays relatively small (especially when compared to the discos concept as perceived in the 1980's) and can be classified as clubs offering a mix between dance space, sitting and/or standing space and bars. Indeed, it is fairly uncommon for an enterprise where the emphasis is on music not to provide at least a small "dance floor".
- 5.8.19 The other growing trend, over the last five years or so, has been the use of outdoor and indoor venues for large one off parties with the participation of well known local and international DJ's. Such parties usually take place over the summer months in a variety of locations that include sandy beaches (like Paradise Bay), large open spaces (such as Marsa, Ta' Qali) and/or in proximity of identifiable landmarks and nodes.
- 5.8.20 As for entertainment, the newly opened Bay Street Family Entertainment Complex in Paceville is a popular rendezvous, whilst the Eden Leisure Group intend developing a number of new outlets like an ice rink, a disco ice-skating zone and a large health/fitness club over the next few months, alongside the established cinema complex, bowling alley and IMAX giant-screen 3-D cinema. Whilst one would consider such developments in other entertainment areas like Sliema, Bugibba and Marsascala, the location of such establishments needs to be carefully identified and certainly would not be acceptable in the heart of residential areas.

5.9 Planning Context: Attractions, Cultural and Entertainment Facilities

- 5.9.1 The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP, 1999) highlights the fact that cultural heritage is an expression of an identity and is of worldwide importance. It is also part of the everyday environment of numerous people and enriches their quality of life. ESDP stresses the importance of spreading cultural life by developing cultural facilities, upgrading existing public nodes, reviving commemorative sites and implementing a sustainable scenario that enables decision makers to pass on the existing cultural heritage to future generations. In this respect, cultural development can play a role of social and spatial balance due to its importance for the local community, whilst also being an essential precondition for the development of tourism.
- 5.9.2 The notions raised by the ESDP are also relevant from a Maltese perspective since cultural heritage, local community participation and tourism are interrelated. This is confirmed by the fact that within the framework for attractions as delineated in Table 1, tourism is often treated as beneficial and as an opportunity. In the Maltese context, tourism often offers a lifeline for facilities within the “special events” and “purposely built for tourists” categories. Man made structures not purposely built as an attraction also stand to gain from tourism (both domestic and international) activity, especially historic sites and monuments that normally require considerable funds for restoration and rehabilitation purposes.
- 5.9.3 Visitation to the latter sites and those within the “natural” category are however sometimes also perceived as a problem and threat, with the emphasis being on visitor management to cope with the problems caused by the guests. The main concerns refer to environmental impacts such as erosion and pollution brought about by continuous recreational activity around local beaches and rock faces (amongst other natural features) together with the negative effects on the original purpose of the site or building (as is religious worship in Maltese churches and cathedrals).
- 5.9.4 As for entertainment venues, significant traffic movements occur on Saturday evenings (besides on Sunday afternoons, towards the countryside, as highlighted in Section 5.5). In this regard, respondents of the Planning Authority’s Household Travel Survey were asked whether they used their car on a particular Saturday evening (between 7.30pm and 10.30pm), how many passengers were with the driver and which locality did they visit.

- 5.9.5 It emerges that inter island movements take place on Saturday evenings, predominantly towards established entertainment areas like St Julian's, Sliema, St Paul's Bay and M'Scala. Traffic towards St Julian's is considerable from all directions, since a factored analysis of the above mentioned survey shows that the locality is visited by over 350 residents (in each of the following sample localities) from San Gwann, Sliema and Gzira (neighbouring councils), B'Bugia, Tarxien, Zabbar and Zejtun (in the South), Attard, Naxxar, Rabat and B'Kara (Central/Northern Malta).
- 5.9.6 Visitation to Sliema, St. Paul's Bay and M'Scala is not too widespread as in St Julian's; indeed, the former two localities mainly attract residents of Central Malta and neighbouring councils (like B'Kara, San Gwann, Mosta and Attard vis-à-vis Sliema, and Qormi, B'Kara, Gzira, Naxxar regarding St Paul's Bay). Over 350 residents of Fgura (in the South) however also visit Sliema, whilst nearly 500 residents of Mellieha (in the North) travel to St Paul's Bay on a Saturday evening. As regards M'Scala, movements are even more regional since it is mainly residents from neighbouring councils like Zejtun, Zabbar, Fgura and B'Bugia that visit this southern entertainment area.
- 5.9.7 Furthermore, development pressures for leisure and theme parks are consistent, yet such attractions take up a lot of land (sometimes outside development zones), can be visually intrusive, create noise and attract considerable traffic. Cinemas and nightclubs have also prospered in the last two decades. Understandably, discos and music clubs tend to be associated with noise and are therefore objected to by residents. Problems of noise however do not always stem from the disco/club, since adequate soundproofing would reduce the noise level, but from its clients and the level of activity such establishments generate.
- 5.9.8 Parking problems, traffic congestion, hostility with locals and excessive level of activity are on the other hand the main impacts generated by theatres, although such impacts vary widely depending on the site and context within particular locations.

6. Sports Activities in the Maltese Islands

6.1 Provision, Distribution and Trends: Land-Based Sports

6.1.1 Participation in sports activities has increased over the recent years. With the increase in population and its becoming health conscious, there is every likelihood that the demand for the provision of sports facilities in the future is also likely to increase. In line with such a perspective, the Secretariat for Sports within the Ministry of Education is pursuing the following goals as part of its strategy for the development of sports in the Maltese Islands:

- to improve the existing sports education programmes
- to introduce sports legislation
- to strengthen the existing sports structures and bodies
- to further develop the available sports facilities
- to improve participation in sports at all levels

6.1.2 Table 6 ranks the most popular sports activities on the Maltese Islands; the ranking is based on the number of participants engaged in these activities. Football tops the list of sports practised followed by other important sporting activities that include basketball, volleyball, tennis and cue sports. In addition to such popular sports there are also a number of sports which have a smaller following but nonetheless are becoming quite popular and need specific facilities. Such sports include off roading, indoor sports and athletics.

6.1.3 It should be pointed out that the provision of sports facilities can be at national, regional or local level (see also Appendix G). Certain sports facilities should be limited to the national level, that is a concentration of facilities in one or two localities that serve the whole of the Islands. These may include the provision of facilities for athletics, horseracing, national swimming pool, etc. Provision of sports facilities at a regional level would entail serving regional catchments whilst provision at the local level might necessitate facilities in the various towns and villages for example, bowl/bocci pitches, training football pitches, sports clubs, like table tennis and darts. Regional facilities are likely to include national league football pitches, waterpolo pitches, sports complexes.

6.1.4 Maps 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 focus specifically on indoor, outdoor and nautical sports facilities, being one aspect of recreation where demand for new facilities, but also land take up, are quite high. The first Map indicates the geographical distribution and existing footprints committed for the use of public sports facilities in the Maltese Islands, whilst Map 5 relates to the non-state school facilities. Maps 6 and 7 on the other

hand show the location of outdoor and indoor sports facilities in state schools, whilst Map 8 indicates the school population by local council and local plan area.

- 6.1.5 From a strategic perspective, Map 4 clearly shows that current public sports facilities in Malta are focused around the North and Inner Harbours together with surrounding areas, whilst facilities in Gozo are located in the central area near Xewkija and Victoria. It emerges that sports facilities in Corradino, Pembroke and Marsa, all located in or relatively close to the harbours area, occupy relatively large sites. The nature of sports facilities available in these three areas however differs. Corradino, for example, is popular primarily because of the existing all weather sports complex where clubs train and play competitive games, although the area also boasts of other facilities such as open air tennis courts and football grounds. Pembroke, on the other hand, hosts a number of sports clubs and facilities that are scattered around the whole town, whilst all types of open air sports are practiced at Marsa which is arguably the largest area hosting sports facilities around the Maltese Islands. The Planning Authority's Pembroke Action Plan lists the following sports clubs/facilities amongst those located in Pembroke: Luxol Sports Club (football, basketball etc), BMX Club (cycling), Island Radio Model Car Club (radio amateurs), Pembroke Tennis Club, Archery Association of Malta, Pembroke Athleta Sports Club (athletics), Malta Judo Federation, Melita Football Ground, Malta Tennis Federation, and Pembroke Scout Group.
- 6.1.6 Map 5 on the other hand shows that sports facilities in non-state schools are best established in the North Harbours and Central Local Plan areas, with hardly any facilities provided in the Gozo, Malta South and M'Xlokk Bay Local Plan areas. Maps 6 and 7 also show that the distribution pattern (and range/variety of sports facilities) of outdoor and indoor sports facilities in Government schools is better spread than those already available to the general public. This is due to the fact that schools are located in most towns/villages, as opposed to public sports facilities which are built according to the potential catchment area.
- 6.1.7 The need for the adequate provision of sports and recreational facilities at the regional/district level was already raised in the existing Structure Plan. Demand is still high since 88 per cent of the Public Attitudes Survey respondents (conducted in June 1999) suggested that there should be more sports facilities (no distinction made between indoor/outdoor) in their respective localities. The implications of this approach vis-à-vis additional land take, however, need additional scrutiny since it might prove to be more cost effective, financially and physically, to have modern, well managed, multi-purpose facilities located centrally to serve the needs of the Maltese Islands rather than several regional or local facilities. It is indeed

generally acknowledged that all types of sports/recreational facilities can neither be provided, nor are they feasible, at a local level.

TABLE 6: POPULAR SPORTS ACTIVITIES IN THE MALTESE ISLANDS

SPORT	LOCATION	RANKING
Football	IND/OUT	1
Basketball	IND/OUT	2
Volleyball	IND/OUT	3
Tennis	IND/OUT	4
Cue Sports	INDOOR	5
Horseracing	OUTDOOR	6
Martial Arts	INDOOR	7
Motor Racing	OUTDOOR	8
Diving	OUTDOOR	9
Gymnastics	INDOOR	9 (joint)

Source: Planning Authority and Kunsill Malti Sport, 1999

- 6.1.8 The information contained in Table 6 presents only a partial overview of the popularity and hence pressures generated by the various sports activities. It does not embrace, for example, the pressures imposed by tourists on the existing facilities catering for sports activities like diving. This point was acknowledged by 45 per cent of the respondents to the Planning Authority's Sports Survey who indicated that tourists already participate in local sports activities throughout the year. This is in line with the Ministry of Tourism's drive to improve the tourist seasonality spread and confirms in part the possibility of organising sports events away from the peak summer months.
- 6.1.9 It would be opportune to analyse the results of Planning Authority surveys on leisure and recreation. Overall, respondents were not fully satisfied with the quality and standard of existing sports facilities in the Maltese Islands. The existing sports facilities at Corradino and Ta' Qali (ex. basketball court, football training grounds) are rarely accessible to the general public and the existing open spaces (mainly at Ta' Qali) are predominantly used for informal recreation. It should be pointed out however that the formal facilities at Corradino and Ta' Qali are not meant to be accessible to the general public for their informal pursuits. Other facilities in various localities, on the other hand, are either heavily booked outside normal working hours, shabby through lack of maintenance or else used for other activities.
- 6.1.10 The limited access and range of existing sports facilities undoubtedly influenced representatives of local clubs/associations when they affirmed that the overall sports facilities are quite amateurish. Indeed, 70 per cent of such respondents stated that they planned to carry out

improvements to the sports facilities utilised by their clubs, with existing facilities in Southern Malta identified as those needing the most urgent attention. Other localities where improvements to existing sports facilities are needed, according to the respondents of the Sports Survey, include Mellieha, St. Paul's Bay (North West), Vittoriosa (Grand Harbours), Ta' Xbiex (North Harbours), Balzan and Lija (Central). Facilities needing improvements include football and waterpolo pitches, athletics' facilities, volleyball courts and bowl (*bocci*) pitches.

- 6.1.11 The Tourism and Recreation Community Survey however also revealed that specific areas were popular with certain sports. Aerobics and fitness sports facilities are mainly located in the North West, North Harbours, Gozo and South Local Plan areas, athletics in Marsa, tennis in the Grand Harbour, North Harbours and Gozo Local Plan areas, diving in the North West, North Harbours and Gozo, with netball and squash in the Grand Harbour and central areas. The only major exception to this is football, which is played in almost all localities.
- 6.1.12 Moreover, around 15 per cent of respondents in the Sports Survey expressed the view that their sport could only be practiced at a distance from residential areas. As a corollary to this, it could be inferred from the survey that 85 per cent of respondents were mainly comfortable with the distribution of sports facilities in their areas. There also seems to be a continuous conflict between recreational activities, with certain sports clubs competing with others in order to make use of the limited facilities around the Maltese Islands. Clay pigeon shooting, for instance, might conflict with picnicking, camping or walking activities. Furthermore, members of clubs in disciplines such as basketball, volleyball, handball, martial arts or gymnastics also find difficulties to practice their favourite sport, due to time allocation constraints. Existing facilities cater for different sports and as a result the same area could be in demand by different practitioners at the same peak hours.
- 6.1.13 Approximately 50 per cent of respondents in the Sports Survey claimed that the practice of their sport (for competition purposes) is tied to a specific locality, that is just one site in the Maltese Islands where certain types of sports could be practiced. The list of sports falling under this heading included archery, hockey, auto racing and clay shooting. Although it is acknowledged that certain sports should be catered for at a national level, 62 per cent of respondents still felt that a number of regional/local facilities would prove more useful than having national facilities catering for all the sporting needs of the Maltese Islands. The feasibility of having a proliferation of facilities at regional/local level is, however, debatable.
- 6.1.14 The use of indoor sports facilities is also on the increase, although such activities are usually of a local nature (e.g. billiards, darts, etc.).

Gyms and fitness centres are also becoming increasingly popular, with various developments being approved around the Maltese Islands. These facilities have a wide catchment with a number of such facilities being provided even in the major hotels. The main land use concern is the provision of sufficient parking facilities since these gyms/fitness centres attract several users especially in the early evening, that is after working hours.

- 6.1.15 Over 50 per cent of respondents in the Sports Survey claimed that the existing facilities on offer could improve if the site occupied by existing sports facilities is administered and managed by their respective clubs, whilst 75 per cent suggested that the availability of additional grants/loans from Central Government may enable them to improve their facilities. The majority of respondents (around 60 per cent) in the Sports Survey envisaged that they will need additional land, mainly to provide better access and facilities (such as a car park), and to enlarge the existing club premises. As for parking, it is a prevailing culture in the Maltese Islands to be able to park private cars in close proximity to their destination, whether it is a sporting facility, cinema or theatre. In the circumstances, the availability of additional land is therefore mainly needed not to practice the sport itself but to increase the operational efficiency of the clubs. This, in turn, would contribute to improve the usage patterns of the current facilities.
- 6.1.16 Although there might be valid reasons for requesting additional land, the use of that land in the countryside for sports activities effectively means allowing the urban sprawl in areas that are outside development zones. This runs counter to existing valid policies that seek to encourage the efficient use of land and buildings, and consequently to channel urban development activity into existing and planned development areas, particularly through rehabilitation and upgrading of the existing fabric and infrastructure. Yet the provision of all types of sports facilities may not always be possible within the urban boundaries and some facilities might require space in rural areas. Certain major impact sports such as shooting ranges and go-kart racing are indeed not neighbour friendly since they generate substantial noise (see also Chapter 7).
- 6.1.17 Furthermore, Table 7 (i.e. number of facilities for main sporting activities in the Maltese Islands) ties in with Maps 5-7, Appendices H and I, and shows that there are several existing sports facilities in schools (state and non-state) that can complement those already available to the general public. These include football, bowls, basketball, tennis and volleyball facilities. Since such facilities in schools are spread around the Island, it would appear that most of the areas of “deficiency” in provision can be catered for by making such facilities available to the general public. Moreover, other sports activities such as handball, badminton, hockey, athletics and those undertaken in multi-use gymnasias/rooms are mainly available in state

and non-state schools, although the quality of provision of such facilities might not be up to standard and subsequently not be adequate for the practice of competition sports.

TABLE 7: NUMBER OF FACILITIES FOR MAIN SPORTING ACTIVITIES IN THE MALTESE ISLANDS

Sport Activity	Public Facilities	Facilities In State Schools		Facilities In Non-State Schools		Total
		IN	OUT	IN	OUT	
Archery	1	1				2
Athletics	1		13		6	20
Basketball	15	7	36		14	72
Bowl/Bocci	43		2			45
Football	89		51		15	155
Multi-use	5	13		22		40
Hockey	3		8			11
Horse racing	2					2
Motor Racing	2					2
Tennis	24		11		9	44
Volleyball	4	6	25		10	45
Waterpolo	11					11
Netball	1	1	36		3	41
Badminton		9				9
Handball		1	5		1	7

Source : Planning Authority, Education Department, Kunsill Malti Sport, 1999-2000

Notes:

1. The above list excludes commercially run facilities such as fitness centres, gyms and hotel facilities. Play areas and yards within schools are also not included.
2. IN= Indoor OUT=Outdoor
3. Multiuse refers to gym/hall/centre.

6.2 Planning Context: Land-Based Sports

6.2.1 Table 8 provides a detailed inventory of the land area occupied by sports facilities, by local plan area. It transpires that there is an area of 1,692,244 square metres devoted to public sports facilities in the Maltese Islands. The bulk of the facilities are concentrated in the Grand Harbours local plan area (781,410 square metres, or nearly 11 per cent of total land in the local plan area). It should be noted, however, that 85 per cent of these 781,410 square metres is occupied by the Marsa Sports Grounds and nearly 11 per cent by the Corradino sports facilities (666,568 and 82,734 square metres respectively), including sports facilities within Corradino's MCAST (San Guzepp

Boys state school). Public sports facilities, on the other hand, appear to be relatively better distributed in the Malta South, North Harbours, Central and Gozo local plan areas. The distribution of facilities in the M'Xlokk and North West local plan areas, however, reflect the pattern of concentration observed in the Grand Harbour area as 92 per cent and 76 per cent of the facilities in these areas are located at Hal Far and Ta' Qali respectively.

- 6.2.2 A further analysis of Table 8 also shows the areas committed for sports uses vis-à-vis gymnasia/fitness centres, outdoor and indoor facilities in state, non-state schools and tourist establishments. Such data is very important since it demonstrates the extent of provision of those existing sports facilities that are commercially run or part of school premises (i.e. not readily accessible to the general public after school hours).
- 6.2.3 It emerges that the provision of sports facilities within state, non-state schools, gymnasia and tourist establishments is considerable in the Central, North Harbours and North West local plan areas, whilst being also sizeable in the Grand Harbours, Malta South and Gozo local plan areas. Around 50 per cent of total sports facilities in the Central and North Harbours areas (i.e. 158,800 m² and 124,580 m² respectively) are currently located within schools (hence barely accessible to the general public) and to a lesser extent in tourist establishments. Provision is also extensive in the North West (approximately 45 per cent of total sports facilities), mainly due to the indoor and outdoor facilities in tourist establishments.
- 6.2.4 Other considerable footprints of sports facilities not accessible to the general public are also located within the Grand Harbours, Malta South and Gozo local plan areas. Indeed, around 59,000 m² of sports facilities are available within state schools located in the Malta South local plan, whilst facilities in Gozitan state schools and tourist establishments exceed 47,000 m². As for the Grand Harbours local plan area, facilities in state schools are complemented by others in non-state schools, yet the overall figure of 64,000 m² is still overshadowed by the considerable area dedicated to public sports facilities within this local plan area.
- 6.2.5 When comparing the above data to the population by local plan area, it emerges that five local plan areas have less than nine square metres of land per person committed to sports facilities, including facilities in state, non-state schools and commercially run centres. Only inhabitants of the Grand Harbours and M'Xlokk local plan areas have relatively higher average allocations per inhabitant (c. 27 and 15 square metres respectively). As stated earlier however, the above figures are high due to the concentration of facilities around the established sports facilities at Corradino, Marsa and Hal Far. Most of these facilities are however primarily available for established athletes,

since competition sports are practiced in these localities. If such facilities were put aside, the level of provision in both local plans would be similar to that of the other five local plan areas.

- 6.2.6 At the other end of the spectrum, one finds that four or less square metres per inhabitant is currently devoted to sports facilities in the Malta South, North Harbours and Central local plan areas, whilst North West and Gozo inhabitants have around eight square metres of sports facilities per inhabitant. Moreover, the percentage of total land in the North West, Gozo and Malta South local plan areas allocated to sports is lower than the national average of 0.7 per cent, whilst the equivalent percentage in the Marsaxlokk Bay and Central local plan areas is in the region of 1 per cent.
- 6.2.7 Such a low percentage may be having negative repercussions on the quality of life of inhabitants within popular residential areas (in the above local plans), especially since other forms of open spaces/leisure facilities in urban areas (other than sports) are also limited. The extent and type of provision of sports facilities is examined at a later stage within this study, yet the above analysis implies that any new planned sports facilities should be easily accessible to those residents in localities that are continuously growing due to internal migration.
- 6.2.8 It is apparent that the overall recreational provision can be significantly improved by making appropriate use of sports facilities available in schools. In this respect, Appendices H and I tie in with the data shown in Maps 5-8 since all these give a detailed summary of facilities in state and non-state schools whilst highlighting the school population by local council and local plan area. Table 8 and Appendix I show that indoor and outdoor sports facilities in non-state schools exceed 118,000 m² and are especially conspicuous in the North Harbours and Central areas, that is those local plans where housing demand (and hence the quest for recreational facilities) is considerable. Although some of these facilities are available against payment, it would be opportune to point out that many such facilities are still inaccessible to the general public. Moreover, the last column in Appendix H also shows that the general public is in principle barred from making use of most of the sports facilities within state schools since access is hardly available after school hours.

TABLE 8: SPORTS FACILITIES BY LOCAL PLAN AREA

Local plan (lp)	Public Facilities	Outdoor facilities in state schools	Indoor facilities in state schools	Indoor & Outdoor Facilities In Non-state Schools	Facilities In Gymnasias/ Fitness Centres	Indoor & Outdoor Facilities In Tourist Establish	Total Sports Facilities	Population	Sports Facilities Per Inhabitant	Per cent of Total Land Allocated To Sports
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 (Total 1-6)	8	9 (7/8)	10 (7 as per cent of lp area)
	m ²	m ²	m ²	m ²	m ²	m ²	m ²	No.	m ²	per cent
M'xlokk Bay	138,910	8,853	719	/	/	/	148,482	10,164	14.6	1
North West	194,189	17,628	1,475	21,922	100	45,370	280,684	32,382	8.7	0.2
Grand Harb.	781,410	45,457	485	18,330	200	1,000	846,882	30,802	27.5	10.8
North Harb.	133,404	58,567	1,107	30,902	375	33,625	257,980	62,056	4.2	1.8
Gozo	174,840	27,711	1,709	6,763	100	18,125	229,248	29,026	7.9	0.3
Malta South	149,812	56,043	2,991	1,776	1150	3,500	215,272	110,413	1.9	0.4
Central	119,679	103,963	8,157	38,744	975	6,935	278,453	103,289	2.7	0.8
TOTAL	1,692,244	318,222	16,643	118,437	2,900	108,555	2,257,00	378,132	6	0.7

Source: Planning Authority, 2001

Note: Footprint areas listed in Table 8 exclude facilities like public gardens, playing fields and open spaces that are included in Map 2 and Appendix E

6.3 Provision, Distribution and Trends: Nautical Sports and Coastal Activity

- 6.3.1 The Tourism and Recreation Community Survey indicated that the provision of watersport facilities has seen a considerable increase over the last few years. The survey revealed, for instance, that 11 per cent of the local population now own a boat in the Maltese Islands. Nautical recreational activities such as water sports, diving and sailing which are popular with the local population can also serve as an interesting niche vis-à-vis tourism development.
- 6.3.2 Water sports encompass a variety of seasonal activities, such as windsurfing, dinghy sailing, canoeing and water-skiing, which do not require a port infrastructure. These activities are usually part and parcel of a resort type of holiday with materials used more or less globally standardized. They generate predominantly seasonal employment and are generally smokeless and quite safe. The only exceptions might be motorized activities like jet-skis and water skiing, for which specific zones through the utilization of buoys are usually set aside depending on noise and safety issues.
- 6.3.3 Water sports have a young, dynamic and positive image and are in principle relatively environmentally friendly activities. Opportunities depend primarily on the existing conditions such as climate, regular and strong enough winds (for windsurfing). Places where these conditions are not fully met might find difficulties in attracting specific niches such as surfing and funboards. The drawbacks mainly relate to the fact that these sports generate conflicts with bathers and fishermen regarding the use of beach areas, possibly also resulting in the overcrowding of nautical sites.
- 6.3.4 Another aspect with regards to watersports is the hiring of seacraft and umbrellas. Bathers visiting Ghadira and Ghajn Tuffieha have experienced such a problem since seacraft and umbrellas occupy beach space which is very scarce. The problem is further compounded by the presence of other permanent structures (such as kiosks) that occupy precious land. In this perspective, a rationalisation of spaces could also “vacate” areas for different beach facilities such as showers and toilets. Indeed, only 15 per cent of respondents in the 1999 Public Attitudes Survey believed that there are currently adequate facilities on major local beaches, practically the same percentage as in the previous Public Attitudes Survey held in 1991. This shows that hardly any improvements have been registered in the interim period since dissatisfaction is constantly high.
- 6.3.5 A diving destination, on the other hand, can attract thousands of divers and several accompanying persons. Diving is an attractive economic activity which creates employment opportunities and is not particularly tied to any specific months, an ideal niche indeed when seeking to extend the country’s tourist seasonality spread. The National Tourism Organisation-Malta in the late 1990’s carried out a survey and concluded that around 35,000 divers and 20,000 accompanying persons visit Malta yearly, that is 4 per cent of

the overall inbound tourism market. A diving “package” holiday, to include flights, currently costs between \$600 and \$3,000 (Duchene P., 1998).

6.3.6 There are two main forms of diving:

- scuba diving, that is underwater exploration at depths of up to 40-45 metres in the case of amateur diving. Additional interrelated activities could take place, to include underwater photography and archaeology.
- snorkelling, harpooning and diving in relatively shallow waters.

6.3.7 The conditions highlighted by Duchene (1998) for developing the diving market should also be specified as they are indeed also valid from a Maltese perspective:

- Quality and well managed underwater environments, well preserved flora and fauna, and interesting wrecks and reefs, amongst other characteristics. One of the major challenges is the conservation and protection of the underwater environment, which is sensitive to all sorts of assaults such as chemical and biological pollution, the introduction of foreign species and the looting of resources.
- Good weather conditions and acceptable water temperatures. It should be remembered that most scuba divers live in fairly cold regions.
- Specific diving infrastructures, that is dive centres providing all the equipment, accessories and qualified instructors/supervisors.
- An interesting tourism environment and varied leisure activities for non divers such as accompanying persons.
- Suitable accommodation and services.

6.3.8 A subject study offering detailed guidance on the provision of yacht marinas has also been finalised. Sailing, also known as pleasure cruising, is a leisure activity and sport of Anglo-Saxon origin which is defined as “all the tourism and leisure activities for which a boat is the main requirement, a boat big enough to warrant use of a port or marina” (Duchene, 1998). It involves various types of boats, sailing boats and motor launches of different sizes, ranging from four metre boats for fishing to fifty metre superyachts costing over \$100 million (Lm 44.5 million).

6.3.9 The Yachting Development Subject Study, commissioned by the Malta Maritime Authority and the Planning Authority, calculates that there are an estimated 176,000 berths in over 350 Mediterranean marinas with the largest concentration at the western end of France and Spain (around 85 per cent of overall berth supply). The eastern Mediterranean (such as Greece and Turkey) has fewer formal marina berths but is a popular cruising ground for summer visitors using informal moorings and anchorages. In this respect, the movement of boats migrating from the west to the east Mediterranean for the summer months before returning to their home base presents Malta with the opportunity to attract stopover traffic en route.

6.3.10 Sailing involves the following activities:

- resident sailing, that is private boats which are kept in Malta's marinas for a number of months. These boats may be owned by the local population (which owns boats and keeps them in the locations most suited for sailing and closest to their permanent and/or temporary homes) and/or foreign residents (who live permanently on the boat or who buy property or regularly come on holiday, buy boats and keep them in the island, being the holiday country).

6.3.11 A resident sailing fleet in an island state like Malta is conditioned by several factors, namely:

- the size of the national population, its level of wealth, seafaring tradition and interest in sailing.
- the specific appeal of the island.
- the development of national and international tourism. In particular, sailing is a factor which will sustain residential tourism in view of the mutual interactions (villa buyers are future boat buyers whilst boat lovers are future home buyers in pleasant localities).
- the tax and regulatory environment
- international sailing, that is national or international sailing boats berthing for a relatively short period of time in Malta's marinas. Accommodating such yachts appears to be an important activity in some Mediterranean destinations; indeed, Malta here competes with other destinations since the islands' tourism appeal, port facilities, natural and coastal characteristics are what differentiate the various islands and ports when it comes to choosing stopover points.

6.3.12 Malta is an established hub destination between source ports and cruise areas. The existing maximum berth capacity, according to the Malta Maritime Authority's 1999-2000 Annual Report, is 1,077. Berthing facilities in Malta are located in central Malta, that is Msida, Lazzaretto Quay, Ta' Xbiex, Pieta', Sliema, and Whitehall Quay (the latter two used in summer only), whilst in Gozo they are provided around the Mgarr Marina. Other berthing facilities provided by the public sector at St. Julian's (as part of the Hilton Hotel project) and Vittoriosa (as part of the Cottonera project) are not included in the above figure.

6.3.13 In ports (like Malta) providing facilities and services for visiting international yachts, the economic spin-offs are considerable. Expenditure per boat varies considerably depending on the size and the cost of the boat, besides the profile of the crew. It should be stated however that crew members are all consumers and that they all spend money in restaurants, bars, casinos, food and various supplies, amongst others. Conversely, islands with few or no facilities, with natural anchorages and hardly any modern port facilities to offer, may not gain any profit from calling yachts.

- charter activities, with or without skipper/crew (the latter appealing predominantly to clients with experience of sailing), or simply renting a cabin on a yacht for a holiday cruise. This niche includes offshore day

trips with/without BBQ, relatively long-term charters for trips to other destinations/countries, chartering boats for match racing, excursions in glass-bottomed boats/tourist submarines, fishing trips on local fishing boats and sailing schools for children and/or tourists. It however does not include diving and water sports (such as dinghy sailing, windsurfing, surfing and jet-ski) that are conducted from the beach or the coast and which hardly require port facilities.

- 6.3.14 Demand in international circles is developing for both charter boats with or without skipper/crews; indeed, yacht chartering companies nowadays also administer and hire out boats owned by individuals, apart from the company owned vessels. The main appeal of these excursions is that they enhance an island's potential leisure activities whilst being compatible with the historic and natural context of the host country. Such an activity appeals to well-off clientele who are quite likely to be interested in the country's cultural attributes. For yachtsmen, chartering a boat enables them to visit sailing areas and is, in the long run, cheaper than buying a boat outright.
- 6.3.15 The concept of charter excursions is not yet well developed locally, since the private sector mainly offers harbour cruises or day trips to Comino and perhaps Gozo. This sector however has a great potential locally since charter companies can either offer charter activities around the Maltese Islands or else market the hubbing concept, that is charter operations around the Mediterranean with Malta as the port of departure. Economic spin-offs are considerable since boats acquire their supplies at the port of departure whilst clients spend money at the same port of departure and in the other ports of call. Furthermore, charter activity generates local employment in the form of boat crews, transport, upkeep and repairs, amongst others.
- 6.3.16 It is opportune to point out that sailing is a popular sport and that the Malta Sailing Federation (which incorporates several clubs) is affiliated to the Malta Olympic Committee and registered with the Malta Sports Council. A number of yachting competitions are organized around the calendar year, amongst them the high-profile Middle Sea Race which attracts yachts from over Europe. Other competitions include the traditional yet highly popular regatta races, whereby towns and cities located around the Grand Harbour vie against each other for the coveted trophy

6.4 Planning Context: Nautical Sports and Coastal Activity

- 6.4.1 Although activities such as sailing, water sports and diving largely take place at sea, some of the ancillary facilities to support them need land based amenities. These might include hard standing facilities, training premises, clubs, storage, club offices and yacht marinas (that might necessitate a change in the coastal configuration) to berth the various boats.

- 6.4.2 As for beach facilities, boathouses and beach concessions, Map 9 shows that such facilities are mainly provided close to the established tourist resorts and bathing areas in both Malta and Gozo. Beach concessions at times contribute to visual pollution although the main concern relates to their location directly on the foreshore. Policy REC 9 of the current Structure Plan advocates the demolition of illegal structures on coastlines or adjacent areas, in view of their unsightly and frequently unsanitary condition. Indeed, the general public nowadays seems to support such a stance since only 43 per cent of the 1999 Public Attitudes Survey respondents believe that existing illegal boathouses should be granted permits.
- 6.4.3 The Planning Authority's Sports Survey also indicated that various other watersport clubs (relating to sports such as sailing, canoeing and windsurfing) require premises rather than facilities to practice their preferred sport. Such premises are required primarily to serve as the club's offices and for the storage of sea-related equipment. The development of such premises however pose a potential problem since most clubs have expressed the desire for their premises to be located on what constitutes the foreshore due to the nature of their preferred sport. However, the relevant policies in the Structure Plan relating to Coastal Zone Management would in principle rule out built development along the foreshore since such policies are aimed to encourage public access around the coastline immediately adjacent to the sea.
- 6.4.4 Furthermore, the main concern from a land-use perspective regarding the construction of waterpolo pitches is that such development may alter the coastal configuration. Overall, waterpolo pools require an area of 75m by 50m, and some local clubs (like Sirens, Ta' Xbiex and Birzebbugia) have over the years expressed a desire to improve their existing facilities and build a well managed and possibly all weather pool. Such development may however involve costly studies besides conflicting with certain coastal policies. Indeed, local clubs may not be in a position to fund such studies and to carry out the improvements themselves.
- 6.4.5 As for diving, snorkellers are mainly local residents, although harpooning is also a favourite past-time of a number of foreigners. Scuba divers, on the other hand, are attracted to destinations and products specifically geared to divers, and require a much greater logistical back-up (such as boats, compressors and security measures) than snorkellers. Appropriate access to particular diving sites is also important; this implies that rails and platforms (amongst other facilities) might be needed on the foreshore, even though no interventions are normally permitted in such areas.
- 6.4.6 Within the context highlighted in Section 6.3, it is also opportune to note that the Yachting Development Subject Study concludes that Malta is geographically well placed and has the right social environment to attract summer yachtsmen, yacht charters, unattended wintering yachts, live aboards and superyachts. The land-use implications and impacts associated with the growth of sailing as a sport and leisure sector however need to be examined further, and will thus be included in Chapter 7 (which highlights the principle issues for the Structure Plan Review).

6.5 Estimate of Demand for Land and Nautical Sports

- 6.5.1 Since no previous studies on sports participation have been carried out, it is difficult to accurately forecast the future participation in sports of the local population. The future is however likely to see an even greater participation in sports activities with the increased availability of leisure time, due partly to current trends of shorter working weeks. The increase in disposable income and the desire of tourists to participate in these activities might be other factors contributing to greater participation in sports (see also Chapter 3 on the determinants of recreational demand).
- 6.5.2 The Tourism and Recreation Community Survey identified around 65,000 sports practitioners in the Maltese Islands, yet such a figure was limited to adults aged 15+ and thus excluded school children. Since the school population is quite active in sports, it was calculated that the overall figure for sports practitioners in the Maltese Islands (in 1998) should be in the region of 84,000, inclusive of all age groups.
- 6.5.3 In this respect, the National Council for Sports (*Kunsill Malti Sport: KMS*) was contacted to verify the Planning Authority's 1998 figures regarding sports practitioners per discipline. The Council provided the Planning Authority with estimates (made by experts in various fields commissioned by the KMS) on the future demand per discipline in the years 2010 and 2020 whilst recommending that certain figures in the Planning Authority's 1998 estimates should also be slightly adjusted. Where possible, various sports associations were also contacted to verify the validity of such figures, and indeed, numbers were in some cases adjusted according to the feedback received.
- 6.5.4 As a result, Table 9 attempts to give an estimate on the likely participation in the various sports during the plan period. It should be stressed that all figures (even those provided by the Council) are estimates in view of the complete absence of comparative data on recreation. All figures are inclusive of schoolchildren.
- 6.5.5 Table 9 shows that around 22 per cent of the Maltese Islands' population, which according to the Census '95 figure is just over 378,000, were actively involved in the practice of sports in 1998 (the figure in the year 2000 rises to 22.6 per cent assuming a population of 380,000). Participation in sports is however also likely to increase during the Structure Plan period. The number of sports practitioners will increase to 94,500 and 98,850 by the years 2010 and 2020, that is 22.8 per cent of the future population in each case (which according to the Planning Authority's population projections are estimated at 414,000 and 434,000 in the respective years). Although sports practitioners are expected to increase by 13,000 over a 20 year period, the percentage increase in practitioners from 2000 to 2020 is only marginal (i.e. 0.2 per cent) due to the considerable projected growth (i.e. around 54,000) in population. Furthermore, Table 9 also indicates that there will be zero growth rate in practitioners from 2010 to 2020.

- 6.5.6 It should be pointed out that the current Maltese participation pattern in sports (that is 22.6 per cent) is however not as widely diffused as, for example, in the United Kingdom, where the percentage of men and women who participated in at least one sporting activity, excluding walking, was in the region of 46 per cent (General Household Survey, 1996). Moreover, trends highlighted in the book “Outdoor Recreation and the Urban Environment” (Williams S., 1995) actually shows that British leisure seekers place more emphasis on disciplines like fitness, swimming, cue sports and cycling.
- 6.5.7 Local practitioners on the other hand indicate football as the most popular sport in the Maltese Islands. Around 40,000 inhabitants from a wide cross-section of age groups currently practice the game, with such a figure projected to increase to around 45,000 by the year 2020. Such a sport is not only popular with children who practice the game during school hours but also with adults who usually opt for late afternoon or early evening games or training sessions, especially in view of the recent increase in commercial floodlit facilities.
- 6.5.8 Basketball and volleyball are two other popular sports. The 2000 estimates of participants in these two sports disciplines averaged around 6,000 and 5,300 respectively, or 7 per cent and 6 per cent of the overall sports practitioners, with such figures including a considerable number of secondary school children (especially females for volleyball and males for basketball) practising their favourite sport in physical education lessons or during break. The number of volleyball and basketball practitioners after school or working hours however decreases considerably.
- 6.5.9 Tennis, horseracing and cue sports are also quite popular in the Maltese Islands. Whilst hardly any physical impacts can be associated with the latter sport, being a small scale indoor sport, the same cannot be said of the other two sports, since both occupy relatively large tracts of land. It should however be pointed out that Table 9 suggests that tennis practitioners will practically remain around 4,500 over the Structure Plan period; as for horseracing, demand is unlikely to exceed 3,000 persons by the year 2020.
- 6.5.10 Motor racing, shooting ranges and athletics on the other hand occupy relatively large tracts of land with the former two being classified as a major impact sport. All three are expected to increase in popularity (possibly around 2,000 practitioners for motor racing and athletics and 1,500 for shooting in ranges by the year 2020), with the result that existing facilities will need to be upgraded and in certain instances increased to meet future demand.
- 6.5.11 Concern has often been expressed over the location of certain motorsports in sensitive areas. Specific localities however need to be identified to allow for the practice of such sports which do not result in any significant adverse impacts (environmental and noise, amongst other impacts) in the particular area. The practice of major impact sports at Hal Far, for instance, is well

established and should indeed be encouraged due to its relative distance from other competing uses. Indeed, the Malta Drag Racing Association (re-quarter mile racing) and the Island Karting Club (re-go karting) are both being granted legal title for land at Hal Far. A karting facility is also run commercially at Ta` Qali. Motor sport activities elsewhere have however been a cause for concern in view of the fragile ecosystems associated with certain areas (ex. offroading at Selmun and scrambling at Ghajn Tuffieha, even though it should be stated that the latter area has in the meantime been declared a protected site). The issue has also been complicated in view of specific locations being outside the development boundaries.

- 6.5.12 The Planning Authority has on various occasions been approached by various developers with proposals for the organisation of Formula 1, Formula 3000 and GT championship races, although to date no development permits have yet been issued. Car hill climbs, car sprints and motor pursuits, amongst other activities, are also held in areas like Mtaħleb, Nadur, Bahrija, Dwejra and San Martin. The organisers make use of public roads for these events, most of which are in remote areas and in need of maintenance works. Such activities may, however, encourage more traffic into areas where restraint in the growth of traffic would be welcomed.
- 6.5.13 Indoor sports such as squash (increase from 700 to 800 users over the 2000-2020 period), bodybuilding (665-800), badminton (400-450), handball (300-600) and weightlifting (250-300) should on the other hand also increase in popularity. It is quite possible that this scale of increase could be accommodated wherever these sports are currently being practised. Moreover, the projected increase in leisure/training demand could be channelled into the underutilised facilities in schools (see also Maps 6-8) due to the limited scale of growth. Competition events could on the other hand take place in the purpose built multi-use sports facilities which the government has proposed to provide in the coming future (of which the development at Cottonera has already commenced. This includes a sports hall with a building footprint of 4800 m², a five-a-side football pitch, a ring road and a parking area of 140 spaces). The practice of martial arts, which will in all probability remain in the 2,000 bracket over the next 20 years, can also be channelled into the above facilities.

TABLE 9: ESTIMATE OF DEMAND FOR VARIOUS SPORTS ACTIVITIES

Sport/year	1998 (No.)	2000 (No.)	2010 (No.)	2020 (No.)
Athletics	1500	1535	1700	1950
Badminton	400	405	410	450
Basketball	5900	6085	7000	7200
Bocci	1500	1520	1600	1700
Bodybuilding	650	665	750	800
Bowling	600	630	900	950
Club sports	850	850	850	850
Cue sports	3000	3130	3800	4200
Cycling	550	560	600	700
Dancing	500	535	750	880
Diving	1700	1710	1800	1850
Fitness	1500	1520	1600	2100
Football	40000	40530	43500	45000
Gymnastics	1700	1730	1900	1950
Handball	300	315	400	600
Hockey	300	310	370	400
Horseracing	2700	2715	2800	2850
Martial arts	2000	2030	2200	2000
Motor racing	1800	1790	1750	1900
Netball	1000	965	800	750
Rock climbing	200	200	200	200
Rowing	100	105	150	170
Sailing	550	565	650	700
Shooting ranges	1200	1225	1350	1500
Squash	700	705	750	800
Swimming	1000	1100	1800	2500
Table tennis	700	690	650	700
Tennis	4500	4500	4500	4500
Volleyball	5000	5330	7000	6500
Waterpolo	800	830	1000	1100
Weightlifting	250	250	270	300
Windsurfing	100	120	200	250
Other	450	450	500	550
Total	84,000	86,000	94,500	98,850
Per cent of population	22.2	22.6	22.8	22.8

Source: Planning Authority, Kunsill Malti Sport, 1999

Notes:

1. The above table reflects those individuals who practice regularly and/or competitively more than one sport. Yet the table seeks to avoid double counting resulting from practitioners' involvement, in an informal leisure environment, in other disciplines. To illustrate the point, there may be football practitioners who play bowling occasionally (ex. once monthly on a Saturday evening), yet such practitioners would only be listed under the "football" category.
2. Practitioners per discipline in year 2000 are the average of growth rate 1998 to 2010.
3. Club Sports refers to Sports such as darts and chess that are practiced indoors

- 6.5.14 Water sports such as sailing, waterpolo, swimming, and diving are also expected to attract more practitioners by the years 2010 to 2020. The greatest increase over the Structure Plan period will be registered in the number of practitioners taking up swimming as a sport (250 per cent increase from 1000 to 2500). The number of local divers will also increase from 1700 to 1850, whilst sailing and waterpolo enthusiasts will go up from 550 and 800 to 700 and 1100 respectively.
- 6.5.15 Although increases are marginal, the importance of diving and sailing as tourism niches should not be underestimated. Indeed, the current 1,700 diving enthusiasts indicated in Table 9 clearly exclude tourists visiting our shores specifically for diving holidays (around 35,000 divers and 20,000 accompanying persons according to the National Tourism Organisation), with the result that future trends for 2010 and 2020 are only reflecting the relatively small increase in local diving enthusiasts. As for sailing, the Yachting Development Subject Study predicted that demand for permanent sailing berths will increase by up to 720 berths by the year 2007. In overall terms, the Study concludes that a further 900 marina berths will be required to meet a sustainable level of sailing demand based on a likely range of demand levels over a 10 year period. An additional 450 to 500 hard standing spaces will also be necessary to complement and support these additional marina berths.
- 6.5.16 The Study shows that Dockyard, Lazzaretto, Kalkara Creeks and Xemxija offered the best prospects for the potential development of yacht marinas, whilst French Creek, Rinella Creek, and Malta Hydrofoil have been listed as potential hard standing sites. In this respect, the advantages and disadvantages of each area were investigated, and indeed, the proposed development of the Cottonera waterfront and yacht marina reflects one of the key conclusions of this study. Although the latter development is partly expected to satisfy demand for sailing berths in the near future, it is not excluded that other marinas will be needed over the Structure Plan period.
- 6.5.17 Other sports disciplines are mentioned in Table 9. The demand for bowls (*bocci*) facilities should also increase from 1520 to 1700 between the years 2000-2020. Such facilities occupy relatively small footprint areas and it is quite common to locate them within public gardens/open spaces or adjacent to areas committed to other sports disciplines. It is envisaged that as the population grows older, there will be an increasing demand for sports facilities practised by the upper age bracket segment of the population. *Bocci* is undoubtedly amongst such sports.
- 6.5.18 It is also possible that certain sports will become more fashionable as opposed to others that become less attractive. A case in point is the health-related sports/activities such as fitness and gymnastics. Although Table 9 indicates that there are not more than 2,000 current practitioners in each of the sports and that increases in practitioners will be relatively marginal, it is quite possible that the popularity of some of these sports could increase at a greater rate than other sports in the coming future. The same applies to abseiling and rock climbing, since such sports are “trendy” (albeit limited in practitioners to date) activities that attract the younger generations.

6.5.19 Other sports with a potential to grow in the future include bowling, cycling and hockey. Bowling may attract 50 per cent more practitioners over the 2000-2020 period (from 630 to 950 users) whilst cycling and hockey practitioners will increase from 560 to 700 and 310 to 410 respectively. The popularity of table tennis and club sports such as darts and chess is on the other hand not expected to increase over the Structure Plan period.

7. Principle Issues for Structure Plan Review

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 The Maltese Islands' existing recreational resources need to be given adequate protection and any facilities to improve such resources are to be encouraged as long as this is not to the detriment of the resource itself. In this perspective, a broad strategy is being recommended for each of the five identified areas, namely outdoor rural recreation areas, outdoor urban recreational areas, catering establishments, cultural/entertainment attractions, land based/ nautical sports. Specific issues relating to a particular recreational strategy are also identified, together with an ensuing discussion describing the land use framework from a strategic perspective.

7.1.2 It is envisaged that the leisure and recreational policies in the Structure Plan Review will be based on the above mentioned strategies and key land use issues.

7.2 Urban Recreational Areas

7.2.1 Strategy

The strategy seeks to ensure that each local council area strives to achieve a minimum level of provision (measured in terms of the current national average recreational space per person of 2.4 m²) within urban areas. This should take place through (at least) the retention/upgrading of the existing areas in those localities exceeding the above figure, whilst aiming to increase provision of additional communal outdoor recreational facilities in those councils having insufficient provision of public gardens, playgrounds and other open spaces in the urban areas, and those registering significant urban sprawl and population growth. The above is especially relevant vis-à-vis those local councils with a predominantly urban character (including port areas).

7.2.2 Key Issues

- **standards of provision for urban recreational facilities**

7.2.3 In the circumstances highlighted in Table 5a, the minimum acceptable recreational space per person in each local council area is being set at 2.4 m², that is the existing national average recreational space per person. Such a figure together with that relating to the total land currently allocated to urban recreational areas (per council) is considered to be very low, especially vis-à-vis foreign standards (see also Appendix F).

7.2.4 It must be said that the comparability of the above local figure with overseas standards is however debatable due to our geographical constraints and since it is not clear whether foreign definitions match those provided in this

study. For indicative purposes however, it would be opportune to point out that a neighbourhood park in the United States serving between 2000 and 10,000 inhabitants (in a service area ranging between 0.4-0.8 km) is indicated as having an area of between 20,000 – 80,000 m² (i.e. an approximate minimum of 8 -10 m² per inhabitant). In Italy (Camrada D., 1999), the minimum acceptable requirement of recreational space per inhabitant is set by existing legislation at 9m². The general planning scheme in Bologna (Italy) however goes beyond and entails 17.6 m² of green space per inhabitant (Mazza L. & Rydin Y., 1997).

- 7.2.5 Due to the need to ameliorate the quality of life of densely built urban environments, the low average figure in the Maltese Islands and recurring widespread demand by the general public, it is important that efforts are made to improve the local recreational provision in each council area. This is also pertinent since seven local councils have pointed out that specific sites planned or utilised as open spaces have over the past 10 years been developed into other land uses such as housing (see also Section 5.2). The overall strategy therefore is to protect the existing urban recreational spaces whilst seeking to reach a minimum of 2.4 m² per council over the Structure Plan period.
- 7.2.6 The Planning Authority is however aware that it is very difficult to achieve such a minimum figure in each council area. Isla, for instance, is practically all built up, implying that the margin of improvement of the existing average recreational space per person (i.e. 0.9 m²) is very limited. In such cases, the importance of protecting the other multi-use public areas (like piazzas and promenades) increases since such spaces also serve a very important role in maintaining if not improving the quality of life of the locality. In Isla's case, Table 5a shows that there are 6 piazzas and a promenade which undoubtedly contribute to mitigate the lack of formal open spaces in the locality.
- 7.2.7 The implementation of the strategy can be facilitated through the analysis of local councils as grouped in Table 5b. As mentioned in Chapter 5, such a table groups localities into three categories, that is those localities with an established coastal recreation use, predominantly rural local councils and those local councils with a predominantly urban character (including port areas).
- 7.2.8 It emerges that those local councils with an established coastal recreation use have an average recreational space per person of 5m², which is double the national average. Keeping in mind that practically all these local council areas (except Pembroke) have a formal promenade and a number of piazzas to complement the urban recreational areas, the strategy in these councils should focus primarily on the protection of existing open spaces. Those councils which have a lower average recreational space per person than 2.4m² should nonetheless seek, where possible, to improve their average figure. Indeed, many of these coastal localities are characterized by heavy seasonal tourism and domestic second home activity which effectively strengthens the need to provide a reasonable amount of open spaces.

- 7.2.9 The predominantly rural local councils on the other hand have an average recreational space per person of 1.6 m², which is 0.8 m² lower than the national average. Although promenades are not available in these local councils, such localities are however adorned with several piazzas besides being in the vicinity of popular rural recreational areas (as described in Chapter 5) and being surrounded by an extensive rural environment on the fringes of the urban settlement. These councils therefore have the countryside, popular rural recreational areas and/or piazzas to complement the existing formal urban recreational areas; those councils below the national average should however still seek to improve on the existing average.
- 7.2.10 As for the third category, the protection of certain undeveloped pockets of land within scheme is commended (where possible) so as to improve the average figure relating to urban recreational areas in those local councils with a predominantly urban character (including port areas). Currently, the average per local council is of 2 m² (as opposed to the national average of 2.4 m²), and practically all councils (except Swieqi and Ta' Xbiex) have piazzas in their locality. Some local councils also have a formal promenade alongside their coastal strip.
- 7.2.11 Tables 5a and 5b show that only a minority of those local councils with a predominantly urban character have an acceptable level of provision. These tally to 29 per cent, that is 10 out of 35 local councils. Such spaces in localities like Floriana, Mdina and Ta' Xbiex should be protected over the Structure Plan period. The need for additional spaces is also less acute in some of the Gozitan councils within this category, since urbanized villages like Xaghra and Nadur are also surrounded by the open countryside which compensates for the lack of urban recreational facilities.
- 7.2.12 Overall however, many of the other councils within this category are densely built, inland localities where continuous urban sprawl in certain instances wiped out buffer zones between one council area and another. Others are densely built port areas whose promenade is not as widely used as in the councils with an established coastal recreational use and whose piazzas may be congested due to other prevailing land uses (like parking and religious activities/paraphernalia). Other councils (mainly in the Central local plan) are registering a rapid growth in population, implying that additional open spaces will be required to improve the quality of life of the ever increasing inhabitants.
- 7.2.13 Existing Government owned open spaces/green areas within urban settlements, especially in localities such as the above, should thus be protected as far as possible for current and future recreational use. Moreover, the development of additional leisure related facilities (such as cycle tracks along roadsides) would certainly result in the improvement of the residents' quality of life whilst bettering the urban fabric of specific localities. The same concept applies to industrial estates in view of demand

by factory workers for a better working environment, to include sports and other formal/informal recreational facilities, in near proximity of their place of employment. In this regard, Government should whenever possible encourage private initiatives (through planning gain, a development brief framework, direct sponsorships by established firms and/or Local Council projects), in view of the likely financial constraints vis-à-vis the provision of additional recreational facilities by the public sector.

7.2.14 The possibility of including innovative recreational facilities (such as basketball nets/areas, skateboarding and adventure areas with ropes, hurdles, ladders and tunnels) when planning new projects to complement the traditional playing field/public garden environment is to be encouraged. Urban walking trails and interpretive panels are also appropriate in localities like Floriana (where there is a concentration of open spaces) and the three villages of Lija, Attard and Balzan (where there is a strong cultural/historical component). The extensive gardens in Floriana have substantial potential in terms of tourism activity due to their rich history, greenery and attractive views. Moreover, the provision of jogging lanes/cycle tracks and more greenery along streets respectively add to the recreational mix and are useful to hide unsightly features or at least make them less noticeable.

7.2.15 Furthermore, natural landscaping should always be given precedence (over hard landscaping) when designing gardens. Such details should however best be tackled case by case within the development control mechanism.

7.3 Rural Recreational Areas

7.3.1 Strategy

The strategy favours the provision of formal national and regional parks through the implementation of measures that include better management, Interpretation techniques and small-scale facilities. Well-managed, low impact, camping and caravan sites are also appropriate.

7.3.2 Key Issues

- **Protection and upgrading of the overall recreational provision**

7.3.3 The results of the Household Travel and Public Attitudes Surveys show that Malta's main rural recreational areas have a national catchment since residents from all parts of the Island seek to protect and frequent them. Such popularity of specific rural recreational areas does however have land-use implications since these movements (especially from Southern and/or Central Malta to Northern Malta) generate considerable impacts like traffic congestion and parking problems.

- 7.3.4 The establishment of well managed regional facilities could however possibly contribute to lessen the traffic impacts since the general public would be tempted to recreate itself in those parks that are in close proximity. Currently, the major rural recreational areas mentioned in Chapter 5 hardly provide any facilities and most arrangements are done on an ad hoc basis. The need for management plans is thus felt in order to “transform” these established, popular rural areas into well-managed country or heritage parks, woodland or recreational areas, as appropriate. Another opportunity could arise through the rehabilitation of disused quarries for recreational purposes as country parks, informal leisure areas and/or similar uses. An integrated Recreation Plan that tackles aspects such as accessibility conditions, utilities requirements and environmental criteria within a national and local context should also be considered, yet to date no Government Department/Ministry has the overall responsibility for recreation and hence the strategic “reigns” to prepare and subsequently implement the plan.
- 7.3.5 In this light, it would therefore be appropriate to formally designate a number of established recreational areas as national/regional country and/or heritage parks. Delimara, Ta’ Qali and Burmarrad should be considered as national facilities due to their strategic location in the Northern, Central and Southern parts of Malta, whilst areas like Buskett, Chadwick Lakes, Bahrija and surrounding countryside (identified highly in the Public Attitudes Survey as meriting protection from development) are other strategically located (albeit smaller) recreational areas sought by increasing numbers of the population. Ta’ Cenc, Selmun, Victoria Lines and Hagar Qim also serve a regional if not national function in the overall recreational provision of the Maltese Islands.
- 7.3.6 It is appropriate to ensure that the national/regional facilities respect the physical or man-made characteristics of the area and subsequently do not offer an identical recreational product. The rural aspect is well established within the Delimara park footprint area, as is the water/countryside theme around Burmarrad. A mix of activities (including sports, but excluding major commercial activity) would be appropriate at Ta’ Qali, whilst the heritage theme should be well interpreted at Zabbar, where a recreational park is being proposed along the Cottonera fortifications. In order to ensure better management, it is moreover important to secure improved liaison between local councils and public sector departments such as the Ministries for the Environment and Agriculture whenever proposals are about to be finalised.
- 7.3.7 In all cases, adequate care should be taken so that areas of ecological or agricultural importance are not damaged by any development. Over commercialisation should be avoided in such parks (since this detracts from the overall recreational experience), and priority should be given to those uses and facilities that favour family recreational activities. Physical interventions, if deemed to be essential, should be carried out under the guidance of the relevant organization but the emphasis should always be to make use of existing buildings/structures (where available), within the established footprint area. Acceptable uses in the national/regional parks could include small-scale facilities such as a visitor interpretation centre and a refreshments area. Interpretation techniques covering historic, cultural,

ecological and/or geomorphological features are also to be encouraged. Moreover, gravel pathways might also be appropriate (in certain rural areas) to accommodate cycling tracks and jogging paths, whilst open areas (with little or no intervention) could also be used for the informal practice of sports disciplines such as volleyball, football and handball. In all cases, the negative impacts should never outweigh the positive impacts to be derived by such development.

- **Impacts of hunting and trapping**

7.3.8 The National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis informs that a technical committee under the auspices of the Ministry of the Environment has been set up to study the full implications of the EU's Directive for the Protection of Birds. It is clear that the increasing popularity of hunting and trapping can lead to problems due to the EU's Directives, and indeed special requirements may be necessary in view of the existing legislative divergencies as highlighted in Chapter 5.

7.3.9 Conflicts with other hobbies, sports and/or leisure activities further compound the problem (see also Chapter 5). Due to the site-specific connotations of hunting and trapping, a strategic land use solution cannot be proposed within the Topic Paper. Yet it is clear that appropriate and efficient management of Malta's rural resources, including clear guidance on rights of way, is a must if the above-mentioned conflicts are to be resolved or at least not allowed to escalate further.

- **provision of adequate, well managed sites for camping and caravanning**

7.3.10 Although only a limited number of Tourism and Recreation Community Survey respondents asserted that they go camping and utilise caravans on holiday, appropriate facilities to accommodate such an activity should nonetheless still be provided. It is important to ensure that such sites do not degenerate into shabby ghettos and subsequently should provide basic facilities, be well managed and free of any serious adverse impacts on the surrounding environment. Such sites should best be identified at a local plan level and should possibly be located where users can engage in informal recreational activities, in close proximity.

7.3.11 Since camping and caravan sites are often located in outside development zones, emphasis should be on temporary structures as opposed to large scale permanent, physical development that can visually disturb the natural setting. In this context, the provision of some small-scale permanent buildings providing logistical support and basic facilities may nonetheless be considered acceptable.

7.3.12 The existing Malta Structure Plan Technical Report 3.1 lists a number of valid criteria which should be adhered to in order to reduce the negative impacts of such development on the environment. These are deemed to be still valid and include:

- to avoid caravan/camping sites in areas of particular environmental concern and near historic centres and monuments
- to avoid functional and visual conflicts with tourist development
- to avoid locations in areas requiring new roads, and ad hoc utilities extensions.
- to define the space that can be utilised for these facilities, avoiding the sprawl of tents and caravans all around the site
- to ensure landscaping and afforestation around the site to avoid negative visual impacts
- to ensure sanitary conditions, water and electricity availability, and parking facilities for each site

7.3.13 The Technical Report also states that camping sites should not be located near shorelines. Within the Review perspective, it is however appropriate to consider camping and caravan sites within the coast, provided that the negative impacts do not outweigh the positive benefits to be derived by such projects. Camping sites should however not restrict (directly or indirectly) access to the shore to other users, whilst no accretions such as illegal cement platforms and boundary walls should be permitted especially on the foreshore.

7.4 Catering Establishments

7.4.1 Strategy

The strategy favours the provision of additional catering establishments in town centres and selected neighbourhood centres as identified in the Structure Plan Review's Retail Strategy and in the respective local plans .

7.4.2 Key Issue

- **catering establishments in town centres and selected neighbourhood centres**

7.4.3 In accordance with the findings presented in Chapter 5, the Planning Authority is favouring the provision of additional catering establishments in town centres and selected neighbourhood centres. Development applications regarding catering establishments will thus be considered in most areas (inclusive the established tourist resorts), even though it should also be noted that the HCEB seeks to limit new catering developments in established areas to the upper class category restaurants, snack bars and/or speciality restaurants. In this light, HCEB bars the development of additional second-class snack bars, lower category restaurants and take-aways in tourist areas, as identified in Section 5.6.

7.4.4 A strategy seeking to discourage catering development within scheme outside town centres and selected neighbourhood centres identified for every locality (i.e. containment as opposed to dispersal) in the Structure

Plan Review's Retail Topic Paper and the respective local plans is therefore being proposed. Catering activity can negatively impinge on the quality of life of local inhabitants if mixed uses such as restaurants and other commercial activity are accommodated in strictly residential areas or where the predominant use is by far residential.

- 7.4.5 A closer look at the definition of "town centre" is warranted. The Retail Paper defines Primary Town Centres (proposed in Valletta, Sliema, Birkirkara, Hamrun, Paola, Victoria and Mosta) as those areas serving a regional or sub-regional function for non-food shopping (that is, clothing, footwear, furniture, household textiles, electrical goods, hardware, jewellery, recreational and other goods), whilst Secondary Town Centres (proposed in Fgura, Qormi, Rabat, Zurrieq, Zabbar, Birzebbugia, Zejtun, Cospicua, San Gwann, Mellieha) are those significant non-food shopping centres serving local residents or those of neighbouring villages. Secondary Town Centres should be used by at least 2,500 people for non-food shopping. Tertiary Town Centres (including Vittoriosa, Siggiewi, Marsa, Ghaxaq, Gzira, Nadur, Luqa, Balzan, Xaghra Gozo, Senglea, Kirkop, Safi, and Qala) are significant non-food shopping centres serving a smaller number of people than secondary town centres. Neighbourhood centres on the other hand are those areas necessitating a planned approach (ex. Iklin, Swieqi) vis-à-vis the provision of local retail services in new and expanding housing areas. The precise delineation of tertiary town centres and neighbourhood centres is best identified at a local plan level.
- 7.4.6 Town centres are strategically located areas that allow scope for the development of new catering establishments. Indeed, the Review's Retail Strategy encourages shopping complexes (in town centres) that invariably include a conspicuous catering component as part of the overall commercial mix. Other catering establishments inside such designated centres are also appropriate, subject to the necessary safeguards. Likewise, catering establishments may also be considered in selected neighbourhood centres, which should best be established at a local plan level since such land uses may not always be appropriate in all neighbourhood centres.
- 7.4.7 It would also be opportune to state that many village cores in various localities around the Maltese Islands are included in the town centres as identified in the Retail Strategy. Catering facilities within village cores encourage the efficient use of existing buildings (or even vacant property) by channelling urban development activity into areas within scheme where a mix of uses is appropriate or at times already established.
- 7.4.8 Those village cores that are not within the town centres should in principle however not be considered for catering purposes, in view of their other established land uses (ex. housing). It is acknowledged that Planning Authority surveys indicate that residents living in areas where there is a relatively low provision of catering establishments are more lenient towards catering activity in their area. Yet such a stance must be considered with caution since it is highly debatable whether these residents would accept a restaurant next door to their home or whether they accept restaurants on condition that they are located on somebody else's doorstep.

- 7.4.9 A proliferation of catering establishments in village cores is also to be discouraged if it would result in unacceptable deleterious impacts on the quality of life of the surrounding established uses and where the overall constraints and negative impacts outweigh the positive impacts to be derived by such developments. The commercial carrying capacity of different village cores in actual fact varies according to the characteristics and sensitivity of specific areas. It is difficult to set limits, yet a policy based on a number of criteria seeking to avoid the over commercialisation of determined localities (like Mdina) would be appropriate to control and avoid over development.
- 7.4.10 To illustrate the above, demand for catering establishments already exists in localities like Cottonera that are not regularly on the tourist itinerary, especially since a number of visitor attractions/museums attracting locals and tourists are already sited in such areas. A number of new catering establishments would therefore add to the existing mix of commercial facilities within the village core. Such activity would also not be appropriate in non-commercial quarters outside the identified town centres where the predominant use is residential.

7.5 Land Based Sports

7.5.1 Strategy

Existing sports facilities should be retained and where possible upgraded, whilst the better utilisation of existing sports facilities in schools (state or non-state) or those provided by the private sector (like fitness centres) is encouraged in order to decrease the need for new facilities. The strategy however also encourages the development of new facilities in particular disciplines since the number and percentage of locals practising specific sports is expected to increase during the plan period.

Moreover, the strategy supports the provision of a limited number of sports complexes promoting the multi-use concept, where international competitions could also be held. The strategy also encourages the channelling of major impact sports from sensitive areas into areas where their adverse impacts could be better mitigated.

7.5.2 Key Issues

- **the multi-use, sharing and upgrading of existing sports facilities, together with the better utilisation of sports facilities located in schools around the Maltese Islands, so as to decrease the need to allocate additional land for new sports facilities.**

- 7.5.3 The scarce land resources dictate the level of provision of certain sports facilities and therefore it is unlikely that demand for all individual sports could be catered for where the demand currently exists (or likely to arise)

during the forecast period. This implies that some sharing of facilities will be necessary, and indeed the optimum use of existing facilities through management is to be encouraged. In this respect, additional transfers of Government owned property (besides that land already allocated to a good number of clubs) will assist sports clubs in their strive for a more professional set-up whilst encouraging the sharing of multi-purpose facilities in some cases through an upgrade of the existing facilities (ex. fitness centres/small gymnasias used for indoor sports).

7.5.4 The approach to constrain further inroads into undeveloped land is appropriate, although limited exceptions for specific sports and recreational uses outside scheme (other than Rural Conservation Areas) may be needed during the Plan period. The utilisation of existing sports facilities within schools is an appropriate way of extending the range of facilities without committing additional land. Most of the existing school facilities are indeed underutilised since data in Chapter 5 shows that most of them are exclusively used by school children during break time and/or physical education lessons, and hence inaccessible to the general public. They could definitely be of benefit in meeting the ever-increasing demand for sports facilities at regional and local level.

7.5.5 In view of the need to ensure the efficient use of land, an upgrade of existing sites allocated or committed for sports uses within schools should therefore be encouraged. The Ministry of Education's recent decision to upgrade the sports ground area of the Attard Primary School by developing two football pitches, a basketball court, two tennis courts and a gymnasium is certainly a step in the right direction, considering that facilities will also be available to the general public. Such a project should be followed by similar initiatives since outdoor and indoor sports facilities in state schools (total of 319,700 and 16,650 square metres respectively) are currently barely utilised by the local community after school hours. Non-state schools could also be encouraged to increase accessibility to the general public of their facilities (indoor and outdoor facilities in this case total 118,500 square metres).

7.5.6 If these facilities are made available for the general public after school hours, there would certainly be no case for providing all types of new sports facilities in every local council area. Management of such sites could be in the hands of the respective school council although the locality's local council could also be involved especially after school hours. Indeed, these facilities in schools also lend themselves for easier adaptation to serve the daily recreational needs of the locality's inhabitants.

- **the role and importance of indoor multi-purpose sports complexes in providing modern facilities for a wide range of disciplines.**

7.5.7 Other professional facilities might be needed in view of forthcoming international events, to include the Small Nations Games in 2003. The Government has committed itself to build three multi-purpose sports complexes in the coming years, and indeed these complexes should suffice to meet demand over the Plan period. Such complexes and other formal

facilities should be targeted primarily for use by athletes and professional practitioners, even though the general public should still be encouraged to participate through spectatorship, which is also an active ingredient in sports.

7.5.8 It should be pointed out that the Planning Authority Board has already approved criteria for the development of sports complexes. Such criteria stress that these facilities should be sited in areas that are expected to register a growth in population and having a regional if not national catchment. The selected site and facility should preferably be located within the Temporary Provision Schemes, should not be restrictive and should allow space for future expansion. Moreover, it should possibly already be dedicated and established for sports uses, should have ease of access and should be close to the existing arterial road network. Furthermore, parking and landscape considerations will be given importance in any design proposals, and the negative physical impacts of such sites should not outweigh the positive impacts to be derived by such projects. In this perspective, a permit for the construction of a complex at Cottonera has indeed already been granted; the site was selected (amongst other reasons) in view of its proximity to those localities in the Malta South local plan experiencing rapid population growth and due to the urban regeneration project currently underway in Cottonera. It is Government's intention to build other complexes in Kirkop and St Paul's Bay, both of which will be located in close proximity to newly constructed schools.

7.5.9 It is worthwhile mentioning that the land take up for the provision of sports complexes is usually quite high and at times necessarily located outside development zones. Internationally acclaimed stadia, for instance, usually require 40,000 square metres for the construction of a stadium and its surround, and another 40,000 m² for grass training pitches associated directly with the stadium and general community uses of pitches (UK Sports Council, Planning and Provision for Sports). Although the Cottonera sports complex occupies a smaller footprint area (total area of circa 18,000 square metres), it is still relevant to point out that this is a considerable tract of land in the Maltese context.

- **provision of new sports facilities at a local and national level: new football, cycling, model aircraft, cue sport, martial arts, bodybuilding, badminton, squash, handball, fitness and bowls facilities needed in specific locations, whilst an upgrade of existing tennis, athletics, hockey, netball, basketball, volleyball, cricket and rugby facilities would suffice**
- **restricting the provision of those sports such as horseracing and golf since their provision requires large tracts of land .**

7.5.10 It should be pointed out that multi-purpose sports facilities would have a regional if not national catchment. Notwithstanding the potential construction of such complexes, it might still be necessary to provide new limited facilities where unavailable at a local community level. No additional

sports facilities should however be considered in areas not experiencing population growth, or where it is deemed that the existing public sports facilities besides those in schools suffice. The estimated growth in demand per sports discipline, together with the provision of existing facilities and demographic trends in neighbouring localities should also be evaluated when considering the need or otherwise for additional sports facilities at a local level.

- 7.5.11 Football and shooting are undoubtedly amongst the most popular leisure pastimes. Indeed, a good number of hunters opt to visit shooting ranges when the hunting season is closed. Both require relatively large land areas, the main difference between the two being that whilst football pitches are usually sited within the Temporary Provision Schemes, shooting ranges are mainly located in the urban fringes or outside development zones. There is a distinct possibility that the natural habitat may also be disturbed in outdoor shooting ranges. The recent government decision to grant police licenses for the use of air guns in shooting ranges has however opened new frontiers for the practice of the sport. Indoor ranges can indeed also be located in urban centres, where adverse physical, environmental and social impacts could be well controlled.
- 7.5.12 The Planning Authority acknowledges the need for well managed shooting ranges that can host international and local competitions. The Authority is thus in the process of finalising a policy paper which will take a closer look at the land use implications of such a sport. The paper is expected to discuss issues such as impacts relating to shooting range complexes, on site buildings in areas that are outside development zones, conflicts due to potentially competing uses (such as country walks and picnics) and examine relevant criteria for the establishment of such uses. The paper will also examine current trends such as indoor and outdoor range complexes for target shooting, and outdoor complexes for trap and skeet shooting.
- 7.5.13 As for football, existing pitches need to be retained. In total, there are 89 football pitches for use by the general public, and another 66 in state and non-state schools. For competition and league matches the facilities used are the National and Centenary Stadia at Ta' Qali, the Tedesco Stadium, Hibs Ground, Pace Grasso pitch, Infetti Ground, University pitch, Gozo Stadium and other pitches in localities like St. Paul's Bay, Mellieha, Dingli, Marsaxlokk, Siggiewi, Zebbug, Corradino, Paola, Mosta and Gzira.
- 7.5.14 The improvement of existing football stadia is needed to bring such facilities in line with international standards (ex. the completion of works at the Victor Tedesco Ground). Stadia usually take up considerable land area and therefore, as much as possible, sites already committed for such uses or adjacent to such facilities should be used for improvement or expansion of such facilities, provided the level of environmental impact is acceptable.
- 7.5.15 Considering that football is the main sport on the island and that the sport is expected to grow steadily in popularity over the next twenty years, it is likely to give rise to the need to provide additional number of pitches. These

should preferably be channelled towards the relatively new urban areas such as Iklin, Bahar-ic-Caghaq and Marsascalea where there is a growing young population and where such facilities are lacking. Another possibility is to reorganise existing 11 a-side football grounds into smaller 5 a-side or 7 a-side pitches, thus increasing the number of playing pitches whilst retaining the same land take up.

- 7.5.16 Athletics is another growing sport (albeit slowly), which is largely practiced around the Marsa athletics track, the national athletics facility. Indeed, although such a track was upgraded for the 1993 Small Nations Games, it certainly needs further improvement regarding the actual track and complementary uses (such as indoor ancillary facilities like weights and shower rooms) to meet international standards and to be able to host international competitions. Improvements to upgrade the Marsa facility need to be considered first before giving due weight to the provision of new facilities that would require additional land in different localities.
- 7.5.17 A modern, centralised facility such as that at Marsa probably suffices to meet overall track and field demand by practitioners, yet the possibility of upgrading existing facilities elsewhere (for recreation purposes by the local community) should not be discarded. A significant opportunity in this field is provided by the possible improvement of the University sports ground. The ground is already used as a jogging/athletics track or for football matches by locals, whilst the area also houses other sports facilities such as a Functional Diagnostics Lab, four squash courts (two of which are used for table tennis), aerobic room, two artificial five-a-side football pitches, sports associations' offices, child care centre and the national swimming pool. Any additional improvement of facilities in these areas may be considered desirable, as it will also serve the long-term strategic requirements during the Plan period, to include the forthcoming Small Nations Games.
- 7.5.18 Improvement of sports facilities at Ta' Qali to international standards needs to be considered as a priority, as amply highlighted in the Planning Authority's Ta' Qali Action Plan. The Action Plan's main aim is to secure Ta' Qali as a recreational area providing wide ranging formal and informal activities for both the general public and tourist. This objective is consistent with the existing Structure Plan Policy REC 7 which designates Ta' Qali as a National Recreation Centre.
- 7.5.19 In this respect, the further development of recreational (inclusive sports) facilities at this location should therefore be encouraged. Ta' Qali could accommodate local-level sports uses such as cycling and model aircraft flying facilities to complement the sports facilities that are already used for international events (such as the basketball court and the football stadium and training grounds). Specific areas have also been identified for road events (in view of the Malta Amateur Athletic Association's request to organise cross country running on an international level), for ancillary basketball facilities and for an all weather extension to the existing football facilities.

- 7.5.20 Basketball and volleyball are among the most popular sports in the Maltese Islands, accounting for approximately 7 and 6 per cent respectively of the total sports practitioners in the year 2020. It is however not envisaged that any further land should be committed for such sports, unless forming part of a modern sports complex for competition purposes. This mainly due to the widespread distribution of existing public facilities and those in schools (state and non-state), which tally 74 and 45 respectively for basketball and volleyball. The improvement of existing facilities may however be needed.
- 7.5.21 Tennis is another popular sport although it is not envisaged to grow in popularity over the Structure Plan period. The upgrading of some of the 26 existing courts, which are also due to benefit from the parliamentary motion to transfer properties to local sports clubs (ex. courts in Pembroke, Corradino and Lija), should be complemented by premises for the Malta Tennis Federation. Otherwise, such facilities, together with the facilities provided by the private sector in tourist accommodation establishments, non-state schools and sports centres/social clubs, should suffice to meet demand until the year 2020.
- 7.5.22 Furthermore, cue sports (total of 3100 current practitioners) do not create any severe land use problems, since most of these facilities have a local function and are easily accommodated in village clubs. Such facilities should therefore be encouraged, especially since demand is widespread and not concentrated in a particular area in the Maltese Islands. Horseracing facilities, on the other hand, occupy large tracts of land. In view of the existing land constraints, the relatively large footprint required and the expected low growth in demand over the Plan period (current practitioners, in the region of 2700, should not exceed 3000 by the year 2020), the national facilities at Xewkija and Marsa should suffice.
- 7.5.23 Similar to cue sports, bocci is also very popular at local level, especially with the older generations. In view of the ageing population and the expected growth (albeit slow growth) in popularity, such facilities should be encouraged. The total number of bocci pitches available to the general public are currently 45, with the result that additional facilities could be provided especially in those local councils which do not have such provision (as stated earlier, bocci pitches do not occupy much land). Indeed, the transfer of bocci pitches and adjacent clubhouses to clubs such as those in Senglea, Zebbug, Zabbar, Zurrieq, Gudja and Zejtun is certainly a step in the right direction.
- 7.5.24 As highlighted earlier, the scale of increase in practitioners of indoor sports such as martial arts, bodybuilding and gymnastics is likely to be quite low over the Plan period. Such sports and other fitness-related indoor sports are all practised in a variety of multi-use halls that do not always meet acceptable standards. A purpose built sports hall/complex would certainly eliminate the logistical problems faced by such practitioners and thus provide a facility that can also be utilised for international events. Such a complex could also provide a modern facility for regular practitioners of less popular sports such as badminton, squash and handball, since such sports also need better facilities so as to improve local standards and

subsequently to grow in popularity. Fencing activities could also be located within such complexes.

- 7.5.25 Moreover, golf is a sport that due to its very nature needs to be provided in a rural setting. The only existing golf course in the Maltese Islands is the Royal Malta Golf Club. This is set in the Marsa Sports Club, which also encompasses tennis courts, squash courts, minigolf, a cricket oval and a polo field, amongst other sports facilities. Golf facilities include an 18-hole course on flat parkland and a 68-par course (5024 metres). The Club is marketed as a golf clinic, especially for visitors who wish to escape the adverse weather conditions in the North during wintertime but is also ideal for individual day excursionists, visiting groups and golf training camps. A practice ground is also available, whilst the Clubhouse provides changing rooms, showers, locker rooms, push trolleys and other golf-related amenities (National Tourism Organisation Malta).
- 7.5.26 Golf is not amongst the most popular sports in Malta. Although foreign visitors are known to make use of this facility, there is also no clear indication of the number of foreigners specifically interested in Malta as a golfing destination. Quite clearly however, golf has become increasingly trendy throughout Europe. Golf is well established as a tourism niche in Portugal and parts of northern Europe. Cyprus, one of Malta's direct tourism competitors in the Mediterranean, also has plans to expand on the existing two golf courses by developing a course in every region.
- 7.5.27 Unfortunately, golf poses a big problem for the environment since large quantities of water, chemical fertiliser and pesticides are necessary to tend the grass mostly cultivated in unnatural habitats. This can become especially difficult on islands with limited water supplies. These are also the issues with which the environmentalists and pressure groups in Cyprus and Spain are concerned with. For example, it is estimated that an average 18-hole course in Mallorca needs approximately 1500 to 2000 m³ of water per day - the equivalent of water consumed by an average population of 800 people (Centre Naturopa, 1997). Pressures on the infrastructure are thus considerable, especially in countries like the Maltese Islands, since rainwater does not suffice to irrigate the grass owing to the Mediterranean climate.
- 7.5.28 In view of the above-mentioned constraints and potential impacts, the Planning Directorate prepared a Policy Paper in 1997 (which was approved by the Planning Authority Board) on the provision of golf course development. The purpose of the document was:
- to establish the Ministry of Tourism's and the Planning Authority's existing policy context regarding such a development
 - to provide guidelines for prospective developers when submitting such projects, particularly with regards to site selection
 - to establish criteria for assessing proposals for such a form of development

- 7.5.29 The paper offers policy guidance for proposals re- golf course development including the criteria for the location of any eventual golf courses, the actual size of such courses and the scale of ancillary development (like club houses) needed to support such a facility. Such developments would also require environmental and social impact assessments to determine the major positive and adverse impacts related to golf courses, whilst giving due consideration to key ancillary issues such as the financial, marketing, economical, parking and infrastructural requirements. It is important that the guidelines included in such a document are given due consideration whenever a planning application for the development of a golf course is submitted to the Planning Authority.
- 7.5.30 Furthermore, the number of practitioners playing hockey is quite small. The Hockey Association of Malta is responsible for overseeing this sport and has 5 clubs (in the national league) affiliated to this association, with practitioners tallying around 300. Facilities are available at Corradino (the main ground), Qormi and Floriana, although hockey clubs also use the multi-purpose ground at Pembroke as a training pitch. Most of the above need upgrading and improvements.
- 7.5.31 The Hockey Association has just unveiled plans to lay an artificial grass surface at the hockey complex in Corradino. Indeed, an improved national facility of international standard that would be accessible to all clubs should suffice to meet existing and future demand. Moreover, hockey practitioners can also make use of other hockey training grounds around the island besides the eight facilities that exist within state schools.
- 7.5.32 Moreover, netball is also unlikely to grow in popularity with the result that the existing facilities (possibly upgrading some of the 36 outdoor courts available in state schools) should suffice. Malta's increasing participation in international matches/tournaments may over the next twenty years increase the popularity of rugby, yet the current facilities at Marsa should be sufficient to accommodate the needs for this sport. As for cricket, participation by locals is increasing, with foreign clubs and groups also making use of the Marsa pitch for training camps. Moreover, the "dual use" concept is very evident at Safi, since cricketers practice their favourite sport on an Armed Forces of Malta training site (besides the pitch at Marsa). Such an approach should certainly be encouraged.
- 7.5.33 It should be noted that applicants for the development of new sports facilities are usually required to provide formal parking spaces for use by practitioners. The better use of public transport is however also advocated, whilst a number of local level sports facilities within urban areas can make use of on street parking (in lieu of formal parking spaces), provided that this does not compromise the parking needs of local residents. Such facilities not requiring formal parking facilities are best identified on a case by case basis, and depend also on the popularity of the sports discipline to be practiced on site (ex. requirements for a bocci pitch may differ from those of a 5-a-side football pitch laid with turf). It is opportune to note however that the larger and more popular facilities need formal parking facilities due to the constant vehicular movements to and fro the facility. Indeed, certain existing facilities

(not necessarily gymnasia) that attract practitioners within a regional catchment generate substantial traffic, and existing on-street parking bays do not suffice to cater for residents and sports practitioners alike.

- **channelling sports that create major impacts away from sensitive areas, whilst acknowledging the need for a well organised off-roading facility and/or a multi-purpose track for circuit motorsports with common support facilities.**

7.5.34 The very nature of rock climbing and abseiling entails that such an activity is mainly practiced outside development zone, predominantly in coastal areas. The practice of such a sport is acceptable although it should be channelled towards areas that are not ecologically sensitive. Moreover, the spraying and hammering/digging of the rock surface should be avoided since the cliff faces should not be damaged. Abseiling/rock climbing should also be channelled away from coastal cliffs where human activity and artificial lighting is minimal during the bird-breeding season.

7.5.35 Yet abseiling could also be practiced indoors or around less sensitive areas like bridges. The popularity of artificial walls within a gymnasium/fitness centre environment is on the increase abroad, and could contribute to lessen local demand for rock climbing activities in sensitive cliff faces. Bridges (ex. Wied il-Ghasel, Mosta) and other high walls could also be used more frequently for such purposes.

7.5.36 Furthermore, the popularity of motor sports is due to increase over the Structure Plan period. Requirements for different motor sports vary and separate facilities might be needed. The Motor Sports Policy Committee set up under the auspices of the Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and the Arts recommended that possibly two national facilities should be identified, one for off-roading and the other for flat surface motor sports. The former generates a lot of dust whilst the latter requires a clean surface. In the latter case, a multi-purpose track specifically designed to cater for different motorsport activities requiring a flat surface (like drag racing, karting, car and motorcycle racing) would thus be appropriate. The sharing of resources and facilities is however possible, and every effort should be made to locate motorsport facilities in an area preferably having common support facilities.

7.5.37 In the above context, the need for the provision of off-roading national motoring facilities is therefore acknowledged. Proposals which fall into the major impact sports category should however be assessed within the limitations of the land available in Malta. Moreover, great care needs to be taken to ensure that off-roading activities blend into the rural and urban scene. If this is not possible, major impact sports that have a large land take up should be discouraged. One should also note that associated problems like land erosion and competition with other uses (such as hunting, trapping and picnics) have also arisen over recent years.

7.5.38 Suitable locations for major impact sports are disused quarries, derelict land, degraded or despoiled land adjacent to areas of high ambient noise

levels and reasonably far from residential areas, or quiet informal recreation parks. Para 6.5.11 has already indicated that two clubs are being granted legal title to develop facilities for go karting and quarter mile racing at Hal Far. The draft North West local plan also identifies another possible site for major impact sports at the former landfill site of Wied Fulija, Zurrieq. Circuit motorsport practitioners should on the other hand where possible make use of existing acceptable areas such as Hal Far (as indicated above). In both cases (i.e. off- roading and circuit), additional purposely-constructed facilities will also be considered, although the difficulty in finding appropriate sites constantly arises. In this respect, consideration should be given to the following guidelines:

- selected land should be derelict, degraded or despoiled. Off-roading will not be permitted in the open countryside
- site should be within an acceptable distance away from residential areas and preferably close to industrial estates or where ambient noise levels are high
- site should not be in the vicinity of urban conservation areas and historic cities
- land should be sufficiently distant from and not in areas of ecological, agricultural and high landscape value or sites of scientific importance
- site should be away from popular recreation areas and countryside areas popular for picnic and walks
- sites should be physically separable from land open for general public access, and not crossed by public rights of way
- land should not be in areas which will jeopardise the experience offered at archaeological or historical sites
- site can be well managed and secured against unauthorised use

7.5.39 Further to the above, Appendix J identifies the land requirements for various motorsports as indicated by the UK Sports Council. There are no precise rules governing the separation of motorsport sites from other uses, but a number of UK authorities have adopted 400 metres from houses as a guideline during site search. However, smaller distances, even as low as 100 metres, have proved sufficient with the use of sound barriers (such as mounding).

7.6 Nautical Sports and Coastal Activity

7.6.1 Strategy

The strategy aims to ensure that the coast and direct foreshore remains accessible to the general public. Only those nautical facilities essentially needing a coastal location should hence be accommodated around the foreshore. Beach management concepts are moreover to be encouraged so as to avoid conflicting coastal activities, whilst beachrooms and boathouses may be permitted in suitable locations. Permits for additional beach concessions will however not be recommended. The strategy also allows for

the development of appropriate coastal/nautical sports facilities (such as small scale facilities like railings in diving sites to improve access to the sea, slipways to facilitate access for seacraft or club rooms for storage purposes) that are currently lacking which may enable the growth of sports like sailing, diving and waterpolo. The management and protection of the designated marine conservation areas is also appropriate. In all cases, the positive benefits to be derived by the development of the above facilities should however always outweigh the negative impacts to be accrued.

7.6.2 Key Issues

- **avoiding conflicting watersport activities and restricting the use of private areas (for kiosks and the hiring of seacraft, umbrellas and deckchairs) on the foreshore**
- **avoiding overprovision of coastal facilities by ensuring that demand for every sport/facility is well established prior to committing additional land on the foreshore**
- **Channelling the demand for the provision of coastal facilities and premises (re- the development of watersport activities such as sailing or canoeing) towards coastal areas that are already developed/committed with such facilities.**

7.6.3 The conflicting watersports issue is best illustrated by examining the leisure activity element alongside sports like sailing and windsurfing. These sports are not amongst the most popular sports in the Maltese Islands, since practitioners of the former sport are expected to tally 700 by the end of the Structure Plan period, whilst windsurf enthusiasts will not exceed 250 by the year 2020. Yet powerboats and jet-ski operations often affect such sporting activities, whilst a major problem is also caused as a result of conflicts relating to bathing activities and beach concessions/accessories. It should also be stated that water sports such as sailing, surfing, water-skiing or motor boating could endanger the natural habitat of flora and fauna.

7.6.4 The management of limited beach spaces around Malta's coastal foreshore is a key issue in seeking to accommodate certain nautical conflicting activities. In order to improve accessibility along the foreshore, the use of temporary/reversible structures such as timber/wooden platforms (as opposed to concrete pathways) should be viewed positively. Moreover, beach management concepts such as the regular setting aside of specific areas for water sports and the fixing of rules for beach use are also to be encouraged. In order to ensure that there will be no overprovision of facilities, the agency/association promoting the development of coastal facilities should indicate specifically the demand for particular sports/facilities prior to committing land on the foreshore. The hiring of beach paraphernalia such as seacraft, umbrellas and deckchairs should also be restricted so as not to occupy valuable beach space.

- 7.6.5 Facilities for the practice of certain water sports (such as premises for canoeing and sailing enthusiasts) are indeed lacking and seem to be constraining the practice of certain sports. Since coastal areas such as sandy beaches and natural foreshores need to be safeguarded, it is however opportune to channel the provision of such facilities/premises towards coastal areas that are already developed/committed with such facilities or other uses. Such areas are best identified as part of the Local Plan process.
- 7.6.6 It should also be pointed out that the varying needs for facilities pertaining to individual nautical sports/activities and interrelated beach management concepts are best addressed at a site specific level (ex. rails to facilitate access to the sea at diving sites, small club rooms for storage purposes, slipways to facilitate access of sea craft), so as to respect the sensitivity of certain areas. Only those facilities directly associated with nautical activities that are necessarily located around the coast should however be considered favourably.
- **No additional permits for beach concessions, restrictions regarding the construction of boathouses and/or beachrooms**
- 7.6.7 The coast and direct foreshore should remain accessible to the general public and not be physically segregated from public use. In order to facilitate effective coastal zone management, existing beach concession permit holders should be controlled and certainly not be allowed to further decrease the limited beach spaces and areas available to the general public. In this regard, no new beach concessions or encroachments will be permitted, whilst the general public should not be compelled to hire beach paraphernalia like deckchairs, umbrellas and seacraft from any particular concession holder. Still, the importance of private-public sector cooperation vis-à-vis the management of coastal areas (such as controlled areas to hire beach paraphernalia as an optional service) is acknowledged, yet this should not entail the appropriation of additional land for private use on the foreshore.
- 7.6.8 The construction of boathouses may also be permitted in appropriate locations that should be identified at a local plan level. A boathouse is a single storey structure built in the vicinity of the foreshore to accommodate the storage of boats and fishing equipment. It should be strictly ensured that the application is made by registered part or full time fishermen and that the use is exclusively for fishing-related purposes. Privately owned leisure craft not used for commercial purposes should on the other hand be stored inland (ex. garages within the settlement boundaries) or in appropriate coastal areas which should also be identified in the relevant local plans.
- 7.6.9 In order to make efficient use of coastal space, only comprehensive layouts may be considered, as opposed to the construction of new individual boathouses. Such layouts should consist of linked terraces or clusters of boathouses with adequate provision of car parking spaces, slipways and refuse disposal. Furthermore boathouse sites should not be within a

scheduled, designated or protected area, and no static, touring caravans and/or other temporary structures should be permitted. The provision of services is also not acceptable, whilst the siting, design and use of materials should be sympathetic with the scale, character and appearance of the area.

7.6.10 A change of use from boathouse/storage to beachroom holiday accommodation could however be considered where appropriate. Beachrooms are a new holiday accommodation concept that will only be permitted in those designated areas identified at a local plan level. The emerging North West local plan, for instance, permits the change of use of existing boathouses to beachroom accommodation at specific locations in Mellieha and Bugibba/Qawra, as identified in the area policies. New beachroom holiday accommodation will on the other hand be permitted at Armier.

7.6.11 Comprehensive, well-planned layouts consisting of linked terraces or clusters of accommodation will be required, as opposed to the construction of new individual beachrooms. The design of beachrooms in groups may allow for the provision of boat storage at ground floor level, subject to satisfactory access to communal launching slipways that do not physically restrict public access to the foreshore. Moreover, the location of beachrooms should not be within a scheduled, designated or protected area, the siting and design should be sympathetic with the character of the area and adequate provision should be made for parking and servicing. Proposals should also make adequate provision for sanitary, water, electricity and sewage disposal facilities, whilst a comprehensive management and landscaping scheme should be submitted with every application. No static or touring caravans, or any other temporary structures, will be permitted on site.

- **controlling the development of sports facilities (like waterpolo) that are necessarily located around the coast.**
- **importance of the natural marine environment in the overall diving provision, and the possibility of finding appropriate sites for artificial reefs and/or the submersion of vessels, to serve as diving wrecks**

7.6.12 Waterpolo is a keenly followed sport although practitioners are not expected to exceed 1000 over the Structure Plan period. The current set up of a national pool at Tal-Qroqq together with training pools/pitches adjacent to the respective clubs should suffice in meeting demand in the next twenty years. An additional swimming pool facility, possibly as part of an indoor sports complex, will however probably be needed, due to the projected increase in usage of such facilities for competitive swimming purposes (250 per cent increase from 1000-2500 over a 20 year period).

7.6.13 The upgrade of training facilities for waterpolo clubs in certain areas is also encouraged, especially since such facilities could also be used more

frequently for swimming competitions and training. Proposals to alter the coastal configuration vis-à-vis water polo pitches may in this regard be considered, although a proliferation of such facilities in close proximity is to be avoided and due regard should be paid to the respective seashore characteristics and beach dynamics. Furthermore, the dual use of hotel swimming pool facilities by hotel guests and the local residents provide an opportunity to add to the existing level of provision.

7.6.14 As for diving, the appreciation of the natural marine environment should continue to form the backbone of all underwater activities. In this respect, the management and protection of the designated marine conservation areas is essential in planning for the sustainable growth of diving as a sport and tourism niche. The submersion of vessels to serve as diving wrecks can also be looked at favourably, provided that the necessary measures are taken to ensure that there is no underwater pollution and that the chosen site does not pose any health-related problems. Artificial reefs such as concrete structures will also be considered, as long as they are clean and free of residue. Such reefs can be channelled to specific points on the seabed and are very popular in other countries, contributing to provide more habitat and to increase fish populations.

- **impacts relating to the further development of sailing as a sport, resident sailing, international sailing, charter and offshore activities**

7.6.15 Sailing as a sport, leisure activity and tourism niche is likely to grow in popularity over the Structure Plan Period. Sailing very often requires a suitable infrastructure, which, due to the very nature of the sport, should be located in close proximity to the shoreline. Even regatta racing requires slipways and storage facilities that should be located in coastal locations. In this regard, the provisions highlighted in paragraphs 6.4.3 (to protect the coast from urban development), 7.6.5 (to channel development towards committed areas) and 7.6.6 (to consider favourably, after a case by case analysis, only those facilities requiring a coastal location).are directly applicable within this context.

7.6.16 The main concern regarding sailing relates to the development of marinas; the Malta Maritime Authority (MMA) believes that the forecasted berth requirements for the next 10 years will be met due to the coming on stream of projects such as Dockyard Creek (Cottonera), Lazzaretto Creek (Manoel Island) and Portomaso (St Julian's), yet demand may indeed increase in the second part of the Structure Plan period. In this perspective, the MMA recommends that before committing other bays for marina development, one should at least gauge whether projected occupancy levels at the new marinas in Cottonera, Manoel Island and St Julian's are actually met. It would therefore be opportune to consider other coastal localities for the development of a marina infrastructure *only* if demand over the Plan period considerably exceeds the supply of berths. Other sites like Xemxija (located in northern Malta, as opposed to the existing berthing infrastructure in the Marsamxetto area) may in this regard be considered for the development of a marina only if the MMA identifies the need for additional berths, which in any case should not be earlier than the latter part of the Structure Plan

period. Hard standing facilities will also need to be catered for, as also indicated in the Yachting Subject Study.

7.6.17 In view of the possible growth in demand, it would however be opportune to closely examine the main impacts relating to the development of the three sailing activities highlighted earlier in this topic paper:

- Resident sailing: Resident sailing necessarily requires a sailing harbour infrastructure. As highlighted in Chapter 5, the total number of berthing facilities in the Maltese Islands is 1077, which when added to the berths coming on stream should suffice to meet overall sailing demand in the coming ten years. It should however still be pointed out that resident sailing can in principle give rise to coastal and inland environmental damage (disruption of the foreshore through slipways, visual intrusion and ancillary development), especially in natural sites which should be preserved for their interest. Furthermore, unsuitable developments (such as architectural design which is incompatible with the environment) and those developments that are an economic and physical burden on the surrounding locality/ies should be avoided.
- International sailing: The environmental risk is considerable not only in ports (where resident and international yachts can share facilities) but also in bays, creeks, islets and natural sites which are systematically sought by yachtsmen. Although the development of the sector needs to be looked at positively, it should still be highlighted that overcrowding of nautical sites in the Maltese Islands can lead to the:
 - degradation of the seabed because of anchors
 - accumulation of waste
 - physico-chemical pollution
 - overcrowding of nearby coastal sites
 - difficulty in effecting qualitative controls
- Charter activities: It is relevant to note that charter development only requires a minor surrounding infrastructure in the form of anchorage buoys, sheltered bays, visitor pontoons and a maintenance quay. Marinas are useful but not indispensable, since clients are more on the look out for virgin/interesting sites. The existing marina infrastructure in the Maltese Islands should therefore suffice in accommodating the needs of charter boats. As regards impacts, the seasonal use of the infrastructure, the degradation of the seabed, problems of waste collection and physical pollution are on the other hand amongst the major risks attributable to such an activity.

7.6.18 Moreover, excursions such as fishing trips for foreigners on local fishing boats, submarine leisure trips and the chartering of boats for match racing or to visit other destinations should also be encouraged. Excursions are generally cost-effective, have low negative impacts and give local fishermen and small entrepreneurs a chance to make profits. Nonetheless it should

also be stated that a project in the 1990's to run a glass-bottomed tourist submarine on a commercial basis failed.

- 7.6.19 Possible drawbacks include security problems, the overcrowding of natural sites, marinas and underwater environments.

7.7 Attractions: Cultural and Entertainment Facilities

7.7.1 Strategy

The strategy favours an improvement in the quality of the cultural product offered through the provision of interpretive, didactic and interactive facilities in museums, archaeological and historic sites.

New visitor attractions and entertainment outlets should also be encouraged although such facilities should aim to add variety to (rather than duplicate) the existing product mix.

Where possible, the overall cultural/entertainment offer should also be diversified away from the traditional areas.

The provision of permanent theme/leisure parks will also be considered, although the difficulty in identifying suitable locations constantly arises.

7.7.2 Key Issues

- **need to upgrade the product offer and facilities in existing visitor attractions and archaeological sites**
- **possible joint ventures (such as with non governmental organisations or even the private sector) to secure an improvement of existing attractions**

- 7.7.3 Most of the existing museums and historic sites leave much to be desired in terms of presentation, interpretation and management, and this is not conducive to visitors seeking maximum satisfaction from the site. Moreover, the nature of the product mix offered with regard to private sector developed visitor attractions is not very varied. Indeed, local attractions should not necessarily be based on audio-visual shows or dominated by static dioramas, since an attractive variety of interactive facilities, interpretive techniques and didactic material will encourage more foreigners and locals to visit such sites (besides assisting in the overall attractiveness and hence financial viability of such projects).

- 7.7.4 Improvements in this regard should be welcomed. A number of existing sites require interpretive centres, yet the scale and location of such facilities must take into account the context of the site. Ancillary facilities (catering, lavatories and facilities for those with special needs) are also necessary in most cases to offer a quality product, even though these facilities should not be catered for to the detriment of the site. Furthermore, adequate parking facilities may at times be necessary (depending on the location and scale of

the project) and the siting of such facilities should be carefully selected and planned to avoid any damage to the site, besides minimising visual intrusion.

7.7.5 Many archaeological sites, besides other authentic (as opposed to private sector “man made”) monuments/attractions, cry out for improvement in management and presentation. Entering into joint ventures with non-governmental organisations or even the private sector provides one way to secure an improvement of sites that form part of Malta’s real heritage, though some form of management agreement and monitoring by the relevant authorities is surely needed. In this way, the authorities concerned could increase the profile of such resources in the eyes of both locals and visitors. This would also complement the Ministry of Tourism’s policy to encourage ‘new product components and additional entertainment and leisure facilities, particularly facilities for visitors during inclement weather.’ (Strategic Tourism Development Framework, 1997).

7.7.6 Another possibility is to apply for the use of European funds. The European Union’s Culture 2000 Programme is one such opportunity since it provides the financial support to promote cultural diversity, common cultural heritage and to improve public access to culture, amongst other aspects. The Programme runs until 2004 and covers all cultural fields (such as archaeology, heritage, visual and plastic arts, literature, music, performing arts) and multi-disciplinary cultural activities.

- **need to provide more varied primary and secondary attractions**

7.7.7 Villages and towns all have their own history, traditions and characteristics. Interpretation centres presenting such features may provide an added incentive to attract tourists and local residents to the various villages. These secondary attractions may usually be of a small scale and are unlikely to attract a large number of visitors at the same time. Casa Rocca Piccola (Valletta), Ninu’s Cave (Xaghra) the Folklore/Antiquities Museum (Gharb) and the newly opened Casa Bernard (Rabat) are typical examples of small, family run attractions that present particular features relating to local history, culture and geomorphology. Other local landmarks such as disused quarries could be used as educational visitor attractions portraying particular ways of life (ex. type of quarried stone, excavation methodologies) in an interactive manner.

7.7.8 The provision of such visitor attractions offers the potential of attracting visitors to localities which are still not regularly established on the tourist map. Overprovision of attractions should however be avoided since exceeding the carrying capacity of specific towns/villages might lead to land-use pressures and impacts like hostility with locals, traffic congestion, parking problems, littering and noise pollution.

7.7.9 Moreover, the existing primary attractions across the Maltese Islands may also extend the variety of their didactic experience by presenting a more informative picture of the local heritage and way of life in a sustainable

manner. Such attractions can be either managed by the public sector or even in private hands. The Great Siege of Malta Experience in Valletta is a relatively new attraction aiming to achieve the above. Furthermore, the Museum of Archaeology also upgraded its qualitative interpretation offer, whilst visitor flows at the Hypogeum are being controlled to ensure sustainability. It is also intended that the recently announced marine aquarium project (forming part of the Qawra Coast Development Brief) will give importance to the educational component vis-à-vis Malta's rich marine life.

- **reuse of vacant/derelict dwellings/monuments and infill sites as attractions**
- **more varied distribution of entertainment facilities**
- **encourage leisure initiatives (like the construction of cinemas, theatres and nightclubs) to vary the product offer and/or revitalise night time activities in town centres/specific locations**

7.7.10 Development of cultural and entertainment facilities should be located within the development zone boundaries by making use of vacant/derelict buildings unless the nature of the project requires the provision of large new structures, which could be accommodated in infill sites. If attractions are to be permitted outside development zones, reuse of existing dwellings should be made rather than constructing new buildings, the provision of which are generally discouraged.

7.7.11 Within this context, the potential use of Malta's rich historical patrimony, such as the abandoned fortifications at Ricasoli and St. Elmo (Valletta) or even the Opera House site (Valletta), as visitor attractions is considerable. As regards the former two, an update of the existing development briefs is however solicited so as to ensure an acceptable mix of land uses as part of the overall rehabilitation strategy of such historical monuments.

7.7.12 Government plans for a cultural/historic theme park at Fort Ricasoli and the development of a marine aquarium may in future add to variety in terms of the attractions available to the visitor. Fort St. Elmo may also be an appropriate site for the development of an artists' centre where artists could display their talents in various fields (such as fine arts, sculptures, crafts and jewellery), once the carnival float builders that currently occupy part of the site vacate the premises. The size of the Island is however very restrictive and additional care is therefore needed when considering the provision of major facilities.

7.7.13 The Bay Street Project and the Eden Leisure Group's initiatives in the leisure/entertainment business are to be commended since these projects provide a different recreational experience to tourists and locals alike. Such initiatives should however be encouraged in other established entertainment spots like Marsascala, since the above mentioned projects are both located in Paceville, a few metres distance from each other.

- 7.7.14 Moreover, purposely built and modern cinemas seem to be quite in vogue as can be seen from the development permits issued in this regard. It is important to ensure however that such facilities do not contribute to increase the negative physical impacts such as parking or traffic congestion in determined localities, thus affecting the quality of life of local residents. Moreover, any new cinemas should have a standard of facilities comparable with that already available in the existing cinema complexes.
- 7.7.15 The provision of cinemas (possibly as part of a mixed use development) is acceptable in all primary and secondary town centres as their provision in other smaller towns/villages may not be considered a viable proposition. The development of the Embassy Complex in Valletta needs to be seen in this light as it is expected to diversify and increase the entertainment value of the capital city whilst enhancing the night life provision.
- 7.7.16 The provision of theatres is also appropriate in primary and secondary town centres, and in Entertainment Priority Areas as designated within the various local plans. Entertainment Priority Areas, although also a business zone, have a “unique feel” because they are the locations where uses such as take-always, bars, restaurants and nightclubs gravitate. They are also areas that attract foreign visitors and thus the location of tourist accommodation facilities. These areas come to life in the evenings and can attract large numbers of pedestrians. State schools (halls and large meeting/class rooms) could be used as venues for rehearsals and local productions by theatre groups. Schools could thus act as a catalyst of recreational activity in the afternoons and early evenings, since the multi-use concept (raised vis-à-vis the better use of existing sports facilities) could indeed be extended to incorporate cultural activity such as drama and music. Indeed, pop musicians often rehearse in private garages within urban areas and their activity may give rise to bad neighbourliness. A management structure allowing them to make use of school premises could ease the problem.
- 7.7.17 From a regional if not national perspective, it should also be said that facilities to accommodate theatrical activities are practically lacking in localities such as St. Paul’s Bay and Sliema, which are frequented by a large number of locals and tourists. Theatres in the above locations would serve as regional centres (for locals residing in the North West and Central areas) and would undoubtedly help diversify the overall tourist recreational offer by providing evening entertainment within easy access of many tourist accommodation establishments. A mix of land uses to include leisure could also be appropriate in order to make the whole project more feasible.
- 7.7.18 In view of the level of activity generated by customers within and outside nightclubs (as also highlighted in Chapter 5), the further mix and variety of clubs/entertainment spots should be mainly encouraged in established localities within the temporary provisions schemes, subject to adherence to the legal planning framework.
- 7.7.19 If nightclubs are to be permitted outside development zones, reuse through the conversion of derelict buildings should be considered since the further

sprawl of development into the countryside will be generally discouraged. Adequate safeguards should also be taken to reduce impacts such as noise and traffic generation, parking problems and the protection of good agricultural land.

- **provision of a permanent theme and/or leisure park**

- 7.7.20 An island the size of Malta can probably ill afford to host a permanent theme park on the lines of Gardaland or Alton Towers. Past experience shows that even smaller theme parks on these Islands have not succeeded as commercial ventures because of their inability to operate as healthy businesses (such as the theme park at Rinella, even though visitation figures are not available). Moreover, theme parks take up considerable tracts of land, create impacts such as traffic generation, parking problems, visual/noise pollution and may need to be located outside development zone (depending on its theme), which runs counter to the existing planning legislation and policies.
- 7.7.21 Smaller facilities in the form of temporary or permanent leisure parks could on the other hand be more appropriate. Temporary leisure parks similar to the one usually set up in Blata l-Bajda are usually seasonal facilities that are dismantled after a period of time. Permanent leisure parks can also be acceptable, although the difficulty in finding acceptable sites constantly arises. The Splash and Fun Park at Bahar-ic-Caghaq, for instance, has over the years provided a wider variety of leisure facilities, to include water chutes, a go-cart track, a dolphinarium and snack bar. Although visitation figures are not available, the continuous quest for improved facilities over a span of 15 years by the concerned developers shows that demand for these type of facilities does exist. Yet coastal locations are not always appropriate due to predominantly ecological considerations.
- 7.7.22 In the above light, the development of leisure and theme parks will be considered, although leisure parks are likely to be more appropriate in the Maltese perspective. Any new leisure parks should be sited within the temporary provisions schemes, and are best identified through the local plan provision. Yet permanent sites would be appropriate in lieu of the granting of permits for temporary parks in areas that could otherwise be retained as open spaces or freed for other land uses.
- 7.7.23 As for major leisure projects requiring considerable tracts of land, the Planning Authority will expect applicants to carry out an economic assessment indicating their economic relevance to the Maltese Islands, the feasibility of leisure/theme parks (large theme parks usually require a visitation of millions) and an assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed project, prior to the processing of such development applications. Besides having due regard to this economic assessment, the Planning Authority will also endeavour to establish a number of criteria relating to the satisfactory siting of permanent facilities (both leisure and theme parks). A scenario whereby the negative impacts outweigh the positive impacts to be

derived through the development of such projects will not be deemed acceptable.

7.7.24 Criteria to gauge the land-use implications of leisure and theme parks should include the visual/landscape impact, the impact on protected areas (including coastal foreshores), existing buildings and structures (especially those of historic importance), the scale and mass of new structures and the impact on adjacent uses, traffic impacts and the adequacy or otherwise of approach roads, together with parking facilities.

7.7.25 Since any approved permanent theme or leisure parks will be considered as national/regional facilities, the Planning Authority will seek to ensure that there will be a fair distribution of such facilities (as opposed to a concentration of facilities in particular localities). A variety of themes and/or facilities is also encouraged if more than one facility is to be developed.

8. Summary of Key Issues

8.0.1 Further to the discussion raised during this topic paper, the following are the key issues which will be tackled as part of the Structure Plan Review policies on leisure and recreation:

8.1 Outdoor Rural and Urban Recreational Areas

- standards of provision for urban recreational facilities
- protection and upgrading of the overall rural recreational provision
- impacts of hunting and trapping
- provision of adequate, well managed sites for camping and caravan holidays

8.2 Catering Establishments

- catering establishments in town centres and selected neighbourhood centres.

8.3 Land-Based Sports

- the multi-use, sharing and upgrading of existing sports facilities, together with the better utilisation of sports facilities located in schools around the Maltese Islands, so as to decrease the need to allocate additional land for new sports facilities.
- the role and importance of indoor multi-purpose sports complexes in providing modern facilities for a wide range of disciplines.
- provision of new sports facilities at a local and national level: new football, cycling, model aircraft, cue sport, martial arts, bodybuilding, badminton, squash, handball, fitness and bowls facilities needed in specific locations, whilst an upgrade of existing tennis, athletics, hockey, netball, basketball, volleyball, cricket and rugby facilities would suffice
- restricting the provision of those sports such as horseracing and golf since their provision requires large tracts of land
- channelling sports that create major impacts away from sensitive areas, whilst acknowledging the need for a well organised off-roading facility and/or a multi-purpose track for circuit motorsports with common support facilities.

8.4 Nautical Sports and Coastal Activity

- avoiding conflicting watersport activities and restricting the use of private areas (for kiosks and the hiring of seacraft, umbrellas and deckchairs) on the foreshore

- channelling the demand for the provision of coastal facilities and premises (re- the development of watersport activities such as sailing or boardsailing) towards coastal areas that are already developed/committed with such facilities.
- avoiding overprovision of coastal facilities by ensuring that demand for every sport/facility is well established prior to committing additional land on the foreshore
- no additional permits for beach concessions, restrictions regarding the construction of boathouses and/or beachrooms
- controlling the development of sports facilities (like waterpolo) that are necessarily located around the coast.
- importance of the natural marine environment in the overall diving provision, and the possibility of finding appropriate sites for artificial reefs and/or the submersion of vessels, to serve as diving wrecks
- impacts relating to the further development of sailing as a sport, resident sailing, international sailing, charter and offshore activities

8.5 Cultural and Entertainment Attractions

- need to upgrade the product offer and facilities in existing visitor attractions and archaeological sites
- possible joint ventures (such as with non governmental organisations or even the private sector) to secure an improvement of existing attractions
- need to provide more varied primary and secondary attractions
- reuse of vacant/derelict dwellings/monuments and infill sites as attractions
- more varied distribution of entertainment facilities
- encourage leisure initiatives (like the construction of cinemas and theatres) to vary the product offer and/or revitalise night time activities in town centres/specific locations
- provision of a permanent theme/leisure park.