

## **Integrated Management of Specially Protected Coastal Area in Malta**

**Report for the period May 2003, to December, 2003, on activities carried out by The Gaia Foundation as Project Manager, as the final phase of the said LIFE Project.**

### **Project Dionysius -Beach Management**

- 1. The safety lines for Ghajn Tuffieha and Golden Sands that were reintroduced for the summer months were instrumental once again in maintaining high levels of safety. The summer went by without incident at Ramla. At Ghajn Tuffieha in August, however, one person suffered a heart attack whilst swimming. He succumbed to the attack prior to the arrival of an ambulance.**
- 2. One of the new set of signs on waste separation, together with 2 colour coded bins, were vandalized at night by some men who set them alight. The men ran off when they saw the night watchman approaching from the other end of the beach.**
- 3. The low lying small signs that were placed last summer along the sand dune area indicating the protected nature of the site at Ramla seemed to serve their purpose well, increasing public awareness without trying to close the site off. A beach warden was in attendance at random hours on weekdays and more so on weekends. The said signs suffered wear and tear, and the occasional vandalism by the end of the swimming season, and will need replacing by the next season.**
- 4. The vehicular access points to Ghajn Tuffieha bay and to the tower that were completely overhauled in the Spring lead to a big reduction of illegal entry to the beach at night. In previous years the chains and bollards were frequently vandalized. The new bollards, made of thick steel, and filled with concrete, placed 1 metre below ground have not been so vandalized. Once again however a padlock was broken and had to be replaced by the warden.**
- 5. Owing to lack of funds, extra duty police officers were not hired in the summer season, to assist the wardens in their duties on land and sea on the weekends in August and September. This service was suspended for the first time in 3 years. Wardens were however used throughout the week and longer hours on weekends. Their main tasks were to provide information on the site as well as to secure implementation of environmental as well as maritime regulations (safety for bathers).**

### **Project Poseidon – Marine Conservation and Safety.**

- 6. Sea patrols, that are usually carried out on weekends in the summer months, by an extra duty police officer and a Foundation warden, using the Poseidon patrol boat, were limited to patrols without a police officer. These covered the entire area between Fomm ir-Rih and Rdum id-Delli, and included patrols to the Ramla site in Gozo. The patrols served to enforce regulations pertaining to dumping, to check for oil slicks and water quality and bathing safety regulations, but were not deemed as effective as in prior years owing to the absence of accompanying police officers.**

### **Project Olympus – Coastal Conservation**

- 7. Regular wardening was carried out on both sites to control breaches of regulations in connection with offroading, bikes and campers. The number of breaches of these regulations continues to decline as the public is generally more aware of the protected and important status of the areas of Ramla and Ghajn Tuffieha, although some few exceptions continue to defy the regulations, most notably some off road motor bikes, who go so far as to flout the law by offroading without any registration plates in order to avoid identification. These are very difficult to control, even by extra duty police officers commissioned to assist in patrolling the sites.**
- 8. An updated revegetation survey for Ghajn Tuffieha was commissioned, with a view to tackle the phase out of the extensive alien *Acacia cyanophylla*, as part of the brief to the site Manager detailed in the Conservation Order for Ghajn Tuffieha. Work on the report commenced in the Autumn. The report, together with the Manager's phase out plan is expected to be completed by January, 2004 and submitted to MEPA thereafter.**
- 9. Ecological surveying by Dr. Adriana Vella???**

### **Project Hermes – Dissemination of Information**

- 10. The LIFE Project work on the 2 sites came to an end on the 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2003. The next 2 months saw the compilation and completion of all the project reporting. Full details were submitted by the Manager to IcoD, the Project Director, which in turn assessed the project and compiled the said reports, which were remitted to the LIFE Unit in Brussels, as well as to the Ministry for Rural Affairs and the environment at the end of July and the beginning of August respectively.**
- 11. In June, The Manager organized the first 2 workshops for students from the Verdala International School. The 2 day workshops took place at the Elysium Visitor Centre and involved an interesting blend of environmental education, social skills, healthy eating and lifestyle, and outdoor life. There was a very good response from both students and parents, who attended a**

student presentation of projects at the end of the workshops. Another 2 workshops were organized in October.

- 12. In October a cultural/environmental event, the second edition of the ROOTS Festival, took place with the collaboration of The British Council Northern Ireland. This was the first main event that took place following the completion of the LIFE Project. A series of 2 nights of music and dance were held at the Elysium Nursery Reservoir, which doubled up as an amphitheatre in the dry summer month. The British Council commissioned 2 artists from Northern Ireland, Deborah Malcolmson and Marie Therese Gibbon, to paint a mural along the old basement water tank that formed part of the old water treatment plant and that is currently used for water storage. The mural progresses from scenes of over development to ones of natural beauty. The event took place on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> October as part of a launch of Elysium as Malta's first environment visitor centre. Other artists that participated in the event included the Jason Paul Band, Katambu, Contact Dance Company and The Fire Throwers. The event was sponsored by the Malta Tourism Authority, Cisk Export, Sonlit, Sound System, Maltacom and Dive.com. A follow up meeting was held with representatives of British Council Malta and Northern Ireland in December to discuss the potential of using the arts in order to promote awareness of the environment.**
- 13. The second issue of The Foundation's "Hermes" newsletter was published in the Spring, with a print run of 1,000. Copies were disseminated to all Departments, Local councils and Public Authorities, as well as other stakeholders and Foundation members.**
- 14. A brochure on the habitats of Maltese Islands was designed and printed. Copies are made available at various events organized by the Manager, as well as to all visitors to the Elysium Centre. The brochure provides a clear indication of importance of the local natural habitats in coastal area management.**
- 15. Work commenced on the design of a webpage on eco tourism as an addition to the Manager's website at [www.projectgaia.org](http://www.projectgaia.org). The webpage would not only provide information on the manager's contribution to establishing eco tourism in the Northwest, but also on the coastal landscape of the Maltese Islands.**
- 16. In October, work was completed on the design and production of 10 information boards, covering a wide range of topics from biodiversity to sustainable agriculture and waste management. These have been designed as all weather mobile units, that could be used at the Elysium Centre as well as any other location. The boards are designed to be easily readable and focus on identification of problems, Gaia's work in the related field and suggestions to the public for a more sustainable lifestyle.**

- 17. In October, a green hotels guide for Malta was put together by Amy Townsend, author of “The Smart Office”, and a team of students from James Madison University. The said guide is expected to be launched publicly and jointly by the Manager, the MTA and the MHRA in the beginning of 2004.**
- 18. In December preliminary discussions were commenced between the Organic Unit within the Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment, the Gaia Foundation and representatives of the Malta Organic Agricultural Movement, with a view to establishing the way forward for the organization and promotion of organic food in the Maltese Islands, and in working to full compliance with the EU regulations by the 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2004.**
- 19. In October, The Gaia Foundation participated in the launch of a Bio Platform for the Maltese Islands at The University of Malta. A presentation of its coastal management projects was delivered to the participant stakeholders.**
- 20. Throughout the Autumn, a number of tours were carried out at the Elysium Centre by tourists, mostly of German nationality. Tours include a full introduction to the Manager’s coastal management projects in the Maltese Islands, as well as to the propagation of indigenous and endemic species at the Elysium Centre.**
- 21. In late November and December, Gaia launched a Festival of Trees at its centre in Elysium. The purpose was to increase public awareness of local habitats and indigenous and endemic species. A stand was also set up on 2 consecutive Saturdays in Sliema.**

#### **Project Phoenix – Waste management**

- 22. Beach cleaning at both Ramla and Ghajn Tuffieha Bay was carried out on a daily basis, on foot from May to July. The Foundation has started cooperation work with a new Government initiative, called “progett skart” (project waste), that has provided skips for glass, metal and plastic. The Foundation’s separated waste bins located at Ghajn Tuffieha are serviced by the tourism department beach waste personnel. The response of the beach cleaning team was however quite slow, and its work had to be constantly overseen and supplemented by Gaia Staff. Overall, however, the public response, to the skips was positive.**
- 23. One of the main problems that persists in relation to beach cleaning is the fact that the Government personnel employed for the job take long periods of absence in the winter months, leaving the beaches in a serious state of neglect with respect to waste, especially during periods when the prevailing North Westerly blows. The reason given is that time in lieu is taken on account of the long hours in summer. The beach cleaners, however, are not seen during the summer at any time after 9 pm.**

## **Project Persephone – Sustainable Agriculture**

- 24. A mixture of mushroom compost and Posidonia Meadows compost was added to the fields prior to planting in September. The Posidonia was deposited in the Persephone field upon collection by the beach cleaning contractor at Ghajn Tuffieha. Prior to use, the Posidonia was washed down thoroughly in order to remove salt deposits.**
- 25. The sustainable agriculture project has carried on into this project period, with sowing of a number of crops, namely:**

**The brassicae family, cabbages, cauliflower, kohlrabi, and broccoli; broad beans, radish, garlic, lettuce, potatoes, peas and beetroots. Rosemary, Basil and Artichokes planted in previous seasons were retained in accordance with the principles of permaculture.**

- 26. There was no harvesting in the period up to December. The first harvest commenced in December. Once again problems related to pest control have been minimal. Snails taking shelter in the rubble walls have been kept at bay with a line of lime at the perimeter of the fields, while chicken wire was used to protect against rabbit attacks. Onions and garlic, sticky Fleabane and Marigolds were planted amongst vegetable crops as repellents. A spray mix of onions garlic and chili peppers was also used.**

## **Project Elysium**

- 27. The large reservoir located at the Elysium Visitor Centre, formally a sewage treatment plant, that was restored in late 2002, early 2003, has served as a good water storage. Water collected here was in turn transferred to the round tank. The manager expects that the collection of rain water at the centre would meet its needs up to the month of April.**
- 28. Biodiversity and tree planting: work at the nursery focused on the sowing, sticking and repotting of various indigenous and endemic species, detailed below in paragraph ... Soil was also moved for repotting, and weeding and cleaning was carried out throughout the nursery. A total of 2337 trees and shrubs were planted throughout the period. These are also detailed in paragraph 38.**
- 29. The trees and shrubs planted at Ghajn Tuffieha were irrigated by drip from the water sources at the Nursery up to October. Areas irrigated were the Golden Bay Headland, and the clay slopes above Ghajn Tuffieha Bay. The first two sites were irrigated twice a week regularly up to September, and once a week in October .**

**30. Planting on site at Ghajn Tuffieha, sowing, sticking, layering and repotting at the tree nursery carried out in the report period were as follows:**

**August:**

**Repotting : 300 Aleppo Pine  
              : 200 Sandarac Gum trees  
Sowing     : 200 Spartum Juncus**

**September:**

**Sowing:    :first trial – 200 Hoary Rock Rose**

**Planting:**

**Place     Inside Elysium Visitor Centre  
Species    1 Periploca angustifolia  
              34 Glaucium flavum  
              10 Centaurea Crassifolius  
              7 Rosmarinus officinalis (indigenous stock)  
              10 Hedera helix  
              1 Vitex agnus castus  
              1 Chamaerops humilis  
              18 Capparis spinosa**

**October:**

**Sowing:    300 Calendula.  
              100 Yellow Poppy  
              200 Sea Fennel  
Sticking:   500 Maltese Rock Centaury  
              270 Shrubby Orache,  
              500 Golden Samphire,  
              170 Maltese Everlasting.**

**Planting: at Elysium Centre:**

**5 Tetraclinis articulata  
9 Vitex agnus castus**

**Near Ghajn Tuffieha Car Park**

**50 Pinus halipensis**

**November:**

**Sticking:  200 Shrubby Orache  
              200 Maltese Cliff Orache  
              146 Maltese Everlasting**

**December:**

**Repotting: 95 Curry Plants**

**Sowing: 100 Almond**  
**200 Rosemary**  
**172 Shrubby Orache**  
**200 Maltese Everlasting**  
**54 Maltese Cliff Orache**

**Planting: Golden Bay Headland:**  
**330 Pinus halipensis**  
**35 Tetraclinis articulata.**

**Rudolf Ragonesi**