

Malta Low Carbon Development Strategy

Public Consultation Document June 2021

The Gozo Business Chamber's Feedback to the Public Consultation Document



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THE GOZO BUSINESS CHAMBER

1. The Gozo Business Chamber's feedback

The Chamber notes with satisfaction Government's commitment to reduce carbon emissions and to assist "the piloting of carbon efforts and new technologies (carbontech)"¹. It also notes the reference that "the island of Gozo can become carbon neutral before Malta's 2050 target"². This commitment is also reiterated in other parts of the document.³

The Chamber believes that in this regard a green economy niche can be established in Gozo through the piloting of carbon efforts and new technologies on the island, prior to these being deployed on a national and also international scale, as Gozo can become a foreign direct investment destination in this area.

Malta's proposed economic vision which is currently in its consultation phase reflects this direction. Among the proposed new economic activities which are intended to create new ecosystems and clusters one can find green finance, green energy exchanges, and other green activities such as renewable energy.⁴

However, when it comes to Gozo the economic vision puts special emphasis on the fact that the generation of new economic activity on the island needs to be fuelled by the green economy. Carbon-tech solutions are being envisaged as one of the areas by which the Government intends to create new economic activity on the island.⁵

It is also interesting to note in this economic vision that the Government is considering "the transformation of Gozo into a carbon neutral island."⁶ In fact there were various announcements from Government quarters that the "island of Gozo can become carbon neutral before Malta's 2050 target".⁷ The Gozo Business Chamber has constantly advocated this target, and it will continue to support any initiative which will work towards that end. The Chamber believes that Gozo can become a best practice example on how sustainability can be the generator of new activity. As an example, carbontech solutions can be tested in Gozo prior to these being deployed on a national level. Some years back the Government had launched the eco Gozo strategy. We still believe that this is something which can be achieved for our island.

In the transport Gozo can be a pioneer in the **uptake of electric vehicles** through:

- **Increased incentives for Gozitan residents to shift to electric vehicles;**
- **Reduced ferry tickets for Maltese residents crossing over to Gozo with electric vehicles; and**
- **The complete shift of Gozo's public transport system to smaller, and more frequent electric buses. Larger buses, which can also be electric or hybrid would only be maintained between the main routes such as Mġarr and Victoria.**

As indicated in the consultation document "road transport is the main source of particulate matter and noise and represents important shares in the emissions of a number of other pollutants, including nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, ozone, sulphur dioxide, metallic compounds and benzene".⁸ Nonetheless the incentives indicated above should be complemented with significant investment in the charging infrastructure in Gozo, and an investment in training to ensure that the private sector in Gozo has the required capability to service such vehicles.

¹ Ministry for the Environment, Climate Change and Planning (2021), *Malta Low Carbon Development Strategy*, p.16

² Ibidem.

³ Ibid., p. 20.

⁴ MIMCOL (2021), *A Future-Proof Malta. Malta's Economic Vision 2021-2031*, p. 20.

⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

⁶ Ibid., p. 34.

⁷ Ministry for the Environment, Climate Change and Planning (2021), *Malta Low Carbon Development Strategy*, p.16

⁸ Ibid., p. 43

One should also consider, when formulating the next public service obligation for the ferry transport between the two islands, that the **ferries should be hybrid vessels**. Nonetheless the Chamber as one of the promoters of the permanent link between the two islands agrees with the subsea tunnel between Gozo and Malta and welcomes the fact that “this is assumed to reduce the requirement for gasoil used in internal navigation by around 50%”.⁹

In relation to transport one of the measures highlighted in the consultation document is to “encourage teleworking and remote working.”¹⁰ In January 2021, the Government inaugurated the first remote working space in Santa Venera.¹¹ **A similar space should be set up in Gozo targeted specifically for Gozitan residents working in the public sector on the main island of Malta.**

⁹ Ibid., p. 44

¹⁰ Ibidem.

¹¹ The Government of Malta. Office of the Principal Permanent Secretary (13 January 2021), *PR210072en. Press Release by the Office of the Principal Permanent Secretary* (online) : <https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/DOI/Press%20Releases/Pages/2021/January/13/pr210072en.aspx> [accessed 10 July 2021].