



Working  
for a  
better  
future

10 electoral  
proposals



vision



BirdLife Malta wishes to see that our Islands have a healthy, natural environment with rich biodiversity and thriving ecosystems.

BirdLife Malta wants to see local people knowledgeable and aware of the value and importance of our natural environment and strive to protect it.

# 1. Land use

Land and natural habitat are a scarce resource in our islands. Malta ranks first in Europe in urbanisation, with 33% of built-up areas, followed by 13% in Belgium. BirdLife Malta believes that Outside Development Zones (ODZ) should be respected and even increased to benefit the health and well-being of all citizens.

**The area of ODZ is to remain the same or increase.** This means that the area of land that has been designated as ODZ area will remain the same in terms of size. If a development proposal is approved inside a designated ODZ area, then another area currently not ODZ must be designated as such.



## 2. Wildlife crime

BirdLife Malta believes that the laws of Malta are adequate but there is a dire need for enforcement. **All enforcement of environmental laws should be within the remit of the Environment and Resources Authority**, the authority specifically set up to safeguard the environment and wildlife. Unfortunately ERA has been assigned the competence and responsibility of all environmental legislation except those protecting wild birds. These laws currently fall within the remit of the Wild Birds Regulations Unit. The Wild Birds Regulation Unit should be removed and an appropriate section should be set up within ERA.



**The setting up of a Wildlife Crime Unit within the Malta Police Force.** Wildlife crime is not just another routine contravention. It requires specific police officers that are trained to know the law, identify the species and know the habitats.

We want the Police Force to have a specialised unit dedicated and trained on wildlife crime. Furthermore BirdLife Malta believes eNGOs should be allowed to assist and collaborate with the unit in all aspects of enforcing the law including fieldwork, reporting, investigation and prosecution.



### 3. Urbanscapes



Given the intense density of building on the island, there are areas on the island where green spaces are lacking. In this respect we believe there should be an effort to **introduce green roofs on the island**, thus creating an additional urban habitat for local flora and fauna. At the same time this brings

nature back closer to us. The following measures should be implemented to support the introduction of green roofs:

- 20% of government roofs should be converted to green roofs
- Incentive for businesses to convert their roofs to green roofs
- Domestic incentives similar to other incentives introduced by the state, to support the introduction of green roofs, especially in highly urbanised areas and the fortified cities.

## 4. Green schools

**All schools should have green spaces.** The scope of such areas should not only serve as a lung for the school, but also be a venue where our children can learn academic subjects in a natural environment rather than in a classroom. Research has shown that children engage, focus and participate more when within a natural environmental setting. All new schools should be designed with this in mind, whilst existing schools should be redesigned to meet this requirement. A target of **50% of existing schools should have green spaces within the next 5 years.**



Apart from the infrastructural changes, government should empower the participation of schools in environment-friendly actions based on sustainability. **Teachers**, in particular those in primary schools, **should be trained on the natural environment.** This will enable our school children to grow with more

understanding, respect and consciousness towards our natural heritage.



## 5. Natura 2000 sites



Natura 2000 sites are important conservation sites within the Maltese Islands. In this respect **management plans for all Natura 2000 sites should be implemented.** With respect to the marine SPAs, a conservation measures plan is the next step.



We believe that these should be done in partnership with eNGOs, with ERA executing its function as a regulator and the eNGOs as operators and guardians of these sites. It is our recommendation that as part of the management plan **the areas in and adjacent to Natura 2000 sites should be pesticide free.**



## 6. Pollution



The closure of the Marsa power station has marked an improvement in the air quality of the harbour area. Few are aware that the cruise liners berthed inside the

Grand Harbour have small power stations on board each vessel which are left running throughout their stay in Malta. The pollution levels in the area, when there is more than one cruise liner, are similar to still having Marsa power station active. In this respect, we believe that suitable measures for Malta should be applied by relevant stakeholders to improve negative impact caused by air pollution from ships

Furthermore, a Sulphur Emission Control Area (SECA) in northern Europe leads to tremendous health benefits for the local population as a result of air quality improvements and lower impacts on the climate and environment. Vessels navigating in this area use cleaner shipping fuel and we believe that **the Mediterranean should also be designated as an Emission Controlled Area.**

The Maltese government should lead this initiative first within the Mediterranean EU member states and then seek to achieve convention across the whole region.



## 7. Waste

Waste has become a growing environmental concern. In this respect, we suggest the **introduction of compulsory separation of all waste at home**. Given our climate the government may choose to support the introduction of garbage disposal units fitted inside kitchen sinks to handle biowaste.

Given that Malta is an island, we should be further concerned on the alarming level of plastics in the sea. **Immediate action needs to be taken to stop plastic from ending up in the sea and decreasing the levels of plastics in the sea**. If strong action is not taken, science is showing that within one decade we will not be able to harvest anything from the sea that is not contaminated with plastics and chemicals. This is a threat as serious as climate change.



## 8. Water & contaminants



Malta is one of the world's ten most water scarce countries. Our only source of freshwater, aquifer groundwater, is over-extracted and over-polluted.

Surface freshwater habitats in Malta are valuable for biodiversity as well as aquifer recharge. BirdLife Malta advocates for a special pilot project, aimed at managing a site with high surface water potential for both aquifer recharge and habitat restoration. Such a site would be an excellent demonstration case study for national as well as international water and biodiversity management.

**Malta should become the first European organic country.** Given also the recent news about the high levels of pesticides found in Maltese crops, we believe that the Maltese Islands can turn this negative position to become the first organic country in the EU. This will have health benefits in terms of the food and our ground water, tourism benefits and environmental benefits. The agricultural industry should be properly assisted to convert its practices to grow all food in an organic manner in a five-year support plan.



## 9. Derogations



**BirdLife Malta believes that the derogations for trapping and spring hunting should cease.** The European Birds' Directive is clear about spring hunting and trapping stating that migratory birds should be protected to reach their

breeding grounds during this time of year. BirdLife Malta's long-standing insistence on the need for protecting the Turtle Dove based on scientific facts has been proven correct with the recent implementation of the moratorium currently protecting the species this spring.

Trapping however, carries no justification for derogation at any time of year. Not only does this harm the birds that are caught, but trapping sites also cause long-term damage to the natural habitat. In this respect, **there should be no derogation on trapping.**

**Political parties should declare in their electoral manifesto their intention to apply any form of derogation to EU legislation that can have an impact on wildlife and/or habitats.** A derogation that is not declared in the electoral manifesto cannot be executed unless by referendum.

## 10. Supporting NGOs

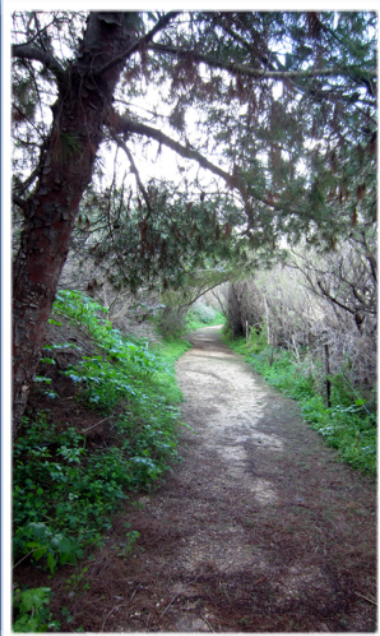
NGOs in Malta have a lot to offer towards the running and development of our country. The Government should continue entrusting more work to NGOs in their area of specialisation through Management or Service Agreements

The Government should create incentives for commercial enterprises to support NGOs

The Government should address the fact that an NGO's running costs are 18% higher than commercial enterprises due to VAT.

The Government should devise a system that aids NGOs that have positively managed projects through EU funding by easing the problems of cash flow experienced due to the way the funds are settled.





BirdLife Malta has made a positive change in the environmental awareness of the Maltese people including the Government.

We wish to see a growth in this change that will continue to benefit everyone.



BirdLife Malta strives for the common good of our country and its people.

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