

Dwejra is to be lit up: Government's "Protection" Law Is a Blatant Betrayal of Dwejra and a Fraud on the Public

The undersigned organisations condemn, in the strongest possible terms, the destructive bill drafted by government under the pretence of "protecting" Dwejra. This law does not protect Dwejra. It vandalises it. It is a calculated assault on the last remaining dark site of the Maltese Islands, dressed up in green language to hoodwink the public.

The law will be allowing lighting to be legally introduced at Dwejra. Permitting lighting until midnight at Dwejra is utterly incompatible with the Gozo and Comino Local Plan, whose policy on Dark Sky Heritage Areas (GZ-DARK-1) states unambiguously that there should be no lighting in this site. Darkness is not an optional aesthetic feature to be negotiated away – it is the very essence of what makes Dwejra unique, scientifically valuable, and ecologically irreplaceable.

Yet government now proposes a regime where lighting is explicitly permitted, and where "new permanent external lighting fixtures" are supposedly prohibited unless permitted by the Authority. This is not protection. This is a loophole large enough to drive a floodlit truck through it! Its real intention is obvious: to legitimize *existing* and so-called "non-permanent" illegal lighting, allow it to remain, and pave the way for further degradation through exceptions.

Even worse, the bill openly allows for certain types of lighting. This is indefensible. Dwejra – on land just as much as on sea – must remain dark from sundown until sunrise, with no exceptions. Dwejra's night sky draws people from all walks of life. Its darkness is essential for astronomical observation, for the education and training of students carrying out scientific work, and for the conservation of vulnerable species such as shearwater, which are fatally disoriented by artificial light. There is no "acceptable" lighting here. There never was.

This law should state one simple, honest sentence: **no external lighting fixtures shall be permitted from sundown until sunrise** – exactly as the Local Plan already demands. No exceptions, no discretionary permits, and no backdoors.

ERA and the minister responsible cannot plead ignorance. They were warned – clearly, forcefully, and repeatedly. The Dwejra Steering Committee, on which some of the undersigned NGOs served, was opposed to this atrocity. Instead of listening, government has chosen to plough over everyone. It is therefore no surprise that the same document will now reduce NGO representation on the committee to a single member and expels Malta's delegate to UNESCO altogether. This is not streamlining; it is deliberate sidelining of independent voices and oversight.

Dwejra's night sky has been fought for over many years, through research, consultation, and wide consensus. Government has now ridden roughshod over all of it, ploughing ahead with a proposal that shreds trust, ignores science, and mocks public duty.

Back in March 2025, a broad coalition of academic and environmental organisations stood united in calling for stronger, not weaker, protection of Dwejra's night sky. That call has been contemptuously ignored.

This is a textbook case of environmental double-speak: a government pretending to care while doing the exact opposite; claiming protection while authorising destruction; invoking sustainability while rubbishing scientific advice and common sense. Dwejra does not need cosmetic laws and hollow slogans. It needs darkness, integrity, and the courage to say no. This bill fails on all counts.

We call on Hon. Miriam Dalli to urgently change course and put an end to hollow claims of protection while presiding over the systematic dismantling of one of Malta's most precious natural assets. This shameful attempt to rebrand environmental damage as stewardship is intellectually dishonest and morally bankrupt.

We also make a direct appeal to Hon. Clint Camilleri, Minister for Gozo and Planning, and a Gozitan himself. Dwejra is not an abstract policy file – it is part of Gozo's identity and heritage. If Camilleri truly cares for his home island, this is the moment for him to stand up and be counted. Silence now will be read as complicity in the destruction of what little remains unspoilt.

We are taking very clear note of the direction government is choosing. This document sends a loud and unmistakable signal about whose interests are being served, and at whose expense. History, the scientific community, and the public will judge accordingly.

We will be fighting back with all our might to defend Dwejra from this calculated and irreversible act of environmental vandalism.

The public is strongly urged to send their objections to era.policy@era.org.mt by the **3rd of March, 2026**, keeping in copy savingdwejra@gmail.com. The email should include the text: "Lights at Dwejra must remain switched off between sunset and sunrise, and not allowed to remain switched on until midnight."

Signatories:

Birdlife Malta
Din l-Art Helwa
Din l-Art Helwa Ghawdex
Flimkien għal Ambjent Aħjar
Friends of the Earth Malta
Għawdix
Moviment Graffiti
Ramblers Malta
The Astronomical Society of Malta
Wirt Ghawdex