

## **Plan for South Park: A nature park and ecotourism destination**

- A brief outline of a proposal to turn the area between Smart City and Zonqor point into a nature park and ecotourism destination.

### **Aims and objectives:**

A nature park in the South of Malta would provide a number of ecological and economic benefits:

- the conservation of the Site of Scientific and Ecological Importance (as proposed for scheduling in the South Malta Local Plan)
- the conservation of the habitats and species for which the site has been proposed
- the maintenance and restoration of conditions necessary to support rejuvenated populations of these habitats and species
- development of opportunities for migrating birds
- Research and monitoring of the designated area and habitats and species
- To eliminate, then prevent, exploitation or occupation inimical to the purposes of the designation – in particular littering and dumping.
- Sustainable development of the area for high value ecotourism through the use of existing unused buildings and the footprints of others, including Fort St Leonard. This can help fund environmental protection of the area.
- Development of limited areas for public education and appreciation

### **Links South Malta Local Plan:**

The relevant areas is covered by the South of Malta Local Plan. There are a number of key priorities for the south of Malta related to environmental protection, restoration, access and development:

**Environmental Protection:** The Plan proposes a number of Areas of Ecological Importance and Sites of Scientific Importance (SMCO 03), including maritime gariggu communities along the coast and the coastal stretch between Xghajra, Zabbar and Zonqor point. These sites have a general presumption against development will MEPA endeavouring to safeguard and protect these areas.

A key element of the development of a nature park will be to ensure the conservation, protection and restoration of the communities and habitats.

**Access:** SMCO 05 aims to promote and safeguard public access along the coast. In contrast to the potential privatisation of coastal areas, including prime bathing areas which should not be allowed anyways, designating the site as a nature park can help improve the public experience of the site.

The coastal stretch in question and surrounding area is considered to be an area of High Landscape Value (SMCO 06). This reiterates the presumption against the creation of new built structures. The plan highlights the recreational value of the area. The proposal would aim to enhance the feeling of remoteness and open space whilst improving access for walking and cycling for example.

The proposed development of 3 hotels is likely to lead to the privatisation of prime bathing areas in contradiction to this policy. Effective and appropriate management of a nature park will improve access to these key areas.

**Visitors and local experience:** Policy SMTO 02 advocate for the development of visitor attractions which would enhance visitor experience to heritage resources. Walking and cycling routes in rural areas are key to encouraging access to the countryside and to connect heritage features (SMRE 02). The local plan for the Xghajra area is through the reinforcement of the domestic tourism role and addressing the negative impacts on local industrial operations and animal breeding farms. SMXA 05 lists a key policy to implement a defence heritage trail.

The development of ecotourism in the area would enhance the visitor experience for tourists and locals alike whilst providing a source of income. Educational facilities and the heritage trail with improved pathways would ensure easy access for all.

### **Summary**

The key aspects of the South of Malta's Local Plan are to

- check the expansion of urban development into the countryside;
- encourage appropriate rehabilitation of and reuse of derelict and abandoned buildings within rural areas;
- safeguard the coastal stretch of countryside
- encourage appropriate facilities to conserve and create awareness towards environmental resource protection

These are not reflected in the government's proposal to develop hotels in the area. The proposal by the four environment organisations takes these policies into consideration through combining the conservation and sustainable ecotourism development priorities to ensure improved environmental protection and better enjoyment of the countryside and coastline.

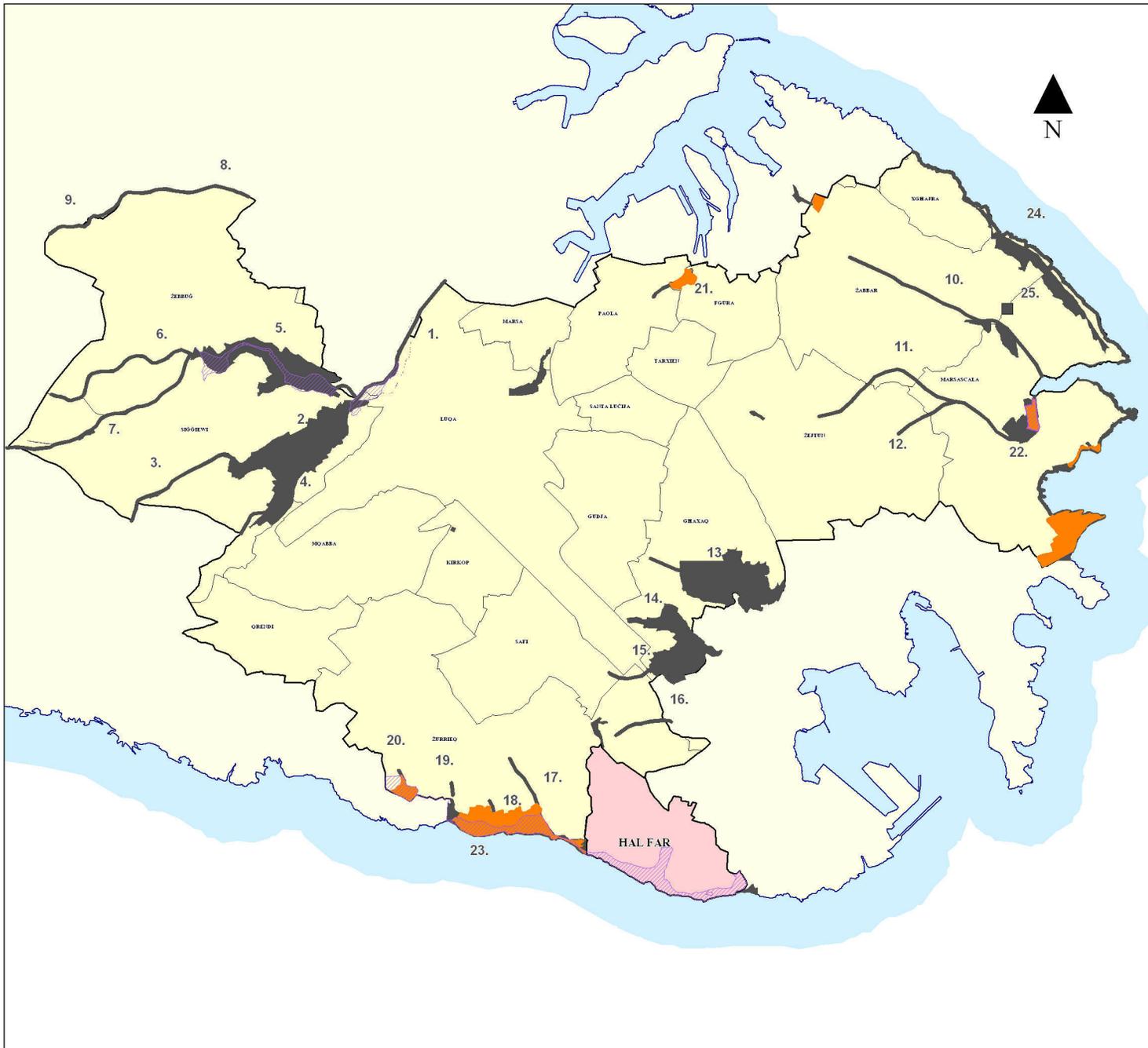
Below:

Map 1: Overall strategy map: South Malta Local Plan

Map 2: Sites of Scientific Importance and Areas of Ecological Importance for scheduling: South Malta Local Plan

Map 3: Illustrative map of concepts





**Key**

-  Local Plan Boundary
-  Local Council Boundaries
-  Hal Far Industrial Estate Policy Area
-  Sites of Scientific Importance and Areas of Ecological Importance proposed for Scheduling
-  Sites of Scientific Importance and Areas of Ecological Importance
-  Special Areas of Conservation (Natura 2000)

- |                    |                            |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Wied il-Kbir    | 14. Wied Has-Saptan        |
| 2. Wied Hanżir     | 15. Wied il-Qoton          |
| 3. Wied Xkora      | 16. Wied il-Qoton iż-Żgħir |
| 4. Wied Ta' Kandja | 17. Wied Moqbol            |
| 5. Wied Qirda      | 18. Wied Diegu             |
| 6. Wied il-Baqqija | 19. Wied Fulija            |
| 7. Wied Hesri      | 20. Wied Bassasa           |
| 8. Wied is-Sewda   | 21. Wied Blandun           |
| 9. Wied Inċita     | 22. Il-Magħluq             |
| 10. Wied il-Għajn  | 23. Coastal Cliffs         |
| 11. Wied Ta' Mazza | 24. Northeast Coast        |
| 12. Wied iż-Ziju   | 25. Fort San Anard         |
| 13. Wied Dalam     |                            |

**Sites of Scientific Importance and Areas of Ecological Importance**

Scale :	Date :	Map :
<b>Not to Scale</b>	<b>July 2006</b>	<b>3</b>
INDICATIVE ONLY		
Not to be used for measurement or direct interpretation.		
Maps to be used in conjunction with Policy Document.		

# Illustrative map of concepts

