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Stakeholder Assessment, Perception and Attitude Focus Group Study in the Context of the Italia-Malta Funded BESS Project



Final Report Prepared by SEED Consultancy

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In Collaboration with Project Partners



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1 Executive Summary

This document sets out the analysis and findings of the stakeholder assessment process undertaken on behalf of the Ministry for Gozo.

This process consisted of a series of focus sessions targeting key stakeholders identified by the Ministry, i.e. scientific community, policy makers, operational, economic and cultural stakeholders and local people. This engagement was designed to elicit feedback on essential aspects of pocket beach management in the Maltese islands and Sicily, primarily seeking to gain insight into the prevalent levels of awareness on the subject, as well as into the attitudes to key aspects that should be factored into subsequent beach management plans and policy implementation.

It is the conclusion of Seed Consultancy that this engagement process has proved successful in that, a number of key findings were made. Seed Consultancy considers these findings to be notable and as such should be factored into any further actions.

The sections below will expand on the key findings for each stakeholder group, presenting relevant observations on themes and patterns that emerged on the various topics discussed. For the purposes of this summary, we wish to highlight the following conclusions reached in terms of cross-comparative findings across the groups. These findings will be expanded further in the Section 4 and 5 of the report.

Summary of main conclusions:

- The proposed beach management plans have been positively received by the majority of participants taking part in each of the focus group sessions.

- The successful implementation of these plans very much depends on them being framed within policy and backed up by legislation.
- In shaping and implementing policy for pocket beaches it is important to be mindful of the differences that exist between the governance structures and lines of authority in Malta (Gozo) and Sicily.
- A proposal was made for a single beach management body/entity/committee whose role would be to oversee the management of pocket beaches in Malta, and liaise with the relevant public authorities, agencies, and other stakeholders.
- Improve coordination between municipality, regional and national efforts to beach management planning in Sicily.
- The blue flag certification has had positive results on some pocket beaches and whilst it remains important to enhance the value of certified beaches, notably from a touristic point of view, it does not cater for the full compass of pocket beach dynamics.
- The majority of participants acknowledged that popular pocket beaches have seen some major improvements along the years, particularly when it comes to beach organization and management, but more needs to be done.
- A tailor-made strategy for each beach, as opposed to one plan for all beaches, would be more sensible, striking a balance between the economic and touristic requirements of particular beaches as well as the environmental and ecological concerns that may arise as a result.

- Likewise, a long-term vision or strategy for pocket beaches must also take into consideration the whole beach dynamic, from the beach itself to the surrounding areas including roads, valleys, cliffs etc.
- Introduce a carrying capacity type of mechanism or beach zonation to protect certain vulnerable pocket beaches from human related pressures.
- The issues of sand erosion and Posidonia washing up on the beach continues to provoke strong emotions in almost every other focus group, and while it is acknowledged that there are no quick fixes to these issues, beach management plans should take cognizance of these issues and seek ways to address them.
- The success of these proposed beach management plans ultimately lies with how much the general public buys into them and thus it is important to back these up with public educational and awareness campaigns.

2 Introduction and Background

This document constitutes the Final Report on the assignment carried out by Seed Consultancy, a Maltese advisory and research firm, and presents an assessment of the prevalent awareness and perceptions of, and attitudes to, the main challenges concerning use, conservation and management of pocket beaches in the Maltese islands and Sicily. This assessment focuses on four defined stakeholder groups and forms an integral part of the wider Interreg Italia-Malta funded BESS project. The Ministry for Gozo is tasked with co-leading the BESS project, in collaboration with four other partners, and, as such, is the Contracting Authority for the stakeholder assessment offshoot project. The other partners of the BESS project are the University of Malta, the University of Messina, the University of Palermo and the Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia.

As per the requirements defined in Section 7.1 of the Tender Document issued by the Ministry for Gozo in connection with the stakeholder assessment, perception and attitude study (MGOZ/MPU T 09/2020), this final report is designed to:

- Provide key insights into the topics and patterns that emerged during the focus group sessions for each stakeholder group on the different topics according to the different participant profiles;
- Capture the observations and emotional reactions exhibited by the participants of the meeting during the running of the focus group sessions on the different topics;
- Undertake a cross analysis of the similarities and differences between the stakeholder groups based on the different participant profiles;
- Propose ways how to render prospective Management Plans practicable and operable, based on the result of the focus group sessions.

2.1 Background: Project Context and Scope

As referred to above, the objectives of this assignment are related to the implementation of the Interreg Italia-Malta funded BESS project, concerning Pocket Beach Management and Remote Surveillance Systems.

Pocket beaches are small beaches limited by natural headlands, broadly extending into the sea, free from direct sedimentary contributions that are not eroded from back-shore cliffs. Along the Maltese and Sicilian coasts, one finds several pocket beaches, which depending on their isolation and level of exposure, preserve ecological niches of great value, and thus represent relic deposits, formed under different conditions from those currently experienced, suggesting a response naturally resilient to the effects of climate changes. These beaches are prized by locals and tourists alike but often suffer the impact of human pressure and trigger risks to the safety of the same users.

The BESS project will map all the pocket beaches to create a remotely sensed monitoring platform, based on the identification of specific geomorphological and sedimentological indices and the evolution of beach-incident wave motion, in order to preserve this erosion-sensitive environmental niche and ensuring continued local and tourist use. The project will equip relevant authorities with an erosion predictive instrument, and its subsequent management will be the responsibility of those who produced it, and who can provide on-demand support. The project involves sharing information with stakeholders of all its phases and will end with the production of a beach management manual and the drafting of three management plans on three sample locations. The three pocket beaches that have been chosen as a test base for the management plans are Mellieha Bay in Malta, Ramla in Gozo and San Vito lo Capo in Sicily.

At present, although various localized and sporadic initiatives do exist, there is no concerted regional management and surveillance system that can observe and act upon pocket beaches at a regional level. The project aims to, among others, fill this void.

To promote stakeholder engagement throughout the whole cycle of this project and ensure that the beach management plans, and subsequent manual, take cognizance and addresses the concerns and needs of different stakeholders involved, Seed Consultancy have been commissioned to organize a series of stakeholder assessment, perceptions, and attitude focus group sessions. It was the understanding of Seed Consultancy from the outset of this assignment that these focus groups formed a fundamental part of the beach management manual in that they are a key preparatory action aimed at addressing the main challenges and needs of pocket beaches in the Maltese islands and Sicily. To this end, it was important to coordinate efforts and conduct all focus group sessions prior to the compilation of the manual, which was commissioned to ADI Associates.

2.2 Background: Project Objectives

The overall objective of this assignment, as specified in Section 2.1 of the Tender Document, is to obtain an understanding of the perception and awareness on pocket beaches (their science, conservation needs, management, regulation, environmental importance, economic and social value, etc.) in Sicily and in the Maltese Islands through the organization of focus groups among four different stakeholder groups in both Malta (Gozo) and Sicily, namely:

- Technical & Scientific Community
- Policy Makers
- Stakeholders (economic, cultural, social)
- Local People (persons closely attached to the geographical areas under review)

More specifically, these focus group sessions should in terms of each of the four defined stakeholder groups identify and describe:

- the current level of awareness on pocket beaches in Sicily and the Maltese islands as well as prevalent perceptions of the key issues;

- ‘top of mind’ and ‘gut’ responses to these issues, particularly in terms of any new measures and actions that are envisaged, aiming to capture public concerns and attitudes that may compromise their implementation;
- the types of messages that could be used in a regional campaign for the introduction of better management and conservation approaches in pocket beaches;
- types of actions / strategies / frameworks that could be used to develop a sustainable management structure for pocket beaches involving all the stakeholders identified.

It was also determined at the start of the process, in consultation with the Ministry for Gozo (Contracting Authority) and other involved partners, that the engagement will structure stakeholder discussion around the following six topics:

1. **Value recognition of pocket beaches:** Pocket beaches are complex and diverse systems, with invariably different implications and relevance for different stakeholders. This range of experiences and attitudes must therefore be evaluated and recorded in order to ensure the best possible implementation of the beach management manual. The first topic seeks to determine, without prompting stakeholder participants, what values they each assign to pocket beaches. Potential values include economic and touristic, natural and ecological, historical and cultural, and recreational.
2. **Vision for Pocket Beaches:** Having identified the underpinning values for pocket beaches, the next topic will look at scoping a vision for pocket beaches in line with each of the values assigned. Expectedly, there will be different views and potentially more than one vision. The scope here is to identify and propose some concrete measures.

3. **Pressures and conflicts:** Having set the scene, the next area of interest will be to identify key issues and pressures, as well as try to reconcile competing needs in management planning for pocket beaches. This topic will try to propose solutions in conflict resolution, mitigation of issues and resource management.
4. **Positive existing measures:** Some measures to reconcile competing needs might already be in place and bearing fruit. These include the Blue Flag certification for some pocket beaches, operational organization of deckchairs, umbrellas and designation of swim zones in other beaches and legislation to protect marine wildlife such as in the case of turtle nesting. Without prompting the debate on specific measures, this next discussion will attempt to identify what is working well to continue strengthening such measures whilst also serving as an example to the implementation of additional measures.
5. **Management of Pocket Beach dynamics:** This topic will seek to explore general management of pocket beaches with reference to facilities and amenities, accessibility, safety surroundings (including the geographical integrity of some pocket beaches), waste collection, enforcement and parking.
6. **Contribution of ideas:** The final step of the focus group sessions encourages contributions of ideas for possible management actions aimed at:
 - Improving decision making;
 - Consensus on priorities;
 - Facility improvements;
 - Improved understanding between stakeholders; and
 - Improved public awareness.

The above topics have been primarily designed and agreed upon beforehand to formalize and structure the focus group process. These topics are however not prescriptive and the approach

that is taken for this assignment is one that allows the discussion to unfold naturally and generate some interesting ideas and concrete measures going forward.

2.3 Background: Engagement through Focus Groups

In line with the qualitative nature of the stakeholder engagement required, the Ministry for Gozo, together with its partners on the BESS project, identified focus groups as being the most effective means of meeting the defined objectives for this project. The advantage of a focus group strategy is the insight it provides into how and what people think about a given range of issues, providing a deeper understanding of how any changes impacting these issues will be perceived by the same stakeholders. Obtaining this snapshot is essential groundwork for ensuring that subsequent qualitative research is timely, relevant, and meaningful, whilst also providing a targeted approach that will increase the likelihood of achieving the widest possible support for any measures and actions introduced as part of this project implementation.

These benefits have been consistently demonstrated by several research studies¹, while it should also be noted that the European Commission itself regularly employs focus groups as a key element of its general project implementation strategy, particularly when building up to the introduction of any new actions or measures.

Figure 1 below captures the essential process for conducting focus groups and reporting on the results.

¹ Smithson, Janet. (2007). Using focus groups in social research.

Bloor, Michael & Frankland, Jane & Thomas, Michelle & Robson, Kate. (2001). Focus groups in social research.

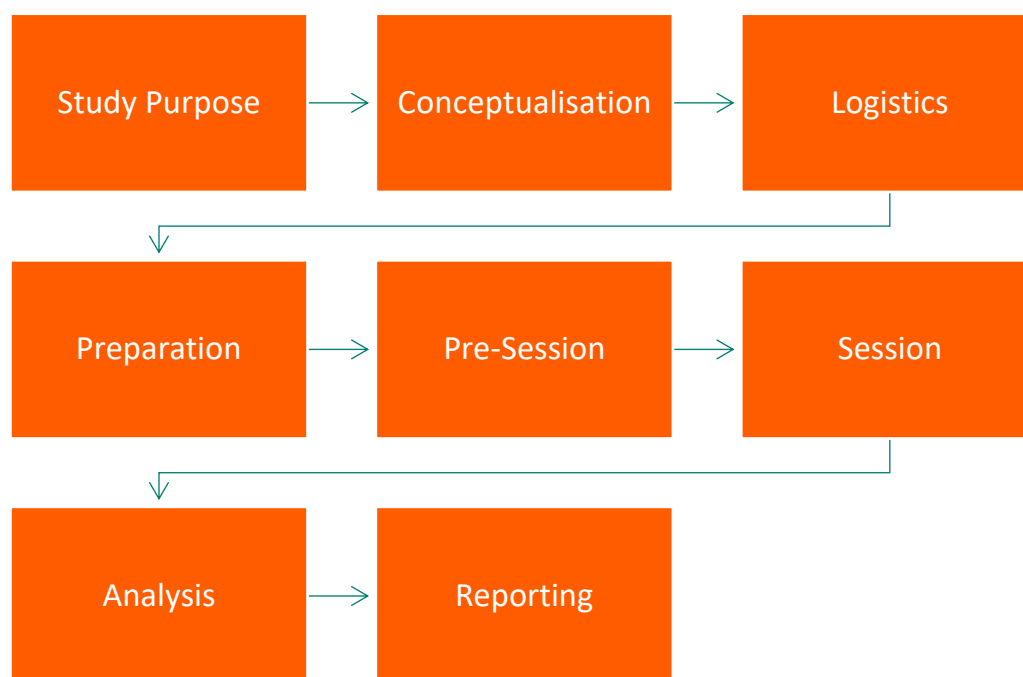


Figure 1: Key stages in focus group process cycle

3 Methodology

As referred to above, the Tender Document for the undertaking of stakeholder assessment, perception and attitude focus group study, in the context of the BESS Project, specified four types of stakeholder cohorts in Malta (Gozo) and Sicily respectively to a total of seven sessions. These were:

- Policy makers (2 focus group sessions – one in Sicily and one in Malta / Gozo);
- Stakeholders (2 focus group sessions – one in Sicily and one in Malta / Gozo);
- Local People (2 focus group sessions – one in Sicily and one in Malta / Gozo);
- Technical & Scientific Community (one joint focus group session involving Maltese and Sicilian experts).

From the outset it was established that, considering the differences that could exist in policy, management, size and characteristics of pocket beaches between Malta and Sicily, it was best to

hold two individual focus group sessions for each of the above stakeholder cohorts, thus ensuring better overall representation of views and insights from both regions. The only exception to this approach was the technical and scientific community cohort, whereby it was decided to carry out one joint focus group session which would bring together technical experts from both Sicily and Malta (Gozo). In this case, the scientific realities surrounding pocket beaches in Malta (Gozo) and Sicily are quite similar and it was therefore deemed practical to hold one discussion. Besides, having Maltese and Sicilian experts sharing their experiences and opinions in one focus group session is also central to fostering interregional consultations and to facilitate knowledge transfer, whilst at the same time promote further collaborations between the two counterparts. For this reason, it was thus not only practical to hold one joint session but also beneficial to the overall assessment and to the prospect of further collaborations between the two regions.

Recruitment of participants for each of the focus group sessions was coordinated by Seed Consultancy, with the cooperation of the Ministry for Gozo and its partners on this project, to help identify the most relevant individuals within their respective cohort.

Focus groups are typically organized in an informal setting whereby participants can discuss and exchange views, face to face. The COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing measures have made this somewhat of a challenging possibility, particularly with Sicilian participants as a result of the travel restrictions imposed. To this end, the majority of focus groups were carried out online using the Microsoft Teams platform. Whilst the desired outcomes have nonetheless been achieved, nothing can in the end substitute face to face interactions and certain body language expressions or emotional reactions were not always possible to capture, and even though participants were asked to switch on their camera there is a limit to the number of people that can show at any one point on screen.

Moreover, going online also created one or two issues with particular stakeholder groups who might not always be IT savvy or have access to the Internet. Issues had been particularly flagged

with reference to the local people cohort in both target regions. As for local people in Malta (Gozo), Seed Consultancy, which is Maltese based, was able to organize this session face to face in the outdoors of Ramla Bay in adherence to COVID-19 guidelines. From the Sicilian side it remained difficult to get local people together over online tools to discuss the management of pocket beaches and likewise it was not an option to have this session organized face to face.

Another issue cropped up with regards to economic stakeholders in the Maltese islands. Given that focus groups were being held in particular relation to the beach management of three sites: San Vito lo Capo (Sicily), Mellieha Bay (Malta) and Ramla Bay (Gozo), it was deemed necessary to split Mellieha Bay and Ramla into two focus groups, as opposed to one as originally specified in the Tender Document. Indeed, Mellieha Bay, which is the largest bay in the Maltese islands, and Ramla Bay are very distinct in both size and characteristics, with likewise very distinct economic stakeholders operating the two beaches. To ensure better representation of views by all the different economic stakeholders it was thus decided to have three separate sessions with respect to the stakeholder groups in Mellieha Bay, Ramla and Sicily.

At the end, in agreement with the Ministry for Gozo, as contracting authority, and the other project partners, seven focus group sessions were carried out. These were:

- Scientific and Technical Community
- Malta (Gozo) Policy Makers
- Sicily Policy Makers
- Sicily Stakeholders
- Mellieha Bay (Malta) Stakeholders
- Ramla (Gozo) Stakeholders
- Malta (Gozo) Local People

Having determined the focus group sessions that will be carried out and the respective topics to be discussed in each of these sessions, moderator guides were prepared for the facilitation and organization of each focus group (Annex 1). Each session was required to have indicatively eight participants and not run longer than 2 hours. In total, 50 different individuals participated across the seven focus group sessions organized.

Mr. Jean Paul Fabri and Mr. Glenn Fenech, two consultants from Seed Consultancy were present throughout all the sessions, one acting as moderator and the other as rapporteur. Mr. Anthony Zammit and Ms. Julia Vella from the Ministry for Gozo, Professor Giovanni Randazzo and Eng. Franco Cavallaro who are partners on the BESS project, as well as Mr. Adrian Mallia from ADI Associates, who are responsible with drawing up the beach management plans, were also in attendance during the duration of most focus group sessions as observers.

4 Cross Sectional Analysis: Overall Perceptions and suggestions

The results of focus groups are qualitative in nature, in this case capturing stakeholder assessments, perceptions and attitudes concerning the management of pocket beaches. This section presents a cross sectional analysis of the most common themes, issues, insights, and recommendations emerging from across the seven focus groups conducted. A broader analysis of the key discussion points and specifics raised in each of the seven sessions will be presented in the hereafter.

1. Positive Response

Encouragingly, the proposed beach management plans have been received very well by the majority of participants taking part in each of the seven focus group sessions. This level of support was also shared by the economic operators in each of the three pocket beaches under review, who are fully aware of the ecological pressures faced by these beaches as they continue to attract

thousand of visitors each year. Indeed, participants are very proud of their operations in these unique locations and likewise believe that their business prospects can only be sustained in the long term if these pocket beaches are themselves protected. This positive overall sentiment augurs very well for this project because it lends stakeholder buy-in and engagement when the designed beach management plans are rolled out for implementation.

2. Policy Direction

Despite this general shared sense of enthusiasm and openness to discussing issues relating to pocket beach management, some of the more experienced participants working in this field voiced their concerns that unless these management plans are grounded in policy, they could very much end up being another study known for its literature value rather than for its implementation. This turned out to be a common concern for participants in both Malta (Gozo) and Sicily, who lamented that various studies have been conducted over the years but owing to the lack of policy direction and/or lack of coordination between different researchers and/or relevant authorities, they fail to achieve intended results. On these past experiences, it was therefore strongly recommended that the vision for pocket beaches is first framed within policy as dictated by government and/or other relevant stakeholders. It must also then be endorsed by legislative enactment to ensure the successful implementation of this same vision and achieve the desired results.

3. Governance Structures

In shaping and implementing policy for pocket beaches it is important to be mindful of the marked differences that exist in governance between Malta (Gozo) and Sicily. In Malta (Gozo), policy making, and the ensuing beach management responsibility, is the sum of a number public agencies, authorities and local councils who come together to provide solutions to particular challenges, despite them at times having opposing visions and interests. This appears to be the

root of some of the legacy issues concerning beach management in the Maltese islands because at times rival standpoints end up in red tape and bureaucracy whenever it is required to implement certain measures that would have otherwise been resolved instantly on the back of better coordination and planning. In Sicily, on the other hand, the municipality is by and large responsible for beach management. While this centralized approach may at times provide for quicker actions, efforts are still sometimes lost between municipal, regional and national priorities. In this case, also, coordination and planning are underlying principles required for the effective implementation of beach management plans.

4. Single Central Authority

Unquestionably one of the overarching pain points mentioned in all sessions involving Maltese stakeholders is that there seems to be no single authority responsible for beach management in Mellieha Bay and Ramla, respectively. On one hand irritated stakeholders complained that their reports are often left unheeded and argued that no one seems to be responsible for the overall management of beaches, particularly when 'out of the normal' situations arise. On the other hand, frustration was also evident in some participants within the policy making cohort, particularly the two local councils participating in these sessions, who at times feel powerless in resolving even the smallest of issues. Despite receiving various reports on littering, cigarette buds, dogs on the beach which are not allowed by law, camping and other issues, local councils, and to some extent other agencies, feel paralyzed by the lack of enforcement and coordination between the different departments. To add insult to their injury, they feel that they unfairly blamed for this inaction by the general public.

This state of play is clearly creating beach management challenges and the beach management plans should therefore seek to address this issue by proposing a single beach management body/entity/committee whose role would be to oversee the management of the respective pocket beaches and liaise with the respective public authorities, agencies and other stakeholders in the

day-to-day running of beach operations, throughout the whole year and not just summer. Accordingly, this beach management committee should not only be the go-to entity to report and resolve such issues but would also be responsible for the overall vision that is required for the respective pocket beaches.

5. Improved coordination

On the Sicilian front, the most urgent call was for improved coordination between municipality, regional and national efforts to beach management planning. Indeed, the lack of coordination between different authorities, at the regional and national level, at times make it very hard to combine efforts, and actions to resolve certain issues are in such instances independently driven without any prior consultation. To this end, studies which would have already been commissioned and potentially have the answers to some of the complex issues are not consulted, missing out on the timely opportunity to make quicker and more informed decisions. It could also be the case that some efforts are duplicated. In some cases, government authorities, not aware of the empirical evidence that would have already been collected, proceed with their investment on certain marine projects without having informed decisions on how best to intervene. In this regard, Sicilian participants noted a significant gap in terms of formal data collection protocols and lamented that there is no central database to collate and store data collected through the various projects, which is then made publicly available. With this in mind, it was suggested that such empirical evidence should be organized and financed for by the region to better facilitate coordination between the different researchers and authorities involved, whilst also enabling future projects to build upon work already conducted.

6. Blue Flag Initiative

In a number of sessions, especially those involving the scientific community and policy makers in both countries, some time was spent discussing the merits of the blue flag initiative to beach

management. On a general point, most participants derive great value in the blue flag certification, as possibly being the closest process to achieving certain standards within the beach management realm. It was also generally accepted that authorities respond more quickly to the needs of pocket beaches that are blue flag certified. This is mainly due to the fact that authorities identify the certification with the touristic value that it generates as an internationally recognized standard. Having said this, some of the members lamented that such an approach often leads to a situation where authorities give priority to beaches with blue flag certification and tend to neglect other beaches. In Sicily, where beaches are much larger than the beaches in Malta, pocket beaches suffer from a similar outcome, whereby the municipality, as the authority responsible for the upkeep of the beach, tends to certify only small parts of beaches (normally those parts which are easily accessible and have urban surroundings) whilst overlooking management efforts in the rest of the beach which might have a higher environmental value.

Without writing off the positive impacts that the blue flag initiative has had on some pocket beaches particularly sea water quality standards, most participants warned against placing too much focus on the blue flag certification as if it was the hallmark of beach management. Doing so, according to some participants, would risk overlooking other important aspects of the pocket beach ecosystem, such as ecological, historical and biodiversity values. In this regard, the management plans and subsequent manual being proposed for pocket beaches in the Maltese islands and Sicily could not be more relevant in this context.

7. Existing Positive Measures

The majority of participants, in all the focus sessions, acknowledged that popular pocket beaches, such as the ones under review, have seen some major improvements along the years, particularly when it comes to beach organization and management. Some of the positive measures that were introduced over the years include the designation of swimming zones, lifeguarding services, better organization of umbrellas and deckchairs resolving long standing issues that had existed between

the rights of private operators and the rights of the general public to use the beach freely without any obstruction, the designation of BBQ areas and the full accessibility of the beach by wheelchair users. Notwithstanding, more remains to be done to maintain and manage the expectations of people and tourists visiting these beaches, particularly with regards to general infrastructure and supporting amenities which are a bit run down or absent altogether.

8. Tailor-made Strategy

As already observed, participants have come out in favour of these proposed management plans for pocket beaches. At the same time however it was also emphasized that having one strategy for all beaches may not be the most effective approach, due to the specific characteristics of the different beaches. To this end, a tailor-made strategy or management plan for each beach would be more sensible, striking a balance between the economic and touristic requirements of particular beaches as well as the environmental and ecological concerns that may arise as a result.

9. Holistic Strategy

The overarching need to have a long-term vision or strategy for pocket beaches must also take into consideration the whole beach dynamic, from the beach itself to the surrounding areas including roads, valleys, cliffs etc. Emphasis was placed on viewing beaches as an ecosystem, with strategies and any underlying actions based on solid evidence, covering touristic, economic, historic as well as ecological and environmental interests. This was in fact a common theme of concern for participants in a number of sessions, in both Malta (Gozo) and Sicily, who complained that certain beach interventions were carried out without any prior studies of the environmental impact these would have on the ecosystem. In the views of participants, many negative impacts of the beach dynamics can be preempted and tackled at planning stage as opposed to reacting to situations and trying to find ways to then mitigate the impacts of certain courses of actions. This

point was also accentuated in view of the risk that reactionary interventions could at times be taken in haste without conducting all the necessary studies to ensure that such interventions are justified from an economic, environmental, and ecological point of view. Against this backdrop, it was strongly being recommended that the proposed beach management plans are framed within a broader vision and strategy and should look at resolving issues in a holistic way rather than in a piecemeal approach.

Similarly, such plans need to make a distinction between rural and urban surroundings as these would necessitate different requirements. The marine environment is also important and not to be overlooked in these beach management plans, especially in view of the increase in the number of boats and other pleasure craft in recent years which is starting to have an impact on popular pocket beaches. The impact does not only emanate from boat pollution and waste but is also related to anchoring and the damage this does to the seabed, as well as it blocks the natural views and serenity of the bay's horizon for beach users.

10. Carrying Capacity

One of the most contentious points mentioned in one of the focus group sessions, relates to whether pocket beaches should continue to be widely accessible to the public without any form of upper limit capacity evaluation. The idea, which was only floated while capturing the views of policy makers in Sicily, was more of a passing statement but its mention has some significant policy implications if it were to be implemented and thus warrants to be assessed further in the beach management plans being proposed. The argument made was not to fully limit the access of particular pocket beaches to the public, but certain municipalities were in fact considering introducing restrictions, or a carrying capacity type of mechanism, as part of their contingency efforts to protect these sites. This has been partly prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic which triggered social distancing measures that reduced the number of people that can gather in public places. However, such requests have not been so far entertained by the regional assessors, even

on grounds of public health let alone for environmental concerns. But it could soon become high priority for beach management policy and thus should not be disregarded.

A similar concept to this, which was proposed by the scientific experts, was the idea of beach zonation whereby different sets of rules and priorities are applied to different areas on the beach. The idea, which is more applicable to pocket beaches in Sicily, given their size, proposes to apply a bias towards conservation to certain areas of the beach where the focus should be more on ecological and environmental preservation and a bias towards recreational activity in other areas of the beach which are deemed to have more of a touristic and commercial element, such as those more exposed to urban areas.

In Malta, there was no talk on beach carrying capacity. This said, the point was made that for pocket beaches which are relatively still unscathed, the plans should ensure that, while people are not barred out from visiting and enjoying, a stronger bias should be placed on the ecological and natural protection of these sites as opposed to making these overall more accessible to the public. This idea of carrying capacity was mentioned with regards to boat moorings in certain popular pocket beaches, such as Mellieha Bay, whereby boats would not be allowed to anchor inside the bay and would only be able to use a pre-determined number of ecological moorings which are properly attached to the seabed, thus automatically limiting the number of boats in the bay and preventing further damage to the seabed.

II. Sand Erosion and Posidonia Issues

Another strong point of contention that has been mentioned in almost every other focus group, and which continues to provoke strong emotions, is the way some pocket beaches are managed when it comes to sand erosion and the perceived reluctance by authorities to act, instead of leaving it up to nature to continue with its course. Participants who complained about this issue felt that on this point pocket beaches, particularly Ramla in Gozo and other popular beaches in Sicily

were being neglected. In the case of Ramla, they argue that large parts of the beach are now completely filled with pebbles, rock and other “unsightly” sediment, making it at times difficult even to swim and definitely not living up to its title of being Gozo’s only sandy beach. Another common issue was the management of Posidonia which regularly washes on shore and is considered to be an eyesore by many locals.

Even though most of the participants have environmental protection close to heart, very few seemed to appreciate that these two phenomena could be part of the site’s ecological process and in the case of Posidonia this actually serves as a protection mechanism against sand erosion during storms or heavy winds, particularly during the winter months.

From the various focus group sessions carried out, Seed Consultancy acknowledges that, in view of the number of conflicting views, of which some are based on studies and technical assessments, there are no quick fixes to these two matters. Still, we believe that the beach management plans should take cognizance of these issues and seek ways to address them; at the very least by proposing a wider stakeholder consultation and awareness campaign.

12. Education

The parting message from most focus groups is to accompany these beach management strategies with a strong commitment for further education and awareness amongst the public. The success of these strategies ultimately lies with how much the latter buys in to them. It is the view of the majority of participants that the public still lacks the civic sense to assume responsibility for what goes on in pocket beaches as long as they continue to be served by them. To this end, more education is required for people to understand what their role is within the entire beach ecosystem and more importantly be aware of the impacts they have / could have as a result of their actions and activities. This point was drawn from the experience of turtle nesting in both Ramla and Mellieha Bay, as well as other pocket beaches, where the closure of parts of the beach did not

create any conflicts with people. Rather it created interest and support from everyone, be it the public and beach operators, because people were being reminded of the importance to protect marine wildlife and were also made to own and feel part of the conservation efforts through educational campaigns. Similar experiences have been noticed with respect to the spot the jellyfish campaign where people have submitted hundreds of jellyfish reports since the campaign's launch.

5 Main Discussion Points from each Focus Group Session

Having presented the overall themes and the most common attitudinal patterns and suggestions that emerged across all seven focus group sessions, this next section provides a more in-depth analysis of the most salient points raised during each of the seven focus groups carried out.

5.1 Scientific and Technical Community Focus Group

The first focus group session in this series of stakeholder assessments was carried out with the scientific community in both Malta (Gozo) and Sicily to gather the opinions and concerns of technical experts with regards to the management of pocket beaches. This provided the study with an opportunity to capture insights from what is generally a more research-based community, as opposed to the other stakeholder cohorts, thus allowing for a technical and scientific contribution to the overall debate of pocket beach management.

This cohort was made up of different individuals with various academic and scientific backgrounds and included marine biologists, beach regeneration specialists, geoscientists, geologists, and environmental economists amongst other. These were:

Malta:

- Prof Anton Micallef
- Prof Joseph Borg

- Dr Saviour Scerri
- Dr Jonathan Spiteri
- Mr Vince Attard
- Mr Anthony Zammit

Sicily:

- Prof Giovanni Randazzo
- Ing Franco Cavallaro
- Dr Mauro Bonasera
- Prof Valeria Lo Presti
- Prof Rosaria Ester Musumeci
- Dr Alessandro Santilano
- Dr Agata di Stefano
- Dr Attilio Sulli

Transcript of main discussion points

- From the outset, there was a general shared sense of enthusiasm on discussing issues relating to pocket beach management within this focus group, whose participants all have direct experience with certain aspects of beach management, be it either policy making or actual research on the environmental and ecological characteristics of beaches. The discussion opened up with a focus on the blue flag certification that certain beaches around Malta and Gozo have, such as the 3 main pocket beaches under review for the purpose of this study. On a general note, the members of this focus group derive great value in the blue flag certification, as possibly being the closest process to achieving certain standards within the beach management realm. To validate this claim, participants pointed towards a strong base of literature highlighting the benefits that blue flag certification brings, especially in terms of enhancing the touristic value of beaches.

- Another highlighted characteristic attributed to the blue flag certification was the greater sense of responsiveness from local authorities, especially when compared to beaches which are not certified. This is mainly because authorities identify the certification with the touristic value that it generates as an internationally recognized standard. Having said this, some of the members lamented that such an approach often leads to a situation where authorities give priority to beaches with blue flag certification and tend to neglect other beaches. In fact, there was a general consensus amongst the members that noted that authorities are interested and enthusiastic in taking the necessary measures in all beaches at first, but then fail to follow through and instead allocate their resources towards blue flag beaches. In Sicily, where beaches are much larger than the beaches in the Maltese islands, the situation is somewhat exacerbated, whereby the municipality, as the authority responsible for the upkeep of the beach, tend to certify only small parts of beaches (normally those parts which are easily accessible and have urban surroundings) whilst overlooking management efforts in the rest of the beach.

- Besides authorities, reference was also made to the value attributed by operators around blue flag beaches, namely hotels, restaurants, kiosks and other establishments. Economic operators also regard the blue flag status as a key force to driving value especially from a touristic point of view, attracting more people to visit the beach due to the expected higher standards when compared to other minor beaches. On this point, and without writing off the positive impacts that the blue flag initiative has had on some pocket beaches, particularly sea water quality standards, most participants warned against placing too much focus on the blue flag certification as if it was the hallmark of beach management. Doing so, in the view of some members within this focus group, would risk overlooking other important aspects of the pocket beach ecosystem, such as ecological, historical and biodiversity values. In this regard, the management plans and subsequent manual being proposed for pocket beaches in the Maltese islands and Sicily could not be more relevant in this context.

- Following up on this latter point, there was also a general concern amongst most participants that expressed a lack of awareness or value attributed by authorities, as well as the public, to the ecological aspect and the biodiversity of pocket beaches. This said, participants noted that when the proper message is conveyed to the public, backed up with educational campaigns, the public may be more appreciative of the environmental value and how this relates to the long-term sustainability of pocket beaches. In this case the public is also more supportive of proposed protection measures and actions. This point was made in view of the number of turtle nesting in the Maltese islands last summer, where the closure of parts of popular beaches did not create any conflicts with the public. Rather it created interest and support from everyone, be it the general public and beach operators.
- The discussion also delved into the overarching need to have a long-term vision or strategy that takes into consideration the whole beach dynamic, from the beach itself to the surrounding areas including roads, valleys, cliffs etc. This vision should then be implemented by way of shorter-term management plans or strategies, spreading out the milestones and targets set over a 5-to-10-year time horizon. Emphasis was placed on viewing beaches as an ecosystem, with the need to have tailor-made strategies for each beach that cater for the specific characteristics of each beach and ensure that a proper balance is reached between conservation and use. A key point raised in this regard was to formulate strategies and any underlying actions on solid evidence, covering touristic, economic as well as ecological and environmental interests. This was a common concern amongst many members of this scientific cohort that complained that certain beach interventions, such as dredging to increase the size of a beach, were carried out without any prior studies of the lasting environmental impact these would have on the ecosystem.
- Furthermore, there was also mention of the importance that this vision is set in policy as dictated by government and/or other relevant stakeholders and is then implemented by

way of specific management plans. Participants see great value in having management plans in conjunction with legislation as opposed to solely the latter, since management plans tend to have more application driven actions as opposed to the potential conceptual or theoretical essence of legislation. The need to frame vision within policy, as opposed to an abstract wish list, which is then also backed up by legislative enactment is deemed to be vital to the successful implementation of this same vision and achieve the desired results.

- A key recommendation that came out from the discussion was on the importance of setting up a database of pocket beaches in the Maltese islands, which would include a ranking of pocket beaches in terms of geological and ecological vulnerabilities, as well as in terms of risks from an economic and environmental point of view. This database will help shape informed decisions when the need to act arises. This initiative is in fact in place in Sicily, with regards to beach evolution on a short- and long-term basis.
- Another suggestion coming out from this panel was the concept of beach zonation, whereby different management plans are applied to different areas on the beach. The idea, which is more applicable to pocket beaches in Sicily, where beaches are typically larger than those in the Maltese islands, proposes to apply a conservation management plan to certain areas of the beach where the focus should be more towards ecological and environmental preservation and a recreational management plan in other areas of the beach which are deemed to have more of a touristic element, such as those more exposed to urban areas. This plan would also be accompanied by an atlas of pocket beaches in Malta (Gozo) and Sicily respectively, providing users with a better understanding of the different types of beaches available.

5.2 Malta (Gozo) Policy Makers Focus Group

In line with the scope of the stakeholder assessment, perception, and attitude focus group study it was key to obtain the views and opinions of policy makers, in both Malta (Gozo) and Sicily, given their remit within the regulatory and political sphere that undoubtedly has an effect on the overall management and upkeep on pocket beaches. This section covers the views and attitudes of policy makers in the Maltese islands. A separate section will report on the perceptions and opinions of policy makers in Sicily.

In Malta (Gozo), policy and the ensuing beach management responsibility is the sum of a number public agencies, authorities and local councils and it was therefore very important to have an overall representation of the various policy stakeholders during this focus group. The following are the representatives of the respective authorities that participated in the online focus group organized for Malta's (Gozo) policy makers.

- Dr Christian Zammit – Xaghra Mayor
- Mr Dario Vella – Mellieha Mayor
- Mr Carmel Debono – Mellieha Executive Secretary
- Ms Stephanie Attard – Malta Tourism Authority
- Ms Amity Galea – Beach Manager within the Ministry for Gozo
- Mr Alexander Camilleri – Environment and Resource Authority
- Ms Alexia Vella – Planning Authority (Marine Spatial Planning)
- Mr Ronald Sultana – Director responsible for tourism within the Ministry for Gozo
- Mr Mario Saliba – Director responsible for program implementation within the Ministry for Gozo
- Mr Christian Magrin, Ms Gabriella Grima & Ms Angele Xerri – Program Implementation Directorate within the Ministry for Gozo

Transcript of main discussion points

- For all policy makers and entities participating in this focus group session, pocket beaches remain an important ecosystem that warrant the utmost protection and best management practices so as to ensure that tourism and economic considerations can co-exist with the conservation requirements of the natural, historical and ecological value of these sites. The various entities involved acknowledged that a lot has been done over the years to try reach this balance. The blue flag certification is one such initiative which has helped raise standards of beaches that have been awarded such a status, but other pressures remain, particularly in pocket beaches that are not blue flag.

The two pocket beaches that have been identified for the beach management plan pilot study, Ramla in Gozo and Mellieha Bay in Malta, have both been awarded a blue flag certification. However, most entities agree that the blue flag certification which covers standards for quality, safety, environmental education and information, the provision of services and general environmental management criteria is primarily aimed at improving beaches with a tourism product objective in mind. Consequently, certain legacy issues concerning pocket beaches, including the two under review, are not necessarily being addressed. It is therefore hoped that these proposed beach management plans will fill in the policy gaps that are left unaddressed by other beach initiatives already in place.

- To begin with, it was argued that beach management in Malta (Gozo) lacks a central entity that coordinates beach dynamics holistically. Instead, beach management is often the sum of different stakeholders who come together to provide solutions to particular challenges, despite them at times having opposing visions and interests. When this happens it generally triggers conflict rather than resolution, ending up in red tape and bureaucracy whenever it is required to implement certain measures that would have otherwise been resolved instantly on the back of better coordination, planning and

potentially some goodwill. During the discussion one could evidently sense the level of frustration being shared by some, especially by the two local councils participating in this session, who at times feel powerless in resolving even the smallest of issues. Despite receiving various reports on littering, cigarette butts, dogs on the beach which are not allowed by law, camping and other complains, local councils, and to some extent other agencies, feel paralyzed by the lack of enforcement and coordination between the different departments. To add insult to injury they are often blamed for this inaction by the public. At this point, reference was made to beach management in other countries such as Italy, whereby the municipality has a much broader remit to implement and enforce certain by-laws and regulations without needing to resort to other authorities.

- To this end, it was being recommended that an inter-ministerial entity, representing the relevant ministries, as well all other relevant entities such as the Malta Tourism Authority, the Planning Authority, and the Environmental and Resource Authority amongst others, is set up. This will help coordinate all efforts and more important expedite any actions that would be required to resolve issues. Although the structure of how this would work was not discussed in much detail, all participating entities seemed to agree that this would possibly be the right time to take this forward as the exercise to design beach management manuals for Ramla and Mellieha Bay gets under way. Such an entity would have to either rest within government or alternatively have direct and open communication channels to government in order to propose and drive policy that would ultimately shape the overall vision and strategy of pocket beaches in Malta and Gozo. In a nutshell, it was suggested that the implementation of all policies should be based on a top-down approach, whereby the inter-ministerial entity acts as a conduit between the various stakeholders and government.

- On a more positive note, participants of this focus group all acknowledged that some measures, despite long being overdue, are starting to bear fruit and adding to the overall

experience of those that visit Ramla and Mellieha Bay, either to swim or engage in any other form of recreation. These include the upgrading of public toilets in Ramla, the introduction of lifeguarding services during the busy summer months, bins for waste separation, walk paths at Ramla, the regular presence of MTA supervisors on the beach, the installation of information and educational panels etc.

Again, the general consensus was that more still needs to be done in order to maintain and manage the expectations of people and tourists visiting these beaches, who more often than not receive firsthand information through brochures and other marketing material that possibly present a different reality to the one they find when they actually visit, with the resulting disappointing effect.

- Encouragingly, participants have come out in favour of these proposed management plans for pocket beaches. It was however emphasized that having one strategy for all beaches may not be the most effective approach, due to the specific characteristics of the different beaches. To this end, a tailor-made strategy or management plan for each beach would be more sensible, striking a balance between the economic and touristic requirements of particular beaches, as well as the environmental and ecological concerns that may arise as a result. For pocket beaches which are relatively still unscathed from mass human presence, the manual should ensure that, while people are not barred out from visiting and enjoying, a stronger bias should be placed on the ecological and natural protection of these sites as opposed to making these overall more accessible to the public.
- It is also important to accompany these beach management strategies with a strong commitment for further education and awareness amongst the general public. The success of these strategies ultimately lies with how much the latter buys in to them. It is the view of the majority of participating policy makers that the public still lacks the civic sense to assume responsibility for what goes on in pocket beaches as long as it continues to serve

them. To this end, more education is required in order for people to understand what their role is within the entire beach ecosystem and more importantly be aware of the impacts they have / could have as a result of their actions and activities.

This point was drawn from the experience of turtle nesting in both Ramla and Mellieha Bay, as well as other pocket beaches, where the closure of parts of the beach did not create any conflicts with people. Rather it created interest and support from everyone, be it the general public and beach operators, because people were being reminded of the importance of protecting marine wildlife and were also made to own and feel part of the conservation efforts through educational campaigns. Similar experiences have also been noticed with respect to the spot the jellyfish campaign where people have submitted hundreds of jellyfish reports since the campaign's launch. This goes to prove that people are open to change their ways in favour of more environmental protection when confronted with information and the right messages.

- Another important point mentioned was that these beach management manuals should provide an overarching context for the implementation of certain interventions to pocket beaches. Concerns were raised with respect to certain walk paths made more accessible along pocket beaches, but which would then run into an obstacle at a later point on the path, thus stopping users and ramblers halfway through the intended walk and forcing them to turn back. The main consequences to this are two-fold:
 - Potential safety hazards that could result if people venture beyond the path that is made accessible.
 - Eliciting unnecessary pressures from users wishing to extend the path and make other areas accessible, which can in turn have a detrimental impact on the area from an environmental point of view.

In the views of participants, many aspects of the beach dynamics can be preempted and tackled at planning stage as opposed to reacting to situations and trying to find ways to then mitigate the impacts of certain courses of actions. This point was also accentuated in view of the risk that reactionary interventions could at times be taken in haste without conducting all the necessary studies to ensure that such interventions are justified from an economic, environmental, and ecological point of view. Xlendi bay was presented as a prime example of how things are not to be done. To extend the promenade and advance tourism and other economic interests, various interventions were made to the bay over the years with the disastrous results. According to some participants, the bay today can no longer be considered to be sandy and what was once the source of attraction to invest in the area is now gone. Against this backdrop, it was strongly being recommended that the proposed beach management plans are framed within a broader vision and strategy and should look at resolving issues in a holistic way rather than in a piece meal approach.

- On this last point it was also emphasized that these proposed beach management plans should not only focus on the pocket beach itself but should also cater for the surrounding areas that comprise the beach dynamics, including sand dunes, valleys, cliff face etc. Similarly, such plans need to make a distinction between rural and urban surroundings as these would necessitate different requirements. The marine environment is also important and not to be overlooked in these beach management plans, especially in view of the increase in the number of boats and other pleasure craft in recent years which is starting to have an impact on popular pocket beaches, such as Ramla and Mellieha Bay. The impact does not only emanate from boat pollution and waste but is also related to anchoring practices which are still very primitive when compared to what happens in other Mediterranean regions, such as Sicily, and are a main cause of damage to the seabed. Increased boating activity also impinges on the natural sight and serenity of the bay's horizon for beach users.

5.3 Sicily Policy Makers Focus Group

This section covers the insights and views of policy makers in Sicily. In this case, municipalities are by and large responsible for the management of their respective pocket beaches and therefore the focus group invited representatives from the different municipalities surrounding popular pocket beaches in Sicily, including San Vito lo Capo which was chosen as one of the three pocket beaches in Malta (Gozo) and Sicily for the pilot beach management plans.

As expected, the majority of participants in this focus group session have direct hands-on experience with the management of these sites and all could agree that the beach represented a strong foundation on which their local communities flourish and on which the regional economy depends. To this end, the project presented these participants with an opportunity to tackle some of the long-standing challenges they encounter in their line of duty, with the hope of alleviating some of the periodic pressures they face and reach a more sustainable level of management for such sites.

The following are the participants involved in this focus group session:

- Mr Francesco Gregorio – Consigliere Comunale di Oliveri
- Mr Giovanni Mangano – Presidente Area Marina Protetta di Milazzo
- Mr Giuseppe Castiglione – Sindaco di Campobello di Mazara
- Mr Rocco Ingianni – Vice Sindaco di Petrosino
- Mr Nino Ciulla – Assessore Comune di San Vito lo Capo
- Ms Santina Lattuca – Comune di Realmonte
- Mr Vincenzo Ortega – Dirigente Comune di Licata

Transcript of main discussion points

- During the session, one could notice that for all participants, these pocket beaches represent an important part of the regional heritage and identity and one could also sense the level of pride each representative has for these unique ecosystems. Conservation and preservation are high on their agenda, and by this they mean the entire site which extends beyond the ecological dynamics of the beach to include valley systems, and the management of sewage in the area, especially during the summer months when the region surrounding the beach receive increased numbers of tourist levels.

A strong point of contention that has been mentioned by most participants, and which continues to provoke strong emotions, is the way beaches in Sicily (including mainland Italy) are managed when it comes to sand erosion and the perceived reluctance by authorities “to preserve what’s left of it”. Particularly for sand erosion, the issues are various and complex and could also be part of the beach natural cycle. However, some participants argued that with regards to some pocket beaches the issue of sand erosion can be blamed directly to the numerous structures that have been built over the last few decades along the beach. These have severely restricted or in some instances blocked the winds which sustain the current that brings sand back to the beach. At this juncture, it was clarified that the aim of this project is not to reverse the clock and remove such structures, no matter how problematic these may be, but rather to look out for solutions to work round the existing issues.

- Another common issue was the management of Posidonia which regularly washes on shore and is considered to be an eyesore by many locals.

Not surprisingly was the fact that although most of the participants have environmental protection close to heart, very few seemed to appreciate that this phenomenon could be

part of the site's ecological defense mechanism. On this point, the Maltese experience was shared with the panel explaining that Malta experienced a similar issue a few years back, however the situation largely improved with a number of information campaigns aimed at educating the general public on the importance of keeping these banquettes on the beach as much as possible to protect the sand from eroding away during storms or heavy winds. In fact, the group was informed that in Malta the practice nowadays is to only remove the *Posidonia* grass during the months of April or May, under strict guidelines to reduce the impact on the ecosystem as much as possible.

Throughout the session, it was amply acknowledged that there are no quick fixes to these complex issues. Still, one thing was evidently clear, and it related to the fact that the hurdles being experienced on these shores, in particular popular pocket beaches, cannot be taken in isolation and the solution/s should be sought in a much wider context. The management plans should take cognizance of this and seek ways to signal such challenges on a more regional (rather than district) level. Protection is only the first step in reaching the goal, proper maintenance and rehabilitation should be the targeted achievements.

- To this end, one participant also lamented that as a country, Italy invests adequately in research but then this research is sidelined during the actual project implementation. It is true that the scope of such studies quite often centers around thematic needs of particular systems, such as in this case pocket beaches, and in most cases require support from the local institutional level to take off. However, when added up these can also serve as a canvas to be adopted more broadly to the regional and national level. Insights that stem from research is already widely available and can be used to tackle problems more strategically, rather than relying on emergency interventions. However, the lack of coordination between regional and national authorities makes it very hard to combine efforts, and more often than not actions, to resolve certain issues, are independently driven without any prior consultation. To this end, studies which would already have the answers

to some of the complex issues are not consulted, missing out on the timely opportunity to make quicker and more informed decisions.

- Another poignant point raised during the session was that of financial restraints at the district council level to manage such areas. Certain administrations have to deal with kilometers of coastline, and this takes away a lot of their budget and is heavily restricting their reach to make the appropriate interventions.
- In another intervention, the extent of public access was discussed. Such sites are widely accessible to the public, and whilst there is no particular argument for certain sites to limit access, certain councils are considering introducing restrictions, or a carrying capacity type of mechanism, as part of their contingency efforts to protect the site. This has also been partly prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic which triggered social distancing measures that reduced the number of people that can gather in public places. Again, several councils lamented that such requests usually fall on deaf ears and are generally not granted by the regional assessors, even in the case of public health let alone environmental grounds.
- Other contributions:
 - More scientific research to monitor pocket beaches and take decisions based on scientific data. It was explained that in this sense BESS has already gone into extensive technical aspects of the coastal areas and various studies were carried out both on land and from the air by means of drones, which could accurately calculate the coastal movements.
 - There should be increased surveillance on human activity on pocket beaches and better overall organization by beach operators, which can/will indirectly enhance the touristic product.

5.4 Sicily Stakeholders Focus Group

Having gathered insights from technical and scientific experts involved in beach management and marine environment, as well as from policy makers involved with the actual shaping of policy and implementation, it was likewise important to gauge the views of stakeholders with direct vested interest in the three pocket beaches under review. Whilst the majority of stakeholder participants are economic operators, such as restaurant and lido owners, other stakeholders were involved, and these relate to the operational, cultural and historic aspect of pocket beaches.

As explained in the methodology section, three different stakeholder focus groups were organized, one for each of the three pocket beaches under review. This was done to ensure better overall representation of views by all the different stakeholders, which can be very distinct from each other, in both size and characteristics, depending on the beach they operate in.

The following are the participants that were involved in the Sicilian stakeholder focus group session:

- Mr Diego Paltrinieri – General Manager of a private entity which operates a sand plant responsible for operations in Sicily and le Marche, mainland Italy
- Mr Gianmichele Iaria – Diving researcher and associate with Messina University
- Mr Pippo Arena – General Manager of a private entity responsible for the conduct of marine surveys

Transcript of main discussion points

- As expected from their resume, participants in this focus group all have direct hands-on experience with the management of these sites or similar areas and all agreed that pocket beaches have been going through huge changes which if not addressed immediately, may continue to suffer irreparable damage to the detriment of future generations. To this end,

the project presented these stakeholders with an opportunity to discuss some of the long-standing problems they encounter in their operations, with the hope to propose solutions.

- The first issue discussed was the inadequate preparation involved, by way of reference to scientific studies and statistical data, when actions are taken by certain stakeholders. The participants noted that a significant gap exists in terms of formal data collection protocols and lamented that there is no central database to collate and store data collected through the various projects, which is then made publicly available. This issue was further accentuated by the pressing need to analyze any trends which may unfold over time, that have a direct impact on the projects being proposed. The participants were convinced that such an initiative is not difficult to implement, especially with today's availability of technological tools whereby a lot of information could be collected in a short period of time through the use of sensors, drones and buoys.

On this point, various members mentioned that government institutions go into investing millions on certain marine projects without having the empirical data on how to best intervene in the area. To highlight this point, they explained how a few years back, the region invested heavily on a research project that involved various beaches across Sicily. Problems started to crop up when project participants failed to communicate and share the data they collected for the project between one another. This in turn resulted in duplicated data collection efforts without any concerted conclusions. Naturally, the project failed to reach its expected outcome, but a lot of quality work was still carried out which ought to be salvaged and used to complement and feed into other studies. With this in mind, it was suggested that such empirical evidence should be organized and financed for by the region in order to prevent similar situations from occurring again whilst also enabling future projects to build upon work already conducted.

- Another point discussed was the impact that ports have on nearby beaches. In Italy, there is approximately 80,000 km of coastline, with ports located roughly every 13km of coastline. These ports have a significant ecological impact on the area, including the ecosystem of nearby beaches. In San Vito lo Capo, for example, there is a port in the middle of the bay for small boats and other motorized pleasure craft. Expectedly this is having an impact on the beach ecosystem, particularly the seabed, which is gradually eroding away with the impact of undercurrents. To remedy this, the group recommended that more studies be carried out on these impacts, which should also provide mitigating measures.
- On a more positive note, all members agreed that municipalities do not generally create issues or unnecessary red tape for researchers or individuals that wish to conduct research on beaches, highlighting that such projects are in fact often commissioned. The problem lies in the intervention following the study, which sometimes takes between 3 to 4 years to finalize and implement. This brings about frequent scenarios whereby the study becomes obsolete, due to the changes that the beach would have experienced during this time horizon. In this context, emphasis was placed on the extreme weather conditions that have been occurring during the past few years, adding to the gravity of long-standing issues. Unfortunately, many projects are still being conducted within this time lag and undoubtedly few effective results are being obtained. To this end, the participants were left disappointed that a lot of taxpayer money is “going to waste”.
- In the last part of the session, the topic of governance was also discussed. On this front it was a bit surreal to understand that all the necessary governance arrangements seemed to be in place and continuously updated, however these are then rarely put into practice by the relevant parties, especially the political class. In the end, there was consensus that politicians need to be more forward looking in their approach as opposed to thinking more short term, as well as be prepared to take some of the less popular decisions to protect pocket beaches and their complex ecosystem for generations still to come.

- People also need to be made aware that their actions and behaviours may have direct or indirect impacts on the beach ecosystem. Unfortunately, the general public is sometimes at fault even on the basic civic principles, such as responsible waste disposal. Few seem able to realize that when people dispose of things, not necessarily on the beach or its vicinity, this could still have an impact on the beach as litter and other waste is very easily washed down to the sea with rain, wind and other elements. Education and public awareness remain key to improve human behaviours, especially when targeted towards the young.

5.5 Mellieha Bay (Malta) Stakeholders Focus Group

Mellieha Bay, colloquially referred to as Ghadira, is the largest pocket beach in Malta and Gozo and the most visited, particularly during the summer months. Economic stakeholders lining this popular beach include restaurants, hotels, lidos and private umbrella and deckchair operators. Other stakeholders involved include Birdlife Malta, who are responsible for managing the Mellieha Bay Birdlife Sanctuary and Red Cross Malta who provide lifeguarding services through the months of June till the end of September. This focus group session, which was held online in view of restrictions relating to the COVID pandemic, invited representatives from the different stakeholder groups involved in Mellieha Bay to discuss various themes related to beach management.

The following are the participants that were involved in this focus group session:

- Mr Jonathan Vella – Il-Pirata Restaurant
- Ms Nicola Cini – San Remo Beach Club
- Mr Robert Brinciau – Red Cross Malta
- Mr Mark Gauci – Birdlife Malta Sanctuary Reserve Manager
- Ms Stephanie Attard – Malta Tourism Authority

Transcript of main discussion points

- Participating economic operators instinctively assign an economic and touristic value when probed to determine what Mellieha Bay stood for. This said, it was also promising to register that these participants are also conscious of the ecological pressures faced by this beach as it continues to attract thousands of visitors each year, particularly during the summer months. In this regard, all participants were found to be very supportive of the idea of having a beach management manual in place for Mellieha Bay, that would ultimately ensure its long-term sustainability and conservation. Participants do not consider economic interests and conservation to be on conflicting ends but rather believe that their business prospects can only be sustained in the long term if Mellieha Bay itself is protected. This is indeed very important because it guarantees stakeholder buy-in and engagement when the designed beach management manuals are rolled out for implementation.

- The participants described how Mellieha Bay is a destination in itself which evolved significantly over the years. In the past, Mellieha Bay was perhaps more associated with summer, bathers and tourism. Today, Mellieha Bay has become a retreat for many people, all year round and the beach management manual should factor this in. According to participating stakeholders, management plans should look at the beach beyond the busy summer months and should offer solutions on how to improve the experience of visitors during the shoulder months as well. Mellieha Bay is indeed rich in ecological and historical value, with the Red Tower overlooking the beach, the Tunnara Battery museum at the other end of the coast, the bird sanctuary, and pleasant trails for walking, jogging or cycling along the coast. With the right investment and vision, Mellieha Bay can offer so much more in terms of recreation and could also serve as a cultural and educational experience, for young and adults alike.

This vision was also shared by Birdlife Malta who manage the bird sanctuary. Contrary to what one might expect, economics also play an important part here, and rather than viewing visitors to Mellieha Bay as a threat to their conservation efforts, they actually see it as an opportunity to educate more people while at the same time help to financially support the sanctuary. To this end, the sanctuary works closely with other Mellieha Bay stakeholders, namely hotels, to promote the sanctuary as an attraction for the tourists' itinerary.

- When it comes to proposed investments, all stakeholders made it clear that they were not implying more development or commercialization. In their own words, Mellieha Bay is beautiful as it is. However, facilities and the general infrastructure are a bit run down and some embellishment would go a long way to improve the overall experience. Upgrading the promenade would also help in this regard but its design should reflect the surroundings of the site and should not try to urbanize the area.
- Mellieha Bay receives thousands of visitors each year and with this influx comes another pertinent challenge: parking. Mellieha Bay stakeholders are pleased that this is currently being addressed with the building of a car park further up the road, adjacent to Mellieha Bay hotel, which will create 300 parking spots. Several other popular pocket beaches however have no such capacity and parking continues to present a major challenge for these sites. Some stakeholders proposed that rather than creating parking areas, which is not always possible for some of the pocket beaches in Malta and Gozo, the beach would offer a park and ride type of system. People would still be allowed to drop off their family and friends, and belongings along the beach but would then go park their cars in other designated areas where a shuttle bus would be waiting to take them back down to the beach.

While the new parking area is a welcome initiative for all participating stakeholders, some have been left slightly disappointed in their view that it does not fully respect the holistic vision for Mellieha Bay. These stakeholders complained that the car park should have been more environmentally friendly in its design. It completely lacks greenery, which not only stands out against the environs of the beach, but it would have ultimately benefitted the car park users themselves because if trees were to be planted this would provide shade to all the cars parked for a full day in the sun.

- Stakeholders acknowledged that Mellieha Bay and other popular pocket beaches around Malta have seen some major improvements along the years, particularly when it comes to beach organization and management. Some of the positive measures that were introduced over the years include the designation of swimming zones, lifeguarding services provided by Red Cross Malta with the support of MTA, better organization of umbrellas and deckchairs resolving long standing issues that had existed between the rights of private operators and the rights of the general public to use the beach freely without any obstruction, the designation of BBQ areas and the full accessibility of the beach by wheelchair users.

Recently, Mellieha Bay also carried out a basic health and safety audit which helped identify certain safety gaps and protocols and led to the investment of additional resources and equipment, such as RHIBS, required to manage the beach both from land and sea. The proposed beach management manual may wish to make this audit a requirement for the most popular pocket beaches. From a safety point of view, Red Cross claimed that there seems to be more focus on the beach itself and authorities very often overlook the adjacent areas of the beach dynamics which is quite extensive. It was therefore being suggested that the beach management manuals make sure to cover holistically the beach surroundings. Relating to safety, stakeholders also hoped that the manual would somehow address the permanent closure of the police station in Mellieha Bay and the lack of police

presence and patrolling, particularly during the summer months. Stakeholders lamented that in case of minor infractions the closest police response was the Qawra police station.

- Notwithstanding these positive improvements, stakeholders complained that Mellieha Bay continues to lack the basic general infrastructure and supporting amenities. For instance, there is no fixed adequate structure to offer health and safety services and instead a makeshift container is used as a clinic. Existing toilet facilities are also lacking, both for beach users and people providing services on the beach, such as lifeguards. Some stakeholders explained that there appears to be plans to increase and upgrade existing amenities, but these continue to be shelved pending proposed plans to shift the existing road and extend the beach.
- As for beach cleanliness, stakeholders admitted that this is never enough and more often than not this depends very much on the beach users themselves. As explained, MTA are responsible for the sand sifting part and the daily cleaning of the beach then rests with the cleansing and maintenance division. MTA confirmed that they are in constant communication with the cleansing department who run a cleaning schedule four times a day. Stakeholders however were not too pleased with the overall results and had often complained to the different authorities, be it MTA, local councils or some other entity, about the level of cleanliness and general beach upkeep, particularly in the afternoon when deckchairs are removed and people head home. Moreover, garbage bags, collected from the beach in the morning, are sometimes left on the promenade well into the afternoon in plain sight for everyone to see. The promenade and surrounding areas, particularly next to the police station and bird sanctuary are sometimes dirtier than the beach area itself.
- Frustrated stakeholders complained that their reports are often left unheeded and argued that no one seems to be responsible for the overall management of Mellieha Bay. On this point, Red Cross Malta added that they face the same responsibility vacuum particularly

when it comes to grey areas, such as coordination of maritime base currently managed by Red Cross. In a nutshell there is no single entity to resolve issues that are out of the normal. In reality, stakeholders conceded that these issues are not difficult to tackle, and most are a matter of touching up, better communication and planning. To this end, stakeholders suggested that the beach management plan should propose the setting up of a beach management committee which would be responsible for the management of Mellieha Bay throughout the whole year and not just Summer. Accordingly, this beach management committee would not only be the go-to entity to report and resolve such issues but would also be responsible for the overall vision that is required for Mellieha Bay.

- Participating stakeholders also touched upon the marine environment of Mellieha Bay. The bay is not only a popular destination for swimmers and bathers but also a popular destination port for boats and other pleasure crafts. Over the years, the number of boats in Malta has increased significantly and this trend does not appear to subside over the foreseeable future. Several boats head to Mellieha Bay on weekends during the Summer and moor inside the bay for the rest of the day. Mooring inside the bay is done on a 'first come first serve basis' by throwing in their anchor, which is in turn damaging the sea grass meadows, such as the Posidonia, which ultimately protects the bay's ecosystem. For this reason, it was being suggested that certain popular locations, such as Mellieha Bay, have a pre-determined carrying capacity limit for boats as is the case with some pocket beaches in Sicily. Furthermore, these beaches would have ecological moorings that are properly attached to the seabed and managed by Transport Malta. Another business model for this proposal could involve the beach operators themselves, such as restaurants and hotels, where each would be assigned a number of these moorings and boat owners would have to pre book moorings in exchange for payment and other services offered by the operators on land. This approach would not only bring about a better organization of boat moorings inside the bay that would clear up the horizon but would also serve to protect the seabed from further damage.

5.6 Ramla (Gozo) Stakeholders and Local People Focus Group

The last two focus group sessions, covering the insights and perceptions of stakeholders related to Ramla in Gozo and local people were held in Gozo, on the actual Ramla site, in full compliance with COVID-19 health measures. Whilst all other sessions were held online, in view of restrictions relating to the COVID pandemic, it was very difficult to employ the same approach in this case, given the cohort of participants involved in these two particular focus groups, particularly local people. This latter category comprises people who are closely attached to the geographical areas under review and it was therefore important to get their views as well because they could perceive issues differently from the other stakeholders researched.

For reasons explained in the methodology section, getting these people together online however was not possible, either because some were not IT proficient or else did not have access to the Internet. The only remaining option was thus to organize this focus group session in person. The Ramla site, with its outdoor setting, presented the right opportunity to hold these two focus group sessions, face to face.

The following are the participants that were involved in the respective two sessions:

Stakeholders:

- Mr Mario Sciberras – Kcina tar-Ramla
- Ms Josianne Xerri – Rose’s Ramla Bay Catering & Deckchair hire
- Mr Joseph Spiteri – Sunbed operator
- Mr Giovanni Zammit – Wirt Ghawdex
- Mr Mario Grech – Private operator to oversee parking arrangements

Local People:

- Mr George Camilleri – Ramla Farmer with strong family ties to Ramla going back generations

- Mr Andrea Sultana – Ramla Farmer
- Eucharist Camilleri – Strong family ties with Ramla having olive trees and other fields in the surrounding area
- Mr Noel Attard – Frequent visitor to Ramla

Transcript of main discussion points

- As expected, the majority of participants in the stakeholder focus group session were economic operators, managing the two catering establishments in Ramla and the rental of umbrellas and sunbeds. To this end, Ramla beach primarily presents them with an economic opportunity to generate business, particularly during the busy summer months. One could sense that they are proud and privileged to be operating in “Gozo’s most popular sandy beach”, as is often marketed by the Malta Tourism Authority and the Ministry for Gozo, “welcoming Maltese and tourists alike”. It is therefore important to frame their views of how Ramla should be managed with this context in mind.

Notwithstanding, all stakeholder participants have close personal and family ties with Ramla, that dates back generations, with almost all of them having nearby fields. In fact, all participants shared a strong appreciation for the surrounding environment and the pressing need to conserve and protect it. For them Ramla is more than just an economic / touristic venture. It is their home, heritage, and social fabric, that links them back to their past and family.

- For the local people, Ramla continues to be an unspoiled natural getaway to wind down and be at one with the environment and the inner self. Conservation and preservation are high on their agenda, and by this they mean the entire site which extends beyond the ecological dynamics of Ramla and also includes the historic remains that are on site (e.g.

Roman Villa remains) or close by (e.g. Calypso Cave, old Roman road leading from Calypso Cave to Ramla, and Mixta Cave).

- A strong point of contention that has been mentioned in other focus group sessions as well, and which continues to provoke strong emotions, is the way Ramla is managed when it comes to sand erosion and the perceived reluctance by authorities “to preserve what’s left of it”, instead of leaving it up to nature to continue with its course. Almost all participants in both focus group sessions felt that on this point Ramla was being neglected and cannot continue to live up to its title of being “Gozo’s most popular sandy beaches”. They argue that large parts of the beach are now completely filled with pebbles, rock and other “unsightly” sediment, making it at times difficult even to swim. According to participating stakeholders, this experience is also shared by several tourists who are at times left disappointed by what they find when their expectation was to visit Ramla as “promoted on brochures”.

Even though most of all participants have environmental protection close to heart, very few seemed to appreciate that this phenomenon could be part of the site’s ecological process. This is also creating some tensions with the environmental NGO entrusted by Government with the management of the site and is often perceived by these participants to be the one advocating against any form of intervention to restore sand back to Ramla. To disprove claims that this is part of the natural process some participants, particularly those forming part of the local people cohort, assert that they have been going down to Ramla for years and the situation has only started to develop over the last two decades.

- Another point of contention raised during the stakeholder’s session is that there seems to be no single authority responsible for the Ramla site. This is clearly creating beach management challenges and the manual could seek to address this issue by proposing a single beach management body whose role would be to oversee the management of Ramla and liaise with the respective public authorities, agencies and other stakeholders to

manage the site and deal with the day-to-day issues, particularly during the summer months.

- Relating to this previous point, there also seems to be an evident lack of enforcement when it comes to dogs, BBQs, camping and loud music, despite there being regulations to regulate all this. Moreover, an old police station was given to an environmental NGO for its base and there is no longer a fixed police presence in Ramla. On this point, participants called for a permanent police presence, particularly in the busy spring to summer months.
- There are no designated areas for sunbeds and umbrellas as is the case with other popular beaches, such as Mellieha Bay. The private operator sets up according to where customers want to stay, while the general public, not wanting to make use of the services of the operator, is free to choose any spot along the beach.

This didn't really come across as a major issue but from a product point of view it might be construed by tourists as disorganization. On the other hand, it might show authenticity to a traditional way of life that is less formal, more Maltese and Mediterranean. The only concern mentioned by the private operator, in relation to this point, is that they cannot use any motorized equipment on the beach to facilitate transportation of umbrellas and sunbeds when these are requested by customers and have to sometimes walk all the way to the other end of the beach with sunbeds and umbrellas. The protection of sand dunes has been mentioned as one of the probable reasons why no such transportation equipment is allowed in Ramla. However, with proper consultation between the private operator and whoever is managing the beach, the stakeholders feel that this is something one can easily resolve if clear boundaries are identified and adhered to.

- Clear boundaries also need to be delineated between private and public land. Some of the participants in both focus group sessions, who are also farmers, complained that their fields

are sometimes trampled upon by hikers and other members of the public that venture beyond Ramla beach into the surrounding areas.

- Increased boating traffic and moorings also seem to be causing considerable issues in Ramla bay, which is quite popular with boat owners during summer. In both focus group sessions, participants complained that this increased level of activity is resulting in a significant rise of boat waste disposal which washes in with currents.
- Other contributions:
 - Extend closing hours of public facilities and amenities during the summer months to at least midnight. They currently close at 10pm.
 - The walking platform which links the road to the beach does not seem to be wide enough for wheelchair accessibility.
 - Improve internet connectivity down in Ramla because it very often creates issues with payment transactions over POS (point of sale) terminals. To partly rectify the situation there was a proposal for the installation of an ATM whereby people can withdraw cash when such instances occur.
 - Ramla is more than just a beach. It is an ecosystem of high ecological and historical value. There was a proposal by one of the participants to promote Ramla, particularly among tourists visiting in the shoulder months, as a heritage trail linking the beach to Calypso cave and other ecological and historical findings in the area.
 - In the words of the two catering operators themselves, the establishments are in dire need of refurbishment. The operators are willing to modernize their premises in full respect of the environs of Ramla. They have proposed setting some standards to what type of materials can be used to help in the overall embellishment of the

site which would also be reflective of the traditional characteristics of the Gozitan setting. Some public financing support, similar to those on offer to households to restore and beautify their facades, would go a long way to make this happen.

6 Annex 1

Moderator Guide – Scientific Community | 16/12/2020

Timing	Instructions	Materials to use
5 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ In view of the COVID-19 Pandemic focus group sessions are organised online using Microsoft Teams<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Wait 3–5 mins until everyone joins the session.– Advise that this session will be recorded to help in the documentation of perceptions and insights at the assessment stage.– Introduce yourself (JP Fabri) as the moderator of this session, and Glenn Fenech as rapporteur and consultant entrusted with the stakeholder assessment.– Thank participants for accepting invitation to join this session aimed at scientific / technical individuals.– Session scheduled to run till 3:30pm (1½ hrs).■ Introduce study:<p><i>The Ministry for Gozo, in collaboration with the University of Malta, the University of Messina, the University of Palermo and the Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia, is currently carrying out a study to develop a Manual for the sustainable long-term management of Pocket Beaches in Sicily and Malta. This exercise is part-financed by the INTERREG Italia-Malta Funded BESS project for Pocket Beach Management and Remote Surveillance Systems.</i></p><p><i>ADI Associates have been entrusted with the coordination of this beach management manual. Seed Consultancy, a Maltese advisory and research firm, has been commissioned to organise a series of stakeholders' assessments, perceptions and attitude focus group sessions that shall form an integral part</i></p>	

Timing	Instructions	Materials to use
	<p><i>of this manual. These focus groups are being conducted prior to the compilation of this manual to ensure that the latter takes cognisance and addresses all the concerns and needs of the different stakeholders involved.</i></p> <p><i>Focus Group sessions have been divided into 4: Policy makers, Stakeholders (economic, social, cultural), Local people, and Scientific Community. Focus today is on the Scientific / technical community.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All views and quotes will be treated in confidence and anonymised. Offer respondents the opportunity to ask questions at any point. ■ Group rules: Encourage everyone's participation but invite everyone to mute their microphone and use 'raise hand' to share insights and make contributions. ■ Introduce other project members who join this session as observers: Adrian Mallia from ADI and Julia Vella from the Ministry for Gozo. 	
5 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask participants to introduce themselves – name & area of specialisation / involvement. <p><i>Call out:</i></p> <p>Malta</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof Anton Micallef • Prof Joseph Borg • Dr Saviour Scerri • Dr Jonathan Spiteri • Mr Vince Attard • Mr Anthony Zammit 	

Timing	Instructions	Materials to use
	<p><i>Sicily</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Prof Giovanni Randazzo</i> • <i>Ing Franco Cavallaro</i> • <i>Dr Mauro Bonasera</i> • <i>Prof Valeria Lo Presti</i> • <i>Prof Rosaria Ester Musumeci – will only stay with us for the first hour so let's try to take her views first.</i> • <i>Dr Alessandro Santilano</i> • <i>Dr Agata di Stefano</i> • <i>Dr Attilio Sulli</i> <p>■ Ask if any participants were not called out to introduce themselves.</p>	
10 mins	<p>First topic – Value recognition of Pocket Beaches</p> <p>■ Moderator's statement: Pocket Beaches may mean different things to different people. The first topic will try to determine (without prompting participants) what values they assign to Pocket Beaches.</p> <p>■ Study is being based on three sites: Mellieha bay (Malta), Ramla (Gozo) and San Vito Lo Capo (Sicily). Focus however should be on all Pocket Beaches.</p> <p>■ Show images to probe debate: images show natural beauty, maritime activity, human recreation etc</p> <p>■ In case moderator needs to prompt what we mean by 'value' here are some ideas: Pocket beaches can have an:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Economic / touristic value – Natural / ecological value – Historic / cultural value – Recreational 	<p>■ Images of test sites: Mellieha Bay, Ramla, San Vito Lo Capo</p>

Timing	Instructions	Materials to use
	Allow for some discussion to take place as an ice breaker and to appreciate all the different forces that are in play.	
15 mins	Second Topic – Vision for Pocket Beaches	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Moderator’s statement: Having identified the underpinning values for Pocket Beaches, the next topic will look at scoping a vision for Pocket Beaches in line with each of the values assigned. Expectedly, there will be different views and potentially more than one vision. The scope here is to identify and propose some concrete measures. ■ Main questions to ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What is your vision for Pocket Beaches? – What focus would you like to see in Beach Management Plans that will promote / drive your vision? – What will it require to achieve this vision? Resources (e.g. financial) and/or policy (regulatory implementation)? 	
15 mins	Third Topic – Pressures and Conflicts	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Moderator’s statement: Having set the scene, the next area of interest will be to identify key issues and pressures, as well as try to reconcile competing needs in management planning for Pocket Beaches. ■ This topic should identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Issues and conflicts countering one’s vision for Pocket Beaches. ■ But should also propose solutions in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conflict resolution – Mitigation of issues – Resource management 	

Timing	Instructions	Materials to use
15 mins	<p>Fourth Topic – Positive existing measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Moderator’s statement: Some measures to reconcile competing needs might already be in place and bearing fruit. This next discussion will attempt to identify what is working well, in order to continue strengthening such measures, whilst also serving as an example to the implementation of additional measures. ■ Moderator should not prompt debate but must make sure to cover measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Blue Flag status – Vince Attard (NTM) can contribute here – BBQ by-laws – Operational organisation of deckchairs, umbrellas, designation of swim zone areas – Protection of natural habitat / Educational campaigns (e.g. spot the jellyfish campaign) – Legislation to protect marine wildlife (e.g. turtle nesting) ■ Main questions to ask <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How were these measures implemented? – What did it involve by way of resources, lobbying etc? – What was the overall experience? Was buy-in of such measures easy? 	
10 mins	<p>Fifth Topic – Management of Pocket Beaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Moderator’s statement: This topic will seek to explore general management of Pocket Beaches that covers the following considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Facilities and amenities – Accessibility – Safety of surroundings (including geological integrity of some Pocket Beaches) – Waste management – Enforcement – Parking 	

Timing	Instructions	Materials to use
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This topic may not be that relevant for this group but they might still have some views on enforcement, accessibility and safety of surroundings (Dr Saviour Scerri is a geologist) 	
15 mins	<p>Sixth Topic – Contribution of ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The final step of the session should encourage contributions of ideas for possible management actions aimed at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improving decision making – Consensus on priorities – Pollution reduction – Landscape improvement – Improved understanding between partners – Improved public awareness ■ Invite any other comments on areas possibly not covered during the session, as well as general feedback. 	
Wrap up 5 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask Prof Giovanni Randazzo and Prof Anton Micallef if they wish to make any closing statements. ■ Thank everyone for their participation and contributions. 	