

Diving Master Plan for Malta

Dive Site Report 19: Exiles Sliema

Version 1: December 2010

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Quality Assurance

Diving Master Plan for Malta Dive Site Report 19: Exiles (Sliema) December 2010

Report for: **Malta Tourism Authority**

Revision Schedule

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DIVE SITE REPORT 19: EXILES (SLIEMA)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Exiles diving site is found equidistantly between Sliema and St Julian's centres. The area is also known as St Julian's Point. A landmark of this area is the St Julian's Tower. The area consists of food and beverage outlets, parking facilities and a dive centre. Sliema is a hub of touristic activity and recreation. Exiles is located within the locality of Sliema (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1: Location of site



DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Access

2. Access to Exiles is through a narrow road on the left of the road that leads from St Julian's to Sliema. There are two entry points E1 and E2. E1 is accessed from concrete footsteps and a concrete platform (where there is a ladder) whilst E2 is mainly accessible over bare rock (See **Figure 2**).

Figure 2: Access point E1 and E2



Land use

3. The surrounding area is a mainly known for its touristic and recreational activities. There are also various bathing facilities and related infrastructure in the surrounding area. This is also evident in the landscaping and the outlets present.
4. The area has ample parking space. There is a considerable formal parking area between 50 and 100m from the access / exit points.
5. Informational signage on the general area is available and various food and beverage outlets are found in the immediate surroundings and in the wider surroundings.

Site Usage

6. In 2005, a survey carried out by Adi Associates revealed that Exiles was the 37th most popular dive site in Malta.
7. Based on the online questionnaire undertaken for the Master Plan, Exiles – Sliema was ranked overall the 27th most popular dive, see **Table I**.

Table I: Rankings for Exiles - Sliema

Overall popularity		27 th	
Overall shore dive	20 th	Overall dive experience	29 th
Novice divers	6 th	Experienced divers	44 th
Best wreck dive	37 th	Best technical dive	30 th
Best cave dive	31 st	Best marine life	33 rd

Existing facilities

8. The site offers various facilities for divers. The formal parking area is just 50m and 100m away from the access points E1 and E2 respectively (See **Figure 3**). The nearest fuel filling station is found at Balluta, around 1km away from the site. The nearest dive centre is located on site (See **Figure 4**).

Figure 3: Parking facilities



Figure 4: Existing facilities



9. Entry point E1 is over a concreted platform and access to the water is via a ladder. In the case of E2, one has to walk over bare rock and some concreted paths in order to arrive to the sloping entry point.
10. **Figure 5** shows the location of the existing facilities.
11. Further details on this dive site are available in the Data Card in **Annex I**.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

12. Some minor interventions are required at this site to improve it for diving purposes. Most measures seek to remove hazards and improve safety and security, or to replace existing infrastructure with proper diver-friendly facilities. It must be emphasised that most dive-related facilities can double-up for use by other recreational users, e.g. swimmers, etc. The proposed interventions are shown in **Figure 6** and include:

- The replacement of the ladder with a new stainless steel version;
- Provision of dedicated parking slots for divers; and
- Provision of signage.

Figure 5: Existing facilities

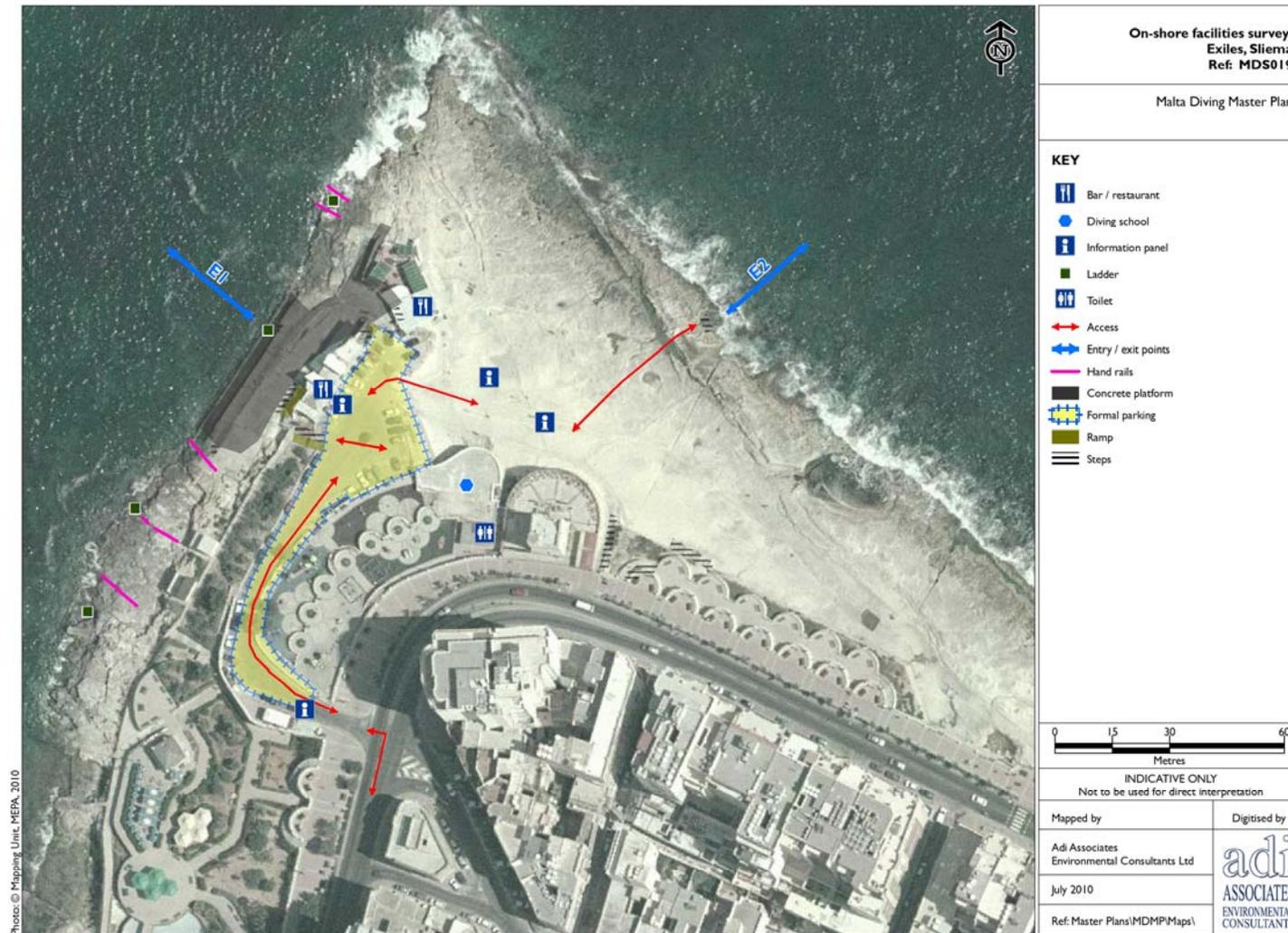


Figure 6: Proposed interventions



Permit requirements

13. The entire list of interventions required to upgrade this Dive Site is reproduced in **Table 2** below. The locations for the proposed interventions are all within the Development Zone ('inside Scheme') and are shown in **Figure 6**. Detailed engineering proposals, complete with drawings, are outside the scope of this Master Plan but will be required before specific interventions are implemented.
14. The proposed interventions are minor and directly link to the dive site *per se*. The proposed dedicated car parking area falls within an existing car park that is part of a larger area of designated public open space (Policy NHRL01 of the North Harbours Local Plan). The existing ladder falls within an area that is promoted for upgrading to 'Blue Flag Beach' status in the North Harbours Local Plan (Policy NHSJ 08). The proposed interventions are not considered to conflict with these Local Plan policies.
15. These Local Plan policy areas are shown in **Figure 7** below. **Table 2** identifies the permitted development status for the various interventions proposed.

Table 2: Permit requirements

Reference	Intervention	Permits required
EI	Replacement of ladder with a new stainless steel ladder.	None. Assuming 'like for like' replacement.
PI	Provision of dedicated parking for divers.	None. Management arrangements for use of parking bays by dive trucks is to be negotiated with between MTA/Dive Schools and Transport Malta. Development permit not required under the Development Planning Act.
General	Provide appropriate signage and interpretation panels with information on the dive site, the underwater attractions, typical marine life encountered, other environmental information, safety rules, and important contact numbers.	None. Permitted development under Class 4 (Minor Infrastructural Development) of the DNO. Why? – Because the proposed signage would be within the limits of development and not on or close to a scheduled or designated area.

Simplification of procedures

16. The need for DNO and DPAs for minor infrastructure is evident at this and many other dive sites. One of the recommendations of the Diving Master Plan for Malta is that dive sites are formally designated in order to recognise the importance they provide for the dive community and the need to ensure potentially ecologically damaging activities are controlled at these locations. The benefits of formal designation are that their status can be acknowledged in the context of:

- Local Plans;

- Environmental Monitoring Plans for Marine Protection Areas (as required through the Habitats Directive);
- The Marine Strategy Framework Directive; and
- The Water Framework Directive.

17. The Master Plan recommends that MTA seek amendments to the DNO to allow for a simplification of procedures for genuine diving related infrastructure, once dive sites are designated.

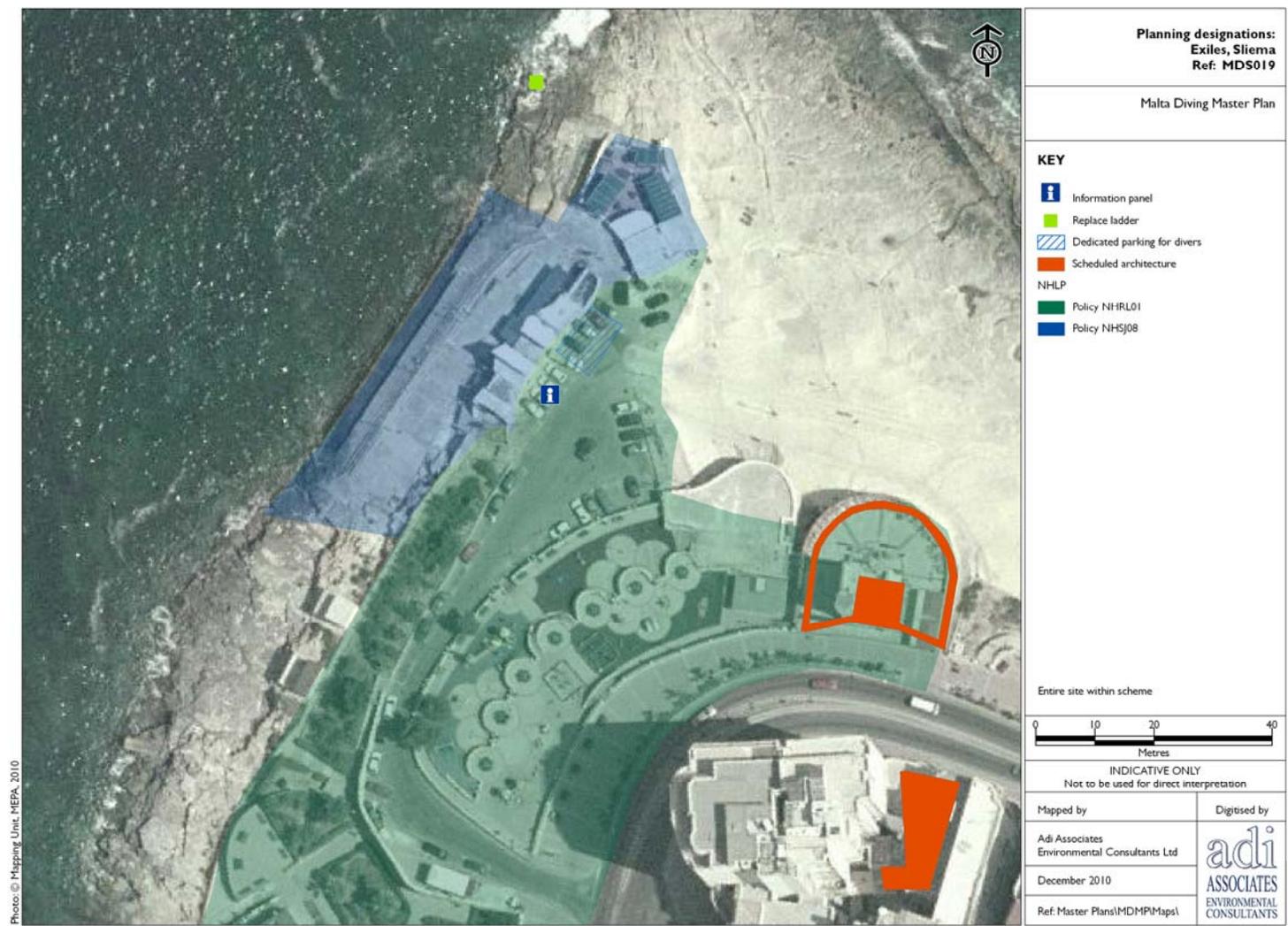
Timing and Priorities

18. The priorities set out below are specific for this dive site. Before implementing any interventions, the current popularity and the potential of the dive site need to be considered so that precedence is given to the highest ranking sites.
19. Since the interventions proposed do not require permission, they can be carried out immediately. The interventions are prioritised in **Table 3**.
20. The priority ranking is based on the importance of the intervention in providing:
- A safe and hazard-free environment;
 - Improved facilities that would facilitate the sport and enhance the diving experience; and
 - An improved and visibly upgraded environment.

Table 3: Prioritised interventions

Reference	Intervention	Priority
EI	Replacement of ladder with a new stainless steel ladder.	Medium
PI	Provision of dedicated parking for divers.	Medium
General	Provision of signage.	Low

Figure 7: Plan showing planning designations in the vicinity of the proposed interventions



CONCLUSION

21. This report has outlined the interventions required to upgrade the onshore facilities for the Exiles dive site. These interventions would bring about a visible improvement to the Site; however, it must be pointed out that the approaches to the dive site (subject of this report) are only one aspect of the dive experience (albeit an important one that gives the tourist the first impression of the site). Equally important are the underwater environment and the quality of the dive itself.
22. The quality of the underwater environment can be improved by:
 - Undertaking regular monitoring of the sea bed to identify interventions that need to be made;
 - Undertaking regular clean-ups of the sea bed (and providing adequate waste disposal containers on shore to promote safe and proper disposal of waste);
 - Establishing some form of management structure for the site (this can be amalgamated with other sites in the vicinity); and
 - Controlling fishing activity in the area.
23. It is also important that any new facilities provided are constructed of appropriate materials that can endure the harsh conditions of the marine environment, and that the facilities, and the general area, are regularly maintained to ensure that the efforts made are enjoyed in the long term. To this end, a maintenance programme that covers all the dive sites should be put in place and performance standards and criteria established to ensure that the right service is being delivered.

Annex I – Data card

MALTA DIVING MASTER PLAN

Inventory of Malta Dive Sites

On-Shore Facilities

Ref. No.

MDS 019

Dive Site: Exiles

Locality: Sliema

Current Status: NIL

Proposed Status: Officially designated Dive Site

Nearest village: Sliema

Boat Dive	Shore Dive
	x

Distance to nearest village:	Within 500m	Within 1km	Within 2 km	Over 2 km
	x			

Distance to nearest Police Station:	Within 500m	Within 1km	Within 2 km	Over 2 km
			x	

Distance to nearest Health Centre:	Within 500m	Within 1km	Within 2 km	Over 2 km
				x

Distance to nearest diving school / air filling station	Within 500m	Within 1km	Within 2 km	Over 2 km
	x			

Distance to nearest fuel / service station:	Within 500m	Within 1km	Within 2 km	Over 2 km
		x		

Approach Roads:	Arterial Road	Distributor Road	Local Access Road	Other Road / Track	Off-road
			x		

Parking Area:	Available	Formal	Informal	Dedicated parking spaces for divers	Against payment	Free of Charge
	x		x			

Facilities available on site:	Telephone	Toilets	Showers	Life-saving post	First Aid Post	Site information
		x				

MALTA DIVING MASTER PLAN

Inventory of Malta Dive Sites

On-Shore Facilities

Ref. No.

MDS 019

Telephones	On site	Within 100m	Within 500m	Within 1 km	Over 1 km
	x				

Mobile Reception	None	Poor	Intermittent	Good	Very Good
					x

Bars/Refreshments Areas:	On site	Within 100m	Within 500m	Within 1 km	Over 1 km
	x				

Security features on site:	Hand rails and stainless steel stairs
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Site cleanliness:	Presence of tar residue	Animal waste	Small litter	Medium Litter	Large Litter

Mooring facilities:	None (anchoring)	Single point moorings	Tie-up buoys	Managed moorings	Pontoons	Quays
	x					

Suggested level of diving qualification / experience:	Beginner	Open Water	Advanced Open Water	Technical
		x		

Presence of On-shore Hazards:	Yes	No
		x

Type of Hazard:	Sharp rocks	Slippery Surfaces	Uneven surfaces	Accumulated litter	Unsuitable structures	Other

Hazard information	
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Number (and name) of entry/exit points:	E1 – Ladder
	E2 – Rocks

MALTA DIVING MASTER PLAN*Inventory of Malta Dive Sites***On-Shore Facilities****Ref. No.****MDS 019****Entry/Exit Point:** E1 – Ladder

Distance of parking area to entry point:	<5m	5-20m	21-40m	41-70m	71-100m	>100m
		x				

Access to water:	Stairs	Giant stride from Quay/Rock	Slope	Slipway	Ladder	Walkway	Rocks
					x		

Exit Points:	Rocks	Rock-cut steps	Hand Rails	Slope	Slipway	Ladder	Steps
						x	

Entry/Exit Point: E2 – Rocks

Distance of parking area to entry point:	<5m	5-20m	21-40m	41-70m	71-100m	>100m
		x				

Access to water:	Stairs	Giant stride from Quay/Rock	Slope	Slipway	Ladder	Walkway	Rocks
	x (rock-cut)						x

Exit Points:	Rocks	Rock-cut steps	Hand Rails	Slope	Slipway	Ladder	Steps
	x	x					