

Diving Master Plan for Malta

Dive Site Report I 4: Cirkewwa – Marfa Point Mellieha

Version I: December 2010

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Quality Assurance

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Report for: Malta Tourism Authority

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DIVE SITE REPORT 14: CIRKEWWA – MARFA POINT (MELLIEHA)

INTRODUCTION

1. Cirkewwa – Marfa Point is found on the northwest coast of Malta and is the main node for the inter-island ferry crossings. The area can become quite busy and hectic both at sea and on land. The diving sites vary from scuttled vessels: tug boat Rozi (scuttled in 1992) and the P29 Patrol Boat (scuttled in 2007); a Madonna statue found inside a cave and geomorphologic features like the Cirkewwa Arch and the Sugar Loaf (a huge boulder). Cirkewwa forms part of the Locality of Mellieha (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1: Location of site

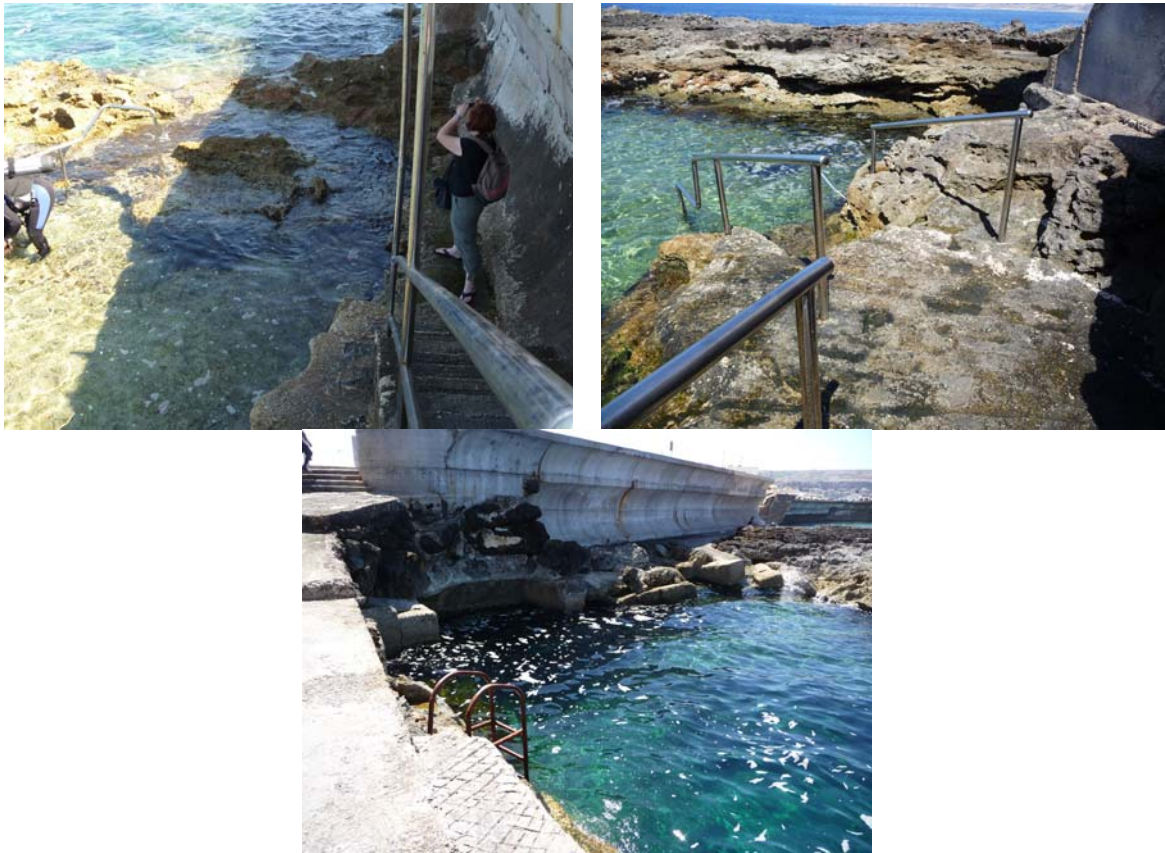


DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Access

2. Cirkewwa – Marfa Point can be accessed mainly from Marfa road. There are three entry / exit points. All three are highly accessible; the first two access points include stairs and a ramp both equipped with stainless steel hand rails whilst the final access point next to the lighthouse has a ladder (see **Figure 2**).

Figure 2: Access point E1, E2, E3



Land use

3. The surrounding area predominantly consists of the inter-island ferry terminal and associated facilities. The area is also popular with tourists due to the presence of a holiday resort in close vicinity; it is also a much sought after area by anglers. Marfa Point also reserves some panoramic views of Comino, Gozo and the Qammieh area.
4. This dive site is served by ample informal parking space, including an area dedicated to the parking of dive trucks. Divers/diving schools have to register in order to get a permit to park their vehicles in the allocated spaces.
5. Public toilets and a food and beverage outlet are within walking distance of the entry points.

Site Usage

6. In 2005, a survey carried out by Adi Associates revealed that Cirkewwa was the most popular dive site in Malta.
7. Based on the online questionnaire undertaken for the Master Plan, the P29 Patrol Boat, the Sugar Loaf & Madonna, the Tugboat Rozi and the Cirkewwa Arch were ranked overall the, 4th, 3rd, 2nd and 5th most popular dives, respectively. It is clear

from this result that Cirkewwa – Marfa Point incorporates the favourite dive sites for divers and diving schools. These sites have had high ranks in various aspects; see **Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4.**

Table 1: Rankings for the P29 Patrol Boat – Cirkewwa (Mellieha)

Overall popularity		4 th	
Overall shore dive	4 th	Overall dive experience	3 rd
Novice divers	19 th	Experienced divers	3 rd
Best wreck dive	3 rd	Best technical dive	17 th
Best cave dive	39 th	Best marine life	4 th

Table 2: Rankings for the Sugar Loaf & Madonna – Cirkewwa (Mellieha)

Overall popularity		3 rd	
Overall shore dive	3 rd	Overall dive experience	5 th
Novice divers	2 nd	Experienced divers	13 th
Best wreck dive	25 th	Best technical dive	41 st
Best cave dive	14 th	Best marine life	5 th

Table 3: Rankings for the Tugboat Rozi – Cirkewwa (Mellieha)

Overall popularity		2 nd	
Overall shore dive	2 nd	Overall dive experience	4 th
Novice divers	15 th	Experienced divers	8 th
Best wreck dive	2 nd	Best technical dive	26 th
Best cave dive	43 rd	Best marine life	2 nd

Table 4: Rankings for the Cirkewwa Arch – Cirkewwa (Mellieha)

Overall popularity		5 th	
Overall shore dive	5 th	Overall dive experience	4 th
Novice divers	3 rd	Experienced divers	8 th
Best wreck dive	42 nd	Best technical dive	26 th
Best cave dive	5 th	Best marine life	2 nd

Existing facilities

8. The site offers facilities for divers. The informal parking area reserved for dive trucks is located within a few metres of the access points (see **Figure 3**). Safety infrastructure, such as railings, is present. Replacing CCTV cameras that are not functioning can increase the site's security. The nearest fuel filling station is found at Mellieha, more than 2 km away from the site. The closest dive centre is located at the nearby Paradise Bay Hotel.
9. Entry point E1 is located to the south of Marfa Point. It consists of a flight of steps equipped with a stainless steel railing; additional stainless steel hand rails allow an easy walk over the rocks to access the water.

10. Entry point E2 is located further towards the lighthouse. A rock-cut slope (with worn out rock-cut steps) and a central stainless steel railing leads divers to the water's edge. Stainless steel hand rails help divers access and exit the sea.
11. Entry point E3 is located just below the Marfa Point lighthouse. Divers access the sea either by using the ladder or through a giant stride over the rocks.
12. Litter was encountered during the site visits.
13. **Figure 4** shows the location of the existing facilities.
14. Further details on this dive site are available in the Data Card in **Annex I**.

Figure 3: Divers' parking



PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

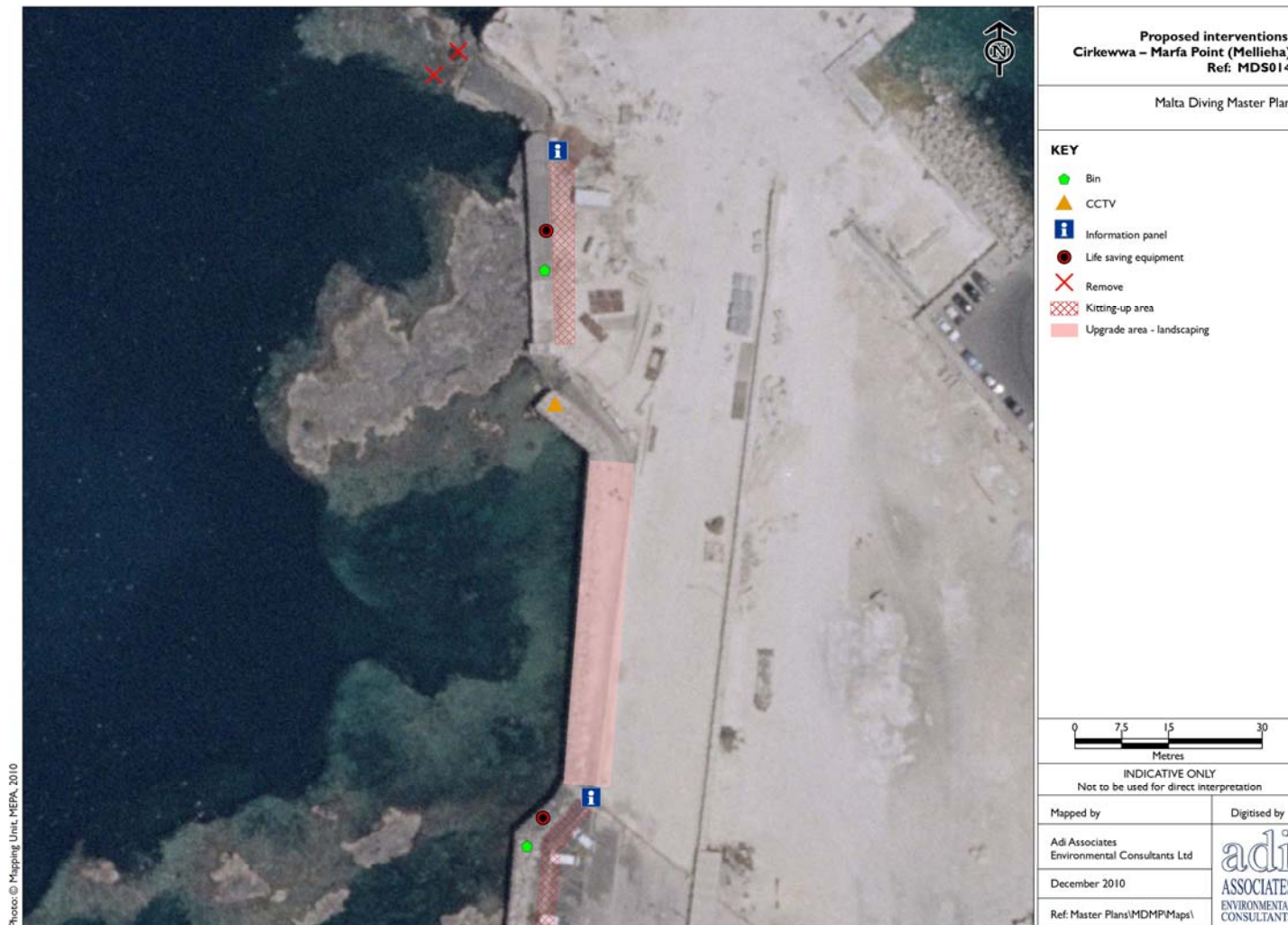
15. Some minor interventions are required at this site to improve it for diving purposes. Most measures seek to remove hazards and improve safety and security. It must be emphasised that most dive-related facilities can double-up for use by other recreational users, e.g. swimmers, etc. The proposed interventions are shown in **Figure 5** and include:
 - Removal of metal stumps and other obsolete infrastructure;
 - Upgrading area through better landscaping, removal of obsolete signage and infrastructure, fixing pavements, and general clean-up of the area;
 - Provision of life saving equipment;
 - Provision of more signage;
 - Provision of kitting-up areas;

- Provision of bins; and
- Security features, including a new CCTV camera in the parking area.

Figure 4: Existing facilities



Figure 5: Proposed interventions



Permit requirements

16. The entire list of interventions required to upgrade this Dive Site is reproduced in **Table 5** below. The locations for the proposed interventions are shown in **Figure 5**. Detailed engineering proposals, complete with drawings, are outside the scope of this Master Plan but will be required before specific interventions are implemented.
17. Most of these are minor interventions that are directly linked to the dive site *per se* and no Development Permits are required. **Table 5** identifies the permissions required for the various interventions proposed.

Table 5: Permit requirements

Reference	Intervention	Permits required
E3	Removal of metal stumps.	None.
	Provision of more signage.	Permitted development. No DNO or DPA required. Why? – Although the proposed signs are located ODZ, Class 4 - I(2) of the DNO deems such ‘small scale’ infrastructure as permitted development, in situations where the infrastructure falls within an existing parking area or carriageway.
	Provision of life saving equipment.	As above.
General	Upgrading area through better landscaping, fixing of pavement, removal of obsolete infrastructure.	None. Although this may be dependent on the extent of the interventions.
	Provision of kitting-up areas.	Permitted development. No DNO or DPA required. Why? – Although the proposed kitting-up area is located ODZ, Class 4 - I(2) of the DNO deems such ‘small scale’ infrastructure as permitted development, in situations where the infrastructure falls within an existing parking area or carriageway.
	Provide life-saving equipment.	As above.
	Provision of bins.	As above.
	Security features, including a new CCTV camera in the parking area.	Permitted Development. No DNO or DPA required. Why? - Class 2(1)(vii) defines the fixing of surveillance cameras, security equipment, and other similar small-scale equipment, as permitted development in areas that are ODZ, provided it is <i>aesthetically compatible with its surroundings. If it is to be effected in a UCA or ODZ, it is not conspicuously finished in unpainted metal (including gold, silver or bronze aluminium) or other visually intrusive coloration.</i>

Simplification of procedures

18. 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.

19. 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

20. 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.

21. Since most of the interventions proposed do not require permission, they can be carried out immediately. The interventions are prioritised in **Table 6**.

22. 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 6: Prioritised interventions

Reference	Intervention	Priority
E3	Removal of metal stumps.	High
	Provision of more signage.	Medium
	Provision of life saving equipment.	High
General	Upgrading area through better landscaping, fixing of pavements and removal of obsolete infrastructure.	Medium
	Provision of kitting-up areas.	High
	Provide life-saving equipment.	Medium
	Provision of bins.	High
	Security features, including a new CCTV camera in the parking area.	High

CONCLUSION

23. This report has outlined the interventions required to upgrade the onshore facilities for the Cirkewwa – Marfa Point 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.
24. 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.
25. 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 014

Dive Site:	P29 Patrol Boat, Sugar Loaf & Madonna, Tug Boat Rozi and Cirkewwa Arch - Cirkewwa
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Locality:	Mellieha
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Current Status:	NIL
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Proposed Status:	Officially designated Dive Site
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Nearest village:	Mellieha
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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	X		X

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

MALTA DIVING MASTER PLAN

Inventory of Malta Dive Sites

On-Shore Facilities

Ref. No.

MDS 014

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, camera (fake?), stainless steel rails on steps.
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Site cleanliness:	Presence of tar residue	Animal waste	Small litter	Medium Litter	Large Litter
			x		

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	x	xx	

Presence of On-shore Hazards:	Yes	No
	x	

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

Hazard information	Steel
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Number (and name) of entry/exit points:	3	E1 - Steps with rails
		E2 - Slope with rails
		E3 - Lighthouse

MALTA DIVING MASTER PLAN*Inventory of Malta Dive Sites**On-Shore Facilities**Ref. No.**MDS 014***Entry/Exit Point:** E1 - Steps with rails

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						x

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

Entry/Exit Point: E2 - Slope with rails

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		x				

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

Entry/Exit Point: E3 - Lighthouse

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		x

MALTA DIVING MASTER PLAN*Inventory of Malta Dive Sites****On-Shore Facilities******Ref. No.******MDS 014***

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