



# **GRDA**

## **FEEDBACK STATEMENT**

### **NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT 2050**

ISSUED BY THE ENVIRONMENT & RESOURCES AUTHORITY  
MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND ENTERPRISE

OCTOBER 2022



## PUBLISHED BY

GOZO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Innovation Hub, Xewkija - Gozo, Malta

Tel: +356 22156333

[www.grda.mt](http://www.grda.mt)

**Publication date: October 2022.**

This publication may not be used in any format or medium.

This material is property of the Gozo Regional Development Authority.

Any queries regarding this publication should be sent on: [info@grda.mt](mailto:info@grda.mt).

Designed by the GRDA. © Copyright 2022.

# National Strategy for the Environment 2050

## Feedback by the Gozo Regional Development Authority

### 1. Introduction

The strategy document published in September 2022, by the Environment Resources Authority (ERA), entitled '*National Strategy for the Environment 2050*' (there after to be referred as NSE) has as a central theme; the fact that the natural environment is crucial to the sustainment of a healthy economic and social ecosystem.

The Gozo Regional Development Authority (GRDA) broadly supports the strategic goals outlined in the strategy and advocates the implementation of the identified initiatives.

### 2. Gozo's Reality: Some Salient Features

Gozo's population has increased by 25.2% over the past decade, largely on the back of a rise in foreign residents. In addition to the permanent population, the Island experienced a strong annual inflow of tourists, both domestic and foreign, especially during the summer season.

This increase in population density and tourism activity led to an additional pressure on land and natural resources, including waste generation, energy and water consumption, as well as an increase in demand for residential and commercial areas. Traffic and circulation of vehicles have also increased significantly over the years with registered vehicles in Gozo reached 41,790 by the end of 2021, an increase of 44.1% when compared to the number of vehicles registered in 2013.

The production of clean renewable energy, based mainly on solar panels, are also in line with that of mainland Malta. As at end of 2021, the number of installations of photovoltaic panels in Gozo reached 4,609, an increase of 4.9% when compared to that recorded a year earlier. This increase mainly reflects higher domestic installations and albeit to a lower extent commercial installation.

### 3. GRDA's feedback

While Gozo's main reality and present challenges are broadly similar to those prevailing on mainland Malta, still Gozo's does have its own challenges that occasionally differ from those of Malta either in size or magnitude.

The GRDA has outlined the main priority areas in a public consultation document (Regional Development Strategy) it published in July 2021.

The GRDA notes the following with regards the Strategic Objectives outlined in the NSE:

NSE Strategic Objective 5.3 – Spatial planning and the development permission process will be further strengthened to ensure that the environment is safeguarded for the general well-being of the population while increasing resilience to climate change. With regards to this Strategic Objective, it is worthy noting that, the GRDA is responsible for the Regional Impact Assessment (RIA) study for Gozo.

NSE Strategic Objective 5.4 – Malta's landscape quality will be managed through an integrated approach to sustain its socio-ecological systems and deliver climate solutions. This objective specifically mentions the Gozitan landscape and its rural character. The importance of safeguarding the Gozitan landscape is also clearly highlighted in the GRDA's regional development strategy. Given the island of Gozo's high coastal percentage and its direct connection to the blue economy through tourism, the GRDA also believes that the blue economy is crucial for the Island.

NSE Strategic Objective 6.4 – Malta's blue economy will continue its transition to a more resource-efficient, resilient and sustainable economy which will enhance the well-being of current and future generations. The blue economy is key to Gozo given the Island's high coastal ratio and its direct connection to the tourism industry which is one of the main economic drivers of the Island. The challenge is thus to promote sustainable tourism practices in coastal and marine areas, ensuring positive externalities for the environment, the workers and the community. Gozo seeks to achieve sustainable tourism through the several measures outlined under priority area 6, within the Gozo consultation document (Regional Development Strategy).

Additionally, the NSE mentions the responsible use of the marine environment as a source of renewable energy. The GRDA believes that Gozo has a great potential in this regard, since marine renewable energy sources are abundant and relatively untapped. Being a small Island, Gozo has the potential to act as a testbed for innovative solutions and pilot projects in the offshore renewable energy sector and the green marine transport sector. Such solutions and projects would enable the Island to achieve its goal of carbon neutrality and potentially become a centre for research on marine offshore renewable energy. This would potentially provide high-quality green jobs for local employees while also luring highly qualified foreigners to the Island.

## 4. Concluding remarks and reference to the Regional Impact Assessment Studies

The GRDA broadly agrees with the strategic objectives listed in the *'National Strategy for the Environment 2050'*. The GRDA continues to encourage its active involvement in the formulation of national strategies and policies so that Gozo's development is factored in the planning, assessment and implementation stages of any Government intervention that will result in a significant impact on the community of Gozo.

The GRDA examined this document in view of the Regional Impact Assessment (RIA). In line with the established methodology, the GRDA has initiated a Screening Process to determine whether an RIA study is required. From preliminary analysis, the Screening Process **does not** suggest that the proposed intervention / strategy, requires a full Regional Impact Assessment Study.



**GOZO REGIONAL**  
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Tel: +356 22156333

Email: [info@grda.mt](mailto:info@grda.mt)

[www.grda.mt](http://www.grda.mt)