

A Sustainable Future for our Mellieħa

Stephen Calleja

It is clear that our Mellieħa, like the rest of Malta, has started the twenty-first century in a stable and prosperous manner. This is to be especially appreciated when one considers the very volatile situation that has emerged in our Euro-Mediterranean region in recent years.

To the south of Malta, across the Arab world, instability has become the dominant feature with revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya resulting in a constant struggle for power and an escalation of tension and outright conflict from time to time. To the north of Malta the European continent has been seeking to manage continuous economic uncertainty and contend with regular terror attacks. The European Union has also been shocked by the decision of the United Kingdom to leave the EU, an outcome that is certain to have far reaching consequences if it ultimately happens.

While so far we in Malta have enjoyed a peaceful lifestyle and prosperous standard of living it would be a mistake to take this for granted. Our peace of mind could be shattered overnight if the instability around us was to manifest itself somehow in Malta. In order to prevent this from happening it is thus essential that all the resources possible are invested to safeguard our security and economic and environmental outlook.

If our future is to be a sustainable one it is also essential that we address immediate local challenges that are stifling our productivity and quality of life.

While development is to be welcomed it must not take place at any price. Everyone knows that Malta's natural geographical characteristics and heritage is running the serious risk of being ruined by overdevelopment. Rampant building is destroying the landscape and the environment we live in. Our air quality, our seas and our 'green areas' are all under threat and have already been negatively impacted by poor planning decisions since the turn of the millennium.

Better management to halt this process is urgently required, for example, by making use of empty buildings everywhere instead of destroying natural land.

Malta has been a member of the EU for more than ten years but are we doing everything possible to ensure that EU environmental standards and regulations are being enforced to protect our standard of living? Everyone knows that our roads have become 'war zones' with far too many accidents and fatalities taking place – when is a serious approach to traffic management and enforcement of road laws going to take place?

Having spent hundreds of millions of euros on continuous construction in the past two decades the time has come to dedicate equivalent resources to other sectors including our Mediterranean heritage, green parks and sport facilities. Only then will we be ensuring that the next generation inherits a sustainable and prosperous future.