

and our office. Our thanks go to Stanley for this initiative. Our annual calendar was not printed in December 2012 as it was decided to schedule the 2014 publication for spring 2013. This would bring it in line with the peak period for its sale as a desirable souvenir in major bookshops and in our properties. The 2014 edition will feature our major heritage sites. Thanks go to Victor Rizzo for this initiative. Victor is also working on a new publication focussing on pill boxes of Mellieha and Joe Azzopardi is putting together a guide book to Victory Church. We thank Joe for his hard work on making *Vigilo*, now in its 43rd edition, grow from strength-to-strength, and Judy Falzon for her help with its proofreading.

HERITAGE AND ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

Highline objections were filed with MEPA to the projected Spinola shopping complex and as a response to the Environmental Impact Statement for the widening of the Coast Road. Prompted by the planned destruction of thousands of trees, a campaign for the protection of trees was launched on Facebook called 'Trees Cannot Talk'. Applications for works at Ta' Baldu limits of Dingli and Portomaso to which DLH had filed objections were both rejected by MEPA. DLH issued a press release in support of MEPA's decision on Portomaso, but also cautioned that the barely swung vote does not bode well for the future of our open spaces especially in the light of the recent draft Strategic Plan for Environment and Development.

DLH also submitted to MEPA its feedback on the Strategic Plan for Environment and Development (SPED) document that presents the Government's strategic objectives for the plan. The sentiment expressed in our feedback was that no matter how comprehensive and well-intentioned such plans may be, economic and political pressures always have had the power to circumvent rules and regulations. A serious effort must be made to address this endemic defect in our society otherwise the SPED runs the risk of being manipulated as was its predecessor, the much abused 1990 Structure Plan. We continue to monitor planning applications and file objections when they are due.

The *Federazzjoni Kaċċaturi Nassaba Konservazzjonisti* (FKNK) has issued several statements inciting hunters and trappers against our ranger at the Majjistral Park on the FKNK website. NGOs Gaia, DLH and Birdlife sent a letter to the Prime Minister protesting against these actions and urging the government to enforce existing hunting laws.

DLH council members attended several governmental consultative meetings: *Laqgħa ta' Konsultazzjoni - Il-Prevenzjoni, it-Tnaqqis u l-Kontroll tal-Ħsejjes, Konsultazzjoni dwar il-pakkett ta' riforma tal-Politika Agrikola Komuni*, (Noise Pollution and the Common Agricultural Policy Reform). DLH jointly with Fish4Tomorrow (F4T) issued comments on the draft Aquaculture Strategy and presented them to MRRA. F4T have appointed a Campaign Coordinator to lead the F4T campaign on sustainable fishing financed by Global Ocean. The group is very active and met with MEPA officials to discuss MEPA's Grouper Action Plan intended to protect this species from extinction. Written comments were then submitted. Further meetings were held between F4T members and local fishermen to gauge these stakeholders' attitudes towards sustainable fishing. F4T volunteers carried out a survey on two consecutive weekends to assess consumer attitudes towards the consumption of fish. F4T has been invited by the MRRA to join a new board set up to promote consumption of local fish with other stakeholders which also include the tuna pen operators. We are at present examining the implications of this involvement.

F4T teamed up with Greenhouse to produce a Youth In Action funded report and a 20-minute documentary with a sustainable fish theme. The scientific report and the documentary, both named '25 Nautical Miles', were presented to NGO members, participants, sponsors, friends and family on 28th November at the Red Tower. F4T also participated in the *Lampuki Fest* where the sustainable consumption of fish theme was expanded.

DLH, together with other environmental NGOs, submitted their comments on the *Malta Council for Economic and Social*

Development (MCESD) consultation on pre-budget documents for next year's government mandate while DLH through Simone Mizzi wrote to the Ministry of Finance recommending financial benefits and tax exemptions on the regeneration of our historic town centres and the restoration of old buildings. We are pleased to note that these measures were indeed adopted by the 2013 budget. On 12th September, DLH represented by George Camilleri, together with other environmental NGOs attended a meeting with Dr Mario de Marco during which various environmental issues were discussed. On 9th November DLH, represented by Simone Mizzi, together with other environmental NGOs, met with MEPA during which Planning Authority officials gave an unconvincing overview on the vague draft policy for the height limitation adjustment policy for hotels in tourism areas and we duly placed the appropriate objections. On 29th November, Nature Trust (Malta) and DLH met MEPA on the possibility of carrying out short-term conservation measures at St Paul's Island. DLH has been invited to form part of the Fisheries and the Agricultural sub-committees of the *Sotto-Kumitat Settorjali dwar l-Agricoltura u s-Sajd*, an inter-ministerial committee formed as part of the work regarding strategic allocation of EU funds for the period 2014-2020. DLH participated with a group of NGOs in a joint PR bringing to public attention the case of light pollution caused by a restaurant in the dark sky zone of Dwejra. MEPA enforcement acted on the PR and caused the infringement to be corrected. DLH furthermore filed objections to planning applications for more tuna penning and fishfarming activities around the *Xrobb l-Għaġin* peninsula.

CARE OF PROPERTIES ENTRUSTED TO DLH

DLH is currently upgrading all properties with regard to health and safety laws and new third-party liability protection requirements such as placing safety barriers around the perimeter of the roofs of all our properties, safety signage and fire safety measures. As required by law, we have appointed a consultant to prepare a Health and Safety assessment report on the heritage sites within our care.

We continue to maintain and enhance our sites. Perhaps the highlight of this year was the mounting of two Knights' period cannons on 19th January 2013, on the roof of the Red Tower. Led by Judge Joe Galea Debono and Lt Col. Eric Parnis, volunteers braved hail, sleet and gale force winds and the event made the back page of *The Times of Malta* and *The Nazzjon*. Our thanks go to these two gentlemen whose tenacity saw the guns sourced, put on loan from Heritage Malta, restored and carriages made in just six months. The Delimara Lighthouse completion is still foxed by the location of a cesspit, with MEPA not accepting the locations we have suggested for it. Torri Mamo's long awaited removal of the concrete buffer has been completed and we hope to embellish this tower into a heritage holiday venue for the discerning tourist very soon. We do commend Council Member, Josie Ellul Mercer, for overseeing the upkeep of the properties so diligently. Many works of art have been restored at Victory Church, Tal-Ħniena's interior walls are two-thirds complete, while alarms and lightning protection have been installed at Ħal Millieri Chapel. St Anthony's Battery at Qala is almost complete and its wooden apertures are now installed. We thank Lt Col. Eric Parnis for this outstanding piece of work.

The statue of St Roque in Main Street, Żebbuġ was restored through the efforts of warden Michael Bonnici with funds donated by BOV, HSBC Żebbuġ, JMV Blocks and Michael Debono Ltd.

Quietly in the office, Professor George Camilleri continues to organise the archives. Mr Joe Busietta, Professor Margit Waas and Mrs Jenny Welsh look after the DLH Heritage Corner. Mrs Romina Farrugia Randon, Mrs Sophie Woltz, Mrs Carmen Naudi, Miss Karen Galea, Mrs Silvia Mule Stagno and Mr Joseph Chetcuti are of great help in the office. We also thank Rosemarie Stagno Navarra and Anne Marie Navarro for their endless support to all of us and also John Gafa, our handyman, and Annie Tabone, our cleaner. We thank all volunteers and staff everywhere for a most amazing year of achievement.