Good Morning members, volunteers, members of the press. I am pleased to present our Annual Report on a most active year for Din l-Art Ħelwa in its work to protect heritage and the environment.

GUARDIANSHIP DEED RENEWALS
The most significant achievement of the last year coming right after a change of government was the renewal of nine Guardianship Deeds on 14 October which had lapsed since their first historic signing in 2003. These were for the Red Tower, Santa Marija Tower and Battery, Wignacourt, Dwejra, Ghallix, Qaliet Marku and Mamo Towers, the Msida Bastion Historic Garden as well as obtaining a new deed for Wied il-Zurrieq tower. A symbolic ceremony was held at the Msida Bastion Garden with the Superintendent of Cultural Heritage, Dr Anthony Pace and the Parliamentary Secretaries for Culture, Dr José Herrera, and for Lands, Dr Michael Farrugia.

PEOPLE
During the year Mr Albert Mamo, Dr Alan Deidun and former DLH Exec President Dr Petra Caruana Dingli were co-opted as DLH Council members. They bring with them invaluable experience in business and environmental management. Albert now chairs the 50th Anniversary Committee, while Petra and Alan contribute regularly to our crucial environment protection activity.

Our Council has formalised the rank of Honorary Council Member for Life for long-standing council members/officials so they remain on council in an advisory capacity but vacate seats to allow for new members. Former Executive President Martin Scicluna has offered to stay in this capacity. I am sure you all join me in thanking Martin for his sterling contribution to DLH over the years in particular for his successful lobbying for DLH to acquire the first ever Guardianship Deeds in 2003.

George Camilleri and Luciano Mule Stagno will represent DLH on the new National Rural Network Malta Committee which aims at adding value to rural development in Malta.

SPONSORSHIPS AND CORPORATE FUND RAISING
We wish to remember the late Mrs Anne Crosthwait, a loyal member of DLH, for leaving the organisation an important legacy of €10,000.

Mr and Mrs Roderick Chalmers have informed DLH of the foundation of the ADRC Trust, the objectives of which are the promotion of Hispanic culture especially amongst young people and activities enjoyed by their late son, Alistair, a dedicated volunteer of DLH. We are grateful to the ADRC Trust for sponsoring a Bir Miftuh concert this year in collaboration with the Embassy of Spain.

DLH is indebted to the Malta Tourism Authority for covering the cost of the flood lighting of Comino Tower, Dr. David E. Griscti for again donating a full page advert to DLH on the Manoel Theatre International Spring Orchestra Festival programme, Mr Justin Zammit Tabona and Infinitely Xara for sponsoring the catering for the Bir Miftuh concerts and Forestals for our new office computer.

We thank Shireburn Software Ltd for sponsoring the restoration of Mattia Preti’s Immaculate Conception at Sarria Church on the occasion of the company’s 30th Anniversary. The restoration by Giuseppe Montella Restauri will be celebrated as DLH’s contribution to the 400th Anniversary of Mattia Preti’s birth at a concert at Sarria Church this evening.

DLH also acknowledges the generosity of the ‘Victory Team’ who make the on-going restoration of Victory Church possible. They are honoured in the new Victory Church Guide book.

One important piece of news is that DLH has won a grant of €50,000 through the Sustainable Development Tourism Fund for the Victory Church project achieving top marks in the scheme which will allow 42 tasks to be completed. The successful application was written by Simone Mizzi, and a dedicated team composed of Albert Calleja, George Camilleri, Albert Mamo, Josie Ellul Mercer, Pat Salomone, and Conservator Amy Sciberras. We are extremely grateful to Albert Calleja for managing the massive job involved with documentation.

The Fund Raising Team led by DLH Treasurer Martin Scicluna, with Profs. Lucio Mule Stagno, and Philip Mercieca brought many new corporate sponsors this year. We are grateful to Bank of Valletta Plc, MSV Life plc, APS Bank Ltd, Island Hotels Group Holdings plc, Shireburn Software Ltd, and Finance Malta for supporting our work.

NATIONAL ELECTIONS AND COURTESY VISITS
National elections on 9 March and a change in government entailed much activity on our part to establish contacts with the new authorities. Immediately after the elections, Simone Mizzi and DLH officials visited the new Minister for Sustainable Development, Mr Leo Brincat, the Minister for Tourism, Mr Karmenu Vella, Parliamentary Secretary for Culture, Dr José Herrera and the Minister for Social Dialogue, Ms Helena Dalli.

Aug 9: Simone Mizzi, Luciano Mule Stagno, George Camilleri and Martin Galea paid a courtesy visit to the Prime Minister, Dr Joseph Muscat at Castille, to present DLH good wishes to the new government but also to voice concern over policy decisions which are to impact on the environment. Present for Government were the PM Dr Joseph Muscat, the Parliamentary Secretary for Planning, Dr Michael Farrugia and Parliamentary Secretary for Culture, Dr José Herrera. Simone Mizzi gave a presentation of DLH achievements in its protection of heritage and this facilitated the renewal of the 9 guardianship deeds.

Sept 10: Simone Mizzi paid a courtesy visit to Dr Simon Busuttil, leader of the opposition and on Sept 12 to the new UNESCO Ambassador, Mgr Joe Vella Gauci.

HERITAGE AND ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION
April: DLH together with Nature Trust Malta and Gaia Foundation was successful in curtailing hunting hours in the Majjistral Nature and History Park when the Environment Ministry issued a legal notice with new regulations for this protected area. Former DLH exec president, Martin Galea represents DLH on the management board overseeing our activity in this important site.

July: DLH and eNGOs attended a meeting with the developers of Ta' Ċenċ who proposed that eNGOs take over the large ecological area as a national park which is already entrenched as a Natura 2000 site. eNGOs did not compromise their position which objects to villas being built at Mġarr ix-Xini.

July: the Coalition Against Spring Hunting was launched, composed of 12 eNGOs including DLH. Its objectives are to bring about a referendum to abolish spring hunting. To date over 40,000 petitions have been collected and vetting of signatures is proceeding. DLH contributed over 4,000 petitions and thanks all who supported this campaign.

October: DLH campaigned vehemently against the final approval by MEPA of the large development on Mistra Ridge. DLH had already opposed this project at outline stage in 2008. DLH spearheaded this objection again which was overturned by the MEPA Board on the 31 October without any reason given. DLH appealed to the Environment and Planning Commissioner requesting an investigation of the case. The Commissioner found that MEPA would have been justified in rejecting the outline development application.