

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE GOZO BUSINESS CHAMBER
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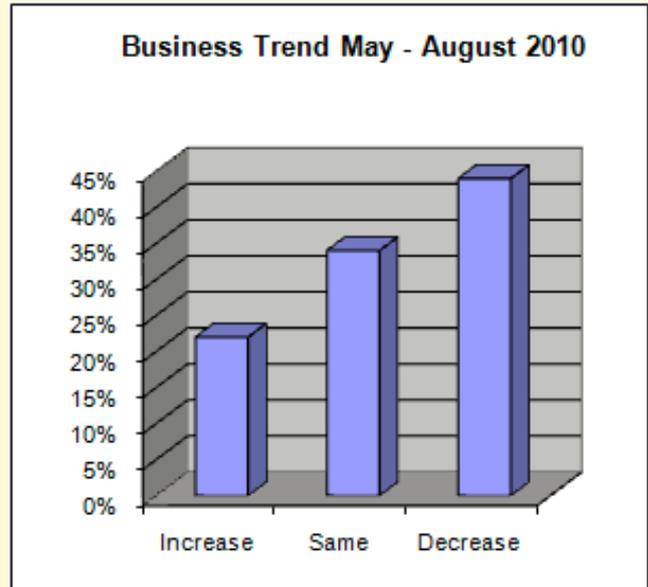
Gozo Business Survey

A survey carried out by the Chamber for the months from May to August 2010 showed that 44% of respondents experienced a decrease in business while 22% registered an increase with the remaining 34% having the same results in comparison to the same months for the previous year. The respondents also said that most of their business was with Gozitans (59%), Maltese visitors (22%) and tourists (19%).

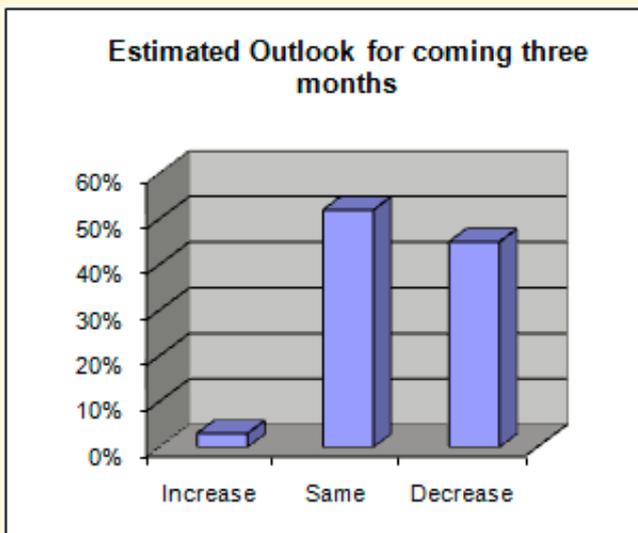
The Gozo Channel ferry service is believed by 37% of the respondents to have been the best factor in helping their businesses followed by the weekend activities organised throughout the period under review (31%). The worst culprit for lack of or loss of business was the lack of parking space available in Victoria and the popular beaches.

In fact, the lack of parking facilities was accentuated once again by 26% of respondents when indicating points that might have had the negative effect on business. Other remarks ranged from the traffic wardens' attitude (22%), to traffic congestion (20%), the waiting time to cross from Malta to Gozo (18%), and prices (14%).

Respondents were asked to give their opinion about certain aspects, ranging from Very Good to Very bad.



The survey showed that main road cleanliness ranged from Good (48%) to very Bad (10%); village core cleanliness from Good (52%) to Very Bad (7%). Cleanliness was classified by the respondents as follows: main roads (from 48% as good to 10% as very bad), town centres (52% good, 7% very bad), and beaches (45% good, 10% very bad). As for places of information for visitors, this ranged from good (37%) to very bad (13%). The worst off came public transport with 39% as bad to 13% as good, and parking spaces with 45% as bad and 7% as good.



The respondents' outlook for the next three months resulted in 3% expecting an increase in business, 52% expecting the same amount, and 45% expecting less business. This also reflected their outlook for future employment. While 3% said that they expect to employ more people, 76% said that they will keep the same number, and 21% expected to decrease the number of employees.

The great majority of replies came from businesses based in Victoria and Xewkija (79%) with the rest from various other places around Gozo.

Coordinating Committee (KK16+)

The National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (KNPD) held its Consultative Committee (KK16+) meeting in Gozo in July. The Gozo Business Chamber was represented by the Chief Executive Officer, Joseph G. Grech.

The meeting was opened by Mr Joe Camilleri (KNPD) and addressed by the Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo. This was followed by a presentation by the Executive Director Ms Anne-Marie Callus on a proposal for the development of community based and individualised day services.

During the round table discussion that followed, CEO Grech gave a short explanation about the Chamber's set-up and its aims. He spoke about the need for better communication between businesses and education establishments, including visits to factories and other place of work. He said that members of the Chamber can be updated about the rights of disabled persons and be encouraged to foster a more positive attitude towards them. Mr Grech said that the Chamber can hold a conference on the employment of disabled people in Gozo to identify both difficulties and opportunities. Furthermore, he said that it is important for Gozitan organisations of disabled persons to keep their identity in order to reflect Gozo's needs. He explained that most businesses in Gozo are family concerns which do not employ any staff. Finally, he said that the problem with employment schemes, such as those promoted by ETC and Malta Enterprise, is what happens after the subsidies end.

Cooperation between GBC

and

MCAST

MALTA COLLEGE of ARTS, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) is in agreement with The Gozo Business Chamber (GBC) to participate in a project by the European Social Fund entitled "Making VET Education More Relevant and Attractive".

The aims of the project are to improve the quality of vocational training and expand MCAST's course offerings in Malta and Gozo; to provide vocational training to young people and adults to increase the participation rate in education, thereby increasing the knowledge and skills level of the labour force; and to address skills mismatches in Gozo.

The role of the GBC in this project is to participate in the TNA implementation particularly liaising with experts conducting the study.

Meeting with the PL Business Forum

A delegation from the PL Business Forum, formed up of Mrs Marlene Mizzi, Mr Stephen Muscat, Mr Paul Vella and Mr John Cassar White has met with the Council of the Gozo Business Chamber.

During the meeting, Mrs Mizzi expressed appreciation for the GBC's acceptance to hold the meeting and said that the Forum understands the difficulties of business and that it is important to try to understand the problems and to discuss and dialogue.

It was pointed out that one of the main headaches of

the Gozo business community is the lack of parking space in Victoria and the main seaside resorts. Other topics discussed related to the long time taken to have projects approved or not; the Gozo airstrip; weekend activities in Gozo; cruise liner visits; the Sa Maison cargo ferry service; hotel occupancy rate; and the Eco Gozo concept.

The Chamber stressed the need for more foreign direct investment, the creation of more berths for yachts and the creation of jobs to halt the number of young graduates and skilled workers from leaving the island.



The LEADER Approach

The LEADER initiative, launched in the nineties with the aim of improving the development potential of rural areas, focuses on bringing together the different public and private local actors.

It is based on the crucial role of the Local Action Groups (LAGs), a public/private partnership composed of representatives of the Local Administration and the private sector. The LAG is in charge of coordinating the design of the local development strategy as well as its implementation.

Three LAGs have been created locally, two in Malta (Majjistral Action Group and Xlokk Action Group) and one in Gozo (Gozo Action Group).

During the past months a lot of work has been covered by the members of the Gozo Action Group and members forming the Managing Authority within the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs.

Following a public call for the post, a manager to implement the Local Development Strategy and manage the entire operations of the Gozo Action Group, was selected and calls for projects will soon be made.

The Gozo Business Chamber is represented on the GAG and members are encouraged to think about projects which can be executed within the ambit of this EU programme. More information will now be sent to all members as soon as available.

Creative Economy Project

The Gozo Business Chamber is actively participating in the newly set up Creative Economy Working Group within the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment in collaboration with the Parliamentary Secretariat for Tourism, the Environment and Culture.

During the first meeting the creative economy working group presented the four strategic paths that have been identified for the strategy which are:

1. Shaping talent into professions
2. Assisting creative businesses find route to market
3. Promoting Malta as a hub of creative activity
4. Championing the sector through cohesive government structure.

The project will involve members connected with creative business service, as well as heritage, arts and media groups and the Chamber will be organising a special meeting in Gozo for all interested persons. Further details will be sent to all members soon.

Joint meeting between GBC and GTA

It has been agreed that regular joint meetings between delegations from the Gozo Business Chamber and the Gozo Tourism Association be held to discuss items of common interest and to present a united front on such issues.

The first meeting was held on 10th August, 2010, and all agreed to hold these meetings on a monthly basis with other meetings in between should the need arise.

Both sides have discussed and agreed upon the visit to Gozo by Baroness Dott.essa Paola Zanoni, the launch of SKAL Group in Gozo, and the Malta Government unilateral declaration about the region of Gozo, among others.

Inter-Islands connections

Cirkewwa Passenger Ferry Service

The inter-islands ferry service has once again been under great stress during the past summer months both from Cirkewwa and from Sa Maison services.

Due to the large number of cars wanting to cross over to Gozo, the Cirkewwa service had to operate on a shuttle service on various occasions. When this was done, queues were kept to a minimum and the waiting period for passengers was short. However, for some unknown reason, on many occasions when the demand was high, the shuttle service was not operated even though the Gozo management's attention was drawn.

Needless to say, the great demand for the Cirkewwa service resulted in the further decrease of the Sa Maison service with the company providing only one trip per week at certain times.

This situation is not ideal and the Gozo Business Chamber calls on the authorities to try to remedy matters. It is not right that Gozitans returning back home after spending a week at work in Malta have to face long hours waiting to cross over from Cirkewwa.



Sa Maison Cargo Ferry Service

During the past weeks, the Gozo Business Chamber was greatly preoccupied with various articles appearing in the local press in connection with the Sa Maison Cargo Ferry Service as these added to the worries already expressed by the Chamber.

The cargo ferry service is very important for Gozo and the Chamber considers it as the lifeline which keeps the island ticking.

A meeting on the subject was held with the Parliamentary Secretary, the Hon. Chris Said, and the Chamber also expressed its opinion that we do not agree that the berthing place would be transferred to Grand Harbour.

Another meeting was held with Dr. Stanley Portelli, CEO of Transport Malta who informed us that the decision to transfer the berthing place from Sa Maison to the Grand Harbour had already been taken since government's priorities had changed. The meeting discussed the new difficulties that the hauliers and the service might encounter and Dr Portelli assured everyone that the hauliers will not have to bear any extra costs. One of the big difficulties that may arise would be the parking of the containers and trucks overnight and their security as well as whether the cargo boat would be able to enter and/or leave port out of the scheduled times. This state of affairs crops up whenever the boat does not run on schedule due to maintenance, foul weather, or its deployment to the Cirkewwa passenger service. The Chamber also expressed its disappointment due to the fact that this much needed service has now been reduced to one trip per week from the original four per week due to the deployment of all Gozo channel boats to Cirkewwa whenever there is heavy traffic there.

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Thinking Health and Safety

The number of times that we hear about accidents at the place of work is on the increase and the Chamber is worried since these accidents cause loss of production besides the injuries to the workers which sometimes are very serious or even fatal.



This is very welcome and is in line with the news that the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU – OSHA) has launched its Healthy Workplaces Campaign on Safe Maintenance.



The Chamber will be keeping all members informed about the next steps. In the meantime, we urge all to think about having healthy workplaces for the benefit of all.

The Chamber has set up a small working group to see how best to help the members and their work force.

You can visit the Campaign website at www.hw.osha.europa.eu

Although the original idea was to heighten awareness of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) issues and remedies to the local business community, it was felt after reflection that a holistic approach be developed to enhance the profile and awareness of OHS. If one becomes aware, one wishes to know what to do next and it is in this spirit that the working group is suggesting a three phase strategy for discussion.



The first phase will be 'Raising Awareness' while the second phase will be the 'Preparation and dissemination of a SME Risk Management Toolkit' and the third phase will be 'Consultancy Support / Auditing'.



Baroness Dott.ssa Paola Zanoni, a well established journalist and TV presenter, has visited Gozo on the invitation of the Gozo Business Chamber's Tourism Unit.

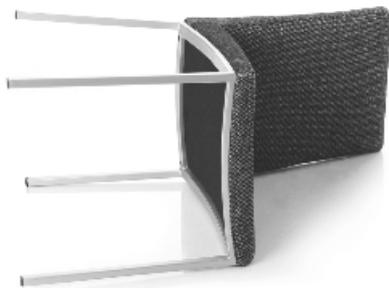
The aim of the visit was for Baroness Zanoni to create a greater awareness about Gozo's touristic potential, especially in the Italian market.

During her visit she met with the Minister for Gozo, the Victoria Mayor as well as with a delegation made up of representatives from the Chamber and the GTA.

Various projects were discussed and it is hoped that these will materialise in the near future.

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Budget 2011

A Budget Working Breakfast was held in Gozo for the Gozo Business community. It was addressed by the Hon. Dr Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, who also replied to various interventions from those present.

The Gozo Business Chamber was represented by a number of members who put forward proposals and suggestions which might be included in the 2011 budget.

The Chamber's President, Mr Joe Grech, spoke on behalf of the GBC and thanked the Minister for giving the opportunity to the Gozo business community to take part. He mentioned that in the 2010 Budget the Minister had spoken about the Creative Economy which can create a lot of high value added work and sustain other sectors such as tourism, manufacture and others.

The President said that Creative Economy is ideal for Gozo and should be the base for the creation of jobs in Gozo, a place which specialises in cottage industries, video productions, crafts, drama, opera and performing arts besides having international experts in ICT.

Unfortunately, there is no single entity in Gozo which caters for all the various groups mentioned and they all work on an individual basis. The GBC is trying to create



a cluster of excellence in ICT in Gozo with the cooperation of its ICT consultant and the backing of Synaptic Laboratories Ltd.

It would be beneficial, the President said, were government to create a strategy for creative economy and asked whether government would be ready to sponsor an expert in Creative Industry to address the needs of the various sectors and also whether a study on Creative and Cultural Industry in Gozo can be undertaken in order to identify the potential of job creation connected with Creativity.

The President also said that the GBC would like to see progress in broadband connection to meet the needs of IT investors in Gozo.



Mr. Gianfranco Pontel, President of Assonautica , presenting the Club's Logo to Mr Joe Grech, President of GBC, in appreciation of the logistics involved in their memorable stay in Gozo

Through the initiative of Mr Joe Grech, President of GBC, 5 yachts out of 12 yachts which Assonautica - A National Assoc. for recreational boating- organized to berth in MALTA, berthed in Mgarr Marina Gozo. This event is a small loop in the chain of activities that the GBC is organizing to promote tourism to the Island of Gozo .

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