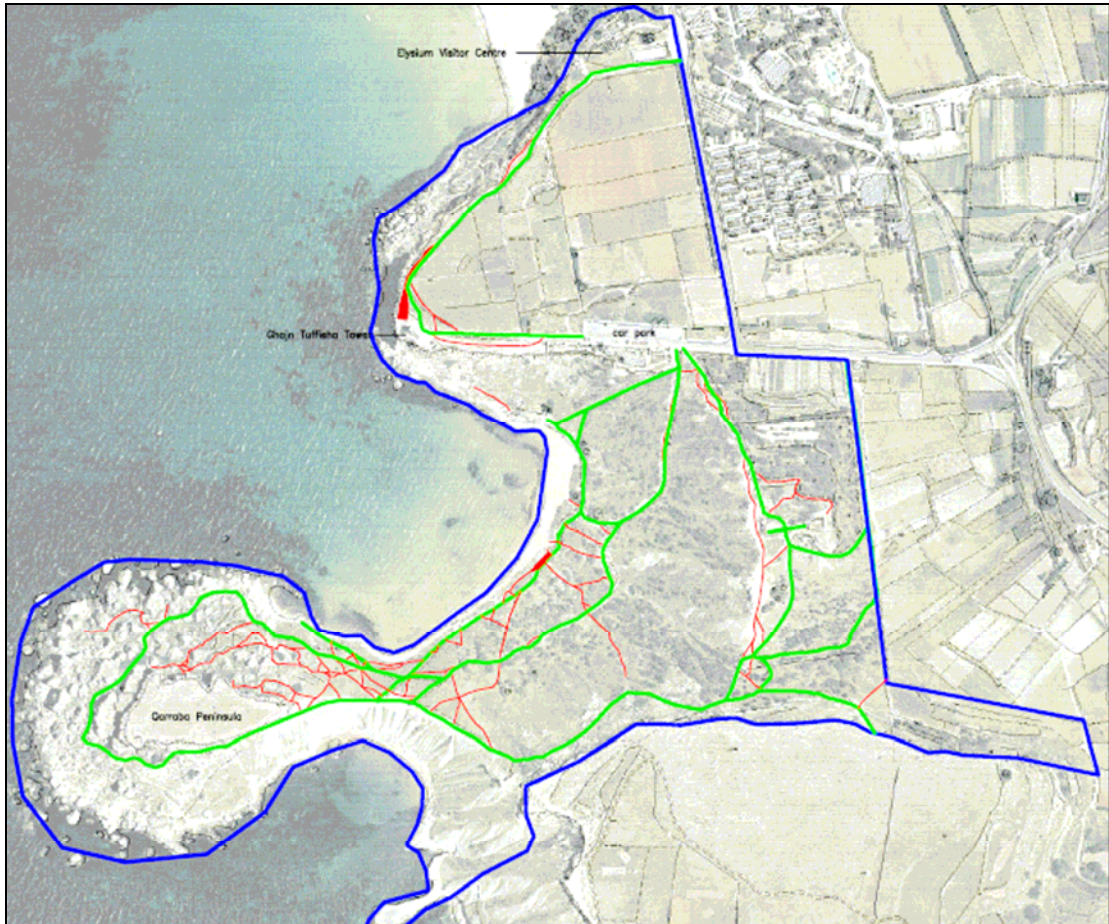


# INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF SPECIALLY PROTECTED COASTAL AREAS IN MALTA

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## **ANNEX 1 TO MANAGEMENT PLAN:**

### **Rationalisation of Footpaths**

**Nature Trail**

**Signage Plan**

**- Draft -**

THE GAIA FOUNDATION

January 2006

# **1 Rationalisation of footpaths**

## **1.1 Introduction**

Ghajn Tuffieha is a touristic hotspot and one of the last remaining bays in the Maltese islands, which has remained relatively untainted by human intervention. It is a venue for country walks and bathing. This provides an excellent opportunity for the general public to experience a location where persons can enjoy outdoor activities in full respect for the environment and also learn about the natural heritage which surrounds them. Therefore thousands of visitors come to enjoy the beauty of Ghajn Tuffieha every year, particularly during the summer months.

In the past the free access throughout the whole area has led to the creation of a footpath network, the degradation of the clay slope communities as well as to an increase of erosion through trampling on the clay slopes. The priority here is to protect the site and therefore human activity must be channelled and controlled without being unnecessarily inhibited.

## **1.2 Former Activities**

Since the site has been closed off for unauthorized vehicular access by bollards in 1996, natural regeneration of vegetation communities along the tracks has been made possible. This was supported by planting of indigenous trees and shrubs along wide paths to decrease the rate of erosion and avoid trampling.

## **1.3 Actual tasks**

Today the managed site is still crossed by several superfluous footpaths in such a way as to disturb the natural development of vegetation communities or eco-systems of value. To control the pedestrian access throughout the area and to slow down the process of erosion are some of the most important tasks to be carried out in the next years.

This can be achieved by channelling of human activity along fewer, clearly defined footpaths, as required by the Conservation Order.

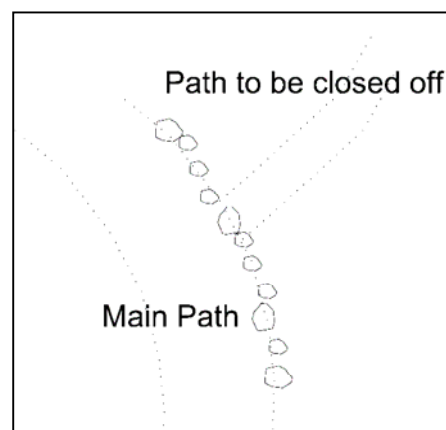
The footpaths, which will be kept, will be restored in such a way as to be more interesting to walk along because of the different species of flora which could be observed along the way and also because of the vantage points from which the scenic beauty of the place can be enjoyed. The footpaths, which will be retained, have been chosen on the basis of popularity and age, the assumption here being that the older ones are the ones which have the greater functional value. They are also the ones which follow the contours of the landscape.

## 1.4 Methods to close off and rehabilitate footpaths

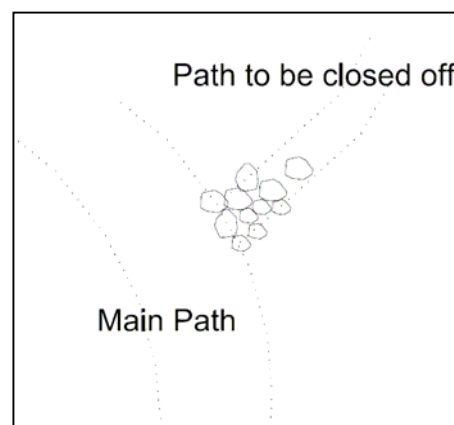
For closing the superfluous paths off no fences, ropes or other artificial structures should be used in order not to disturb the natural character of the area. The access to the unnecessary paths should rather be made most uncomfortable for visitors to enter while using natural materials.

This can be achieved by different methods:

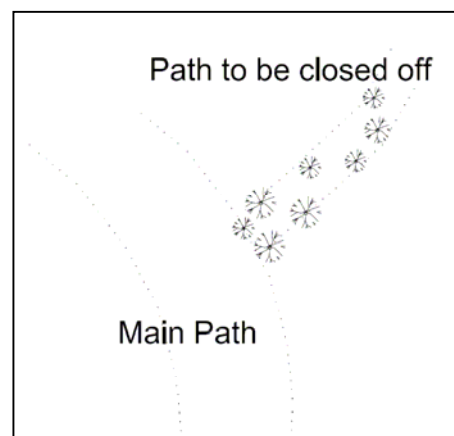
1. Putting stones along the borders of the main path on crossings with superfluous paths to mark it for ramblers.



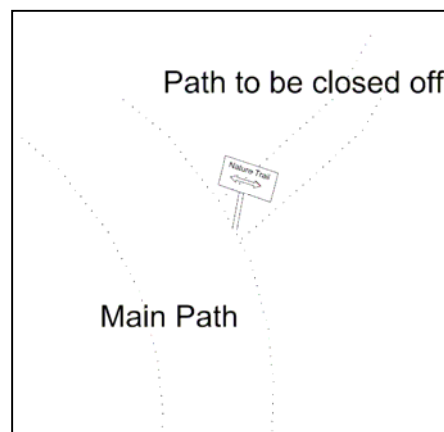
2. Another method to make the access to the superfluous paths more difficult for visitors could be by putting big stones and boulders in the beginning of those paths. For both measures only natural stones of the local area will be used.



3. Planting of Esparto Grass – *Lygeum spartum* and indigenous shrubs (especially Shrubby Orache - *Atriplex halimus*, Golden Samphire - *Inula crithmoides*) on closed paths and wide clearings.



4. Installing small, wooden directional signs along the main paths to mark the Nature Trail and at the same time to prevent the further trampling off the path (design → see 2.1.3, proposed positions: at selected crossings of main path with paths to be closed off, → see map)



## 2 Signage Plan

### 2.1 Visitor Information and signage plan

#### 2.1.1 Upgrading of old information boards

The 2 existing information boards at the car park need to be upgraded. New designs and the updated site regulations will be put on the boards (see location of the boards 1 and 2 in map).



Actual state of Board 1



Actual state of Board 2



Use of corporate design for new boards

#### 2.1.2 Installation of new information boards

Six new information boards will be erected in key points along the Nature Trail in order to explain to the visitor what there is to see and inform the public about flora, fauna, ecology, geology and history. No designs are available yet.

Possible themes for the information board could be the following (see location of the boards in map):

**Board 3: GENERAL INFORMATION NATURE TRAIL**

- Start of the Nature Trail at Elysium Visitor Centre
- general explanation about Nature Trail
- explanations about protection status of site and site regulations

**Board 4: GAIA FOUNDATION**

- erect at point with view to Golden Bay
- explanations about Gaia Foundation's work

**Board 5: HISTORY 1**

- to be placed at Ghajn Tuffieha Tower
- information about Ghajn Tuffieha Tower and Maltese coastal fortification in general

**Board 6: HISTORY 2**

- to be placed at Sound Locater, Crew Quarters and Beach Post at Hotba l-Bajda
- information about these buildings and their historic background

**Board 7: ECOLOGY 1**

- to be placed along the main path in the clay slopes

- information about clay slopes as an unique and important habitat of the Maltese Islands
- typical species
- threats (invasive plants, trampling, erosion etc.) and protection measures

Board 8: ECOLOGY 2

- to be placed at the beginning of Il-Karraba peninsula
- information about Boulder screes, garigue, sandy beaches
- typical species for each habitat
- threats and protection measures

### 2.1.3 Directional signs

Around 30 small, wooden directional signs will be installed along the main paths to mark the Nature Trail and to prevent the further trampling off the path. The proposed positions for those signs would be at selected crossings of the main path with paths to be closed off (→ see map).

**Proposed Design:**



Scale: 1:2

**Size:** 22 cm x 14 cm x 2 cm

**Material:** weatherproofed hardwood

**Signing:** mill cut letters with weatherproof paint

**Installation:** The signs will be fixed in a 45° position onto poles, which are 80 cm long with a 7 cm diameter. The endposition of the sign will be 50 cm off the bottom.

Proposed position see map.

## 2.2 Safety Aspects

The small area north of the Ghajn Tuffieha Tower as signed in the map (marked red) should be urgently closed off for the public because a part of the cliff is about to collapse in the next months or years. Signs for that are several gullies and faults which are enlarging after heavy rainfalls. The Gaia Foundation suggests to erect 2 - 3 warning signs near the tower at the cliff and to close off the access by restoring the damaged rubble wall and planting native shrubs (positions see map).



Scale: 1:4

**Size:** 44 cm x 28 cm x 2 cm

**Material:** weatherproofed hardwood

**Signing:** mill cut letters with weatherproof paint

**Installation:** The signs will be fixed in a 45° position onto poles, which are 110 cm long with a 7 cm diameter. The endposition of the sign will be 80 cm off the bottom.

Proposed position see map.

### **Why we choose wooden material?**

Wood (as a natural material) is perfect to integrate in this area, also after a long time of exposing climate the signs can be easily and cheaply repaired (refreshing paint, working up wood).

Signs to do:

**Printing:**

- a) **2 Warning signs Ghajn Tuffieha Tower:** 50 x 30 cm, 10 mm PVC, computer cut lettering, covered with vinyl
- b) **8 Nature Trail signs:** 40 x 30 cm, engraving on wood provided by Gaia
- c) **12 No cars/camping/fires/picking of plants-signs:** square size, like existing signs, 10 mm PVC, printing, covered with vinyl
- d) **1 Ghajn Tuffieha Welcome sign:** 10 mm PVC, printing, covered with vinyl
- e) **1 Ghajn Tuffieha regulations (still pending) signs:** 10 mm PVC, printing, covered with vinyl

**Freehand:**

- f) **2 Main Entrance Center signs:** 8 foot long, height: above fence, wood with paintings, Welcome, logo, opening hours, contact details...

**Engraving:**

- g) **30 directional signs:** 8cm x 8cm x 60 cm, engraving an arrow