

Activities carried out in the first six months of the project, February, 2000 to July, 2000, by The Gaia Foundation, Project Manager.

1. The rehabilitation of the old sewage treatment plant, which falls within the level two protected site at the Golden Bay Headland. This area is housing the nursery referred to in paragraph two. Rehabilitation included:
 - a. the clearing of disused rooms for storage of equipment,
 - b. clearing of rubble and junk,
 - c. repair of rubble walls
 - d. landscaping of site with indigenous trees and shrubs.
 - e. Laying out a drainage system to channel rain water into the old sewage treatment plant. This increases the water supply and reduces heavy erosion on the sand dunes and on the top soil at the Golden Bay Headland. The soil washed by the rains is deposited in the nursery grounds and could be reused, rather than washed out to sea.

2. The upgrading of Malta's first nursery for indigenous trees and shrubs, to accommodate up to 20,000 saplings. This included:
 - a. the installation of a security fence running approximately 500 metres,
 - b. the purchase and use of thousands of pots, peat, soil and seeding trays,
 - c. the placing of wooden palets under all pots,
 - d. the placing of shading material for all plants in the first two stages of growth
 - e. the accumulation of seeds and cuttings of various plants in the spring for propagation,
 - f. The repotting of seedlings from trays planted in winter and spring.
 - g. The installation of a fire fighting system that could be used for the nursery grounds as well as the sand dune level one protected area immediately below the nursery, which is full of reeds and is prone to fires.
 - h. The purchase of a number of plants to be planted in the 2000/2001 season to make up for the shortfall in plants propagated in the nursery's first year.

NB The exact number of each type of plant, together with the stage of growth will be furnished later on this week. You can add the figures at the end.

3. February to April saw the second phase of the planting of indigenous trees and shrubs. Unlike every other plantation project known, that has been carried out in Malta, this project does not deal with a monoculture plantation of one species per area. Each area is rehabilitated through the plantation of a mixture of trees and shrubs that are compatible. The areas covered were:
 - a. Golden Bay Headland,
 - b. The area around Ghajn Tuffieha Tower,

- c. Hotba l-Bajda,
 - d. The clay slopes East of Ghajn Tuffieha Bay.
 - e. Land North of hotba l-Balda allocated for a permaculture project
The exact number of trees and shrubs will be communicated at a later date.
4. The laying out of an irrigation system to cover the entire site currently under vegetation. This involved the use of hundreds of metres of 40mm main pipes, leading to over 1,500 metres of 16mm arteries to form a drip irrigation system. Water is currently being pumped by petrol pump from the nursery. The nursery area is furnished with a combination of drip irrigation and sprinklers.
 5. The application to Enemalta for an electricity supply for the nursery. This is required for the operation of a more efficient pumping system, security lights and the use of power tools. Supply has not however been connected.
 6. The installation of two heavy duty water pumps that would allow the irrigation of the entire site at once, and would reach the furthest ends of the site.
 7. The laying out of a fire fighting system for the clay slopes at Ghajn Tuffieha and the Qarraba Isthmus and Peninsula, which are graded level one protection. A piping system is currently connected to storage tanks at the top of Hotba l-Bajda with a capacity of 8,000 litres.
 8. The commencement of Malta's first permaculture project, through the identification of an adequate site, which has been left barren for 5 years, the planting of olive trees as a first stage of agriculture, and pine trees along the perimeter as a windbreak.
 9. The purchase of books on permaculture, local flora and herbs as guides to propagation.
 10. The laying of three lifelines at Ghajn Tuffieha Bay, known for its dangerous underwater currents, as part of the beach safety facilities. Beach safety has also been upgraded through the hiring of security personnel (a plain clothes policeman) on weekend afternoons, to enforce safety and environmental regulations.
 11. The laying of a boat lane into Ghajn Tuffieha Bay to guide any pleasure craft, motorised or otherwise.
 12. The upgrading of the waste management system at Ghajn Tuffieha Bay to include organic waste, currently being recycled after a three year interval, and to remove dead posidonia more frequently. This is no longer being removed to the landfill, but placed on site, away from bathers, but close to the beach. After the winter rains it will be cleansed of salt and used as compost. Traces of sand will be washed back to the water's edge. More bins have been placed in the swimming areas inaccessible to vehicles. They are being serviced by boat.

13. Preparation for Blue Flag Status for Ghajn Tuffieha. The management of the site fulfilled almost all requirements for a Blue Flag beach. The notable exception is the provision of beach bar facilities and public conveniences. An application for these was submitted in May, 1999 to the Planning Authority for Malta's first environmentally sustainable beach bar. Considerable effort has been exerted by the Foundation this Spring 2000 to procure the necessary permits prior to the onset of summer, but unfortunately without success, although the Planning Authority is obliged by Law to process all permits within four months. The beach bar will be phasing out packaging wherever possible. Proceeds will be pouged back into the site to cover structural works necessary, for which life funds are not available, such as the rehabilitation of the foreshore through the removal of an old concrete platform, the provision of public conveniences, and the restoration of the stairs, that have not been maintained for over 40 years, and minimisation of the environmental impact of the said stairs to the clay slopes.
14. Regular patrolling of the site. This is required to enforce regulations pertaining to camping, offroading, open fires and littering. Patrols are also required to minimise vandalism and theft of irrigation and other equipment.
15. The construction of small information boards on fire hazard zones, beach safety, site regulations and waste separation guidelines, as well as the servicing of old information boards.
16. The commissioning of an ecological survey and recommendations for rehabilitation of Rđum Majjiesa Clay Slopes. This area fall just outside the Ghajn Tuffieha area currently managed, and should become an extension of the said site owing to its high ecological value.
17. The purchase of an arial photgrammetric survey for Majjiesa and Ghajn Tuffieha.
18. The drafting of a management plan for the Majjiesa area.
19. The formulation of a management plan for the Ramla Bay area in Gozo, as a basis for the management of the site, being submitted to the Environment Protection Dept. for its approval.
20. The formulaton of first interventions measures necessary for the immediate protection of the Ramla Bay site, also submitted to the Environment Protection Department for approval.
21. The drafting of a management contract, to be signed by the Environment protection Department, for the management of the Ramla site. This is currently pending with the Department.
22. The purchase of equipment required for the project, including one boat, one computer, one copier machine and one generator. The boat is necessary for beach patrols to help to enforce present maritime regulations in areas around Ghajn Tuffieha and Ramla that are being considered for Marine Conservation status, to access otherwise inaccessible beach coves from Gnejna to Majjiesa for beach cleaning, to assist in marine conservation studies, and to facilitate work carried out by staff covering all three sites. The generator has been considered necessary to power pumps and power tools needed on all sites.

23. The hiring of new staff, namely Robert Wubbels, as an extra warden on site. Joseph Chetcuti has been upgraded from part a timer to a full timer. Carmen Chetcuti, as a part timer, has increased work from approximately 20 hours to 30 hours per week. All work on site is carried out by the said personnel. Coordination of work on site is carried out on by the director.
24. The setting up of the Gaia Foundation's website, which is located at www.gaiamalta.org. The website is geared to carry all information about the Life project, including all professional studies and interim reports.
25. The official launch in March 2000 of the Life project, hosted by the Minister for Environment. The launch was given widespread coverage in the local media.
26. The restoration of Ghajn Tuffieha Tower, built by Grand Master Lascaris of the Order of the Knights of Malta. This was done with the support of the Director of Public Projects, who provided the labour, and the philanthropic organisation Din l-Art Helwa, that provided the funds for the materials required. The tower is intended to house Malta's first environment information visitor centre.