

Restoration of the only substantial remaining railway track embankment in Malta

Last Monday, the restoration of the only substantial remaining railway track embankment in Malta, located in Triq il-Linja in H'Attard, was inaugurated. This unique 19th century industrial architectural heritage was restored by the H'Attard Local Council and co-financed through the European Regional Development Fund, under Operational Programme I, 2014-2020 programme and the Development Fund within the Planning Authority. The railway embankment, forming part of the Malta Railway system (*Il-Vapur tal-Art*) which operated from 1883 to 1931, lay abandoned and the H'Attard Local Council worked to preserve this unique heritage for posterity. The next phase of the project will involve the setting up of a cultural information and educational centre built on the existing footprint of the rail station in Għnien l-Istazzjon, which is no longer standing. The centre will be equipped with display areas and will also provide information related to cultural assets/landmarks that visitors will find within the locality of H'Attard and the Three Villages (H'Attard/Hal Balzan/Hal Lija) which will complement the Three Villages heritage trail that MTA has set up. A public library reading section will be included.

The project will enable the local council to present visitors with the opportunity to experience life as it was in our towns and villages. Malta's built heritage offers a product which is unique to our islands and which fits in well with tourists' increasing demand for an authentic experience of the host community while on holiday. One of the best ways in which to gain a competitive edge in tourism is by promoting a locality's unique resources where these exist, improve the interpretation, accessibility, conservation and promotion of these heritage sites. Acknowledging the cultural strength that H'Attard and the Three Villages collectively have to offer, the project seeks to address the above requirements in order to enhance the performance of the "village core" tourism product. The local council stresses the need to restore and preserve the cultural assets within the locality of H'Attard and calls on the local authorities, particularly the Superintendent for Cultural Heritage, to take a proactive role in such conservation efforts.

