

The Use and Management of Maltese Rocky Shore Platforms for Coastal Tourism

R. Morgan⁽¹⁾ and A. Micallef⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾ Coastal and Riverine Research Unit, School of Applied Sciences, University of Glamorgan, Pontypridd, Wales, UK CF37 1DL

Tel +44-1443-480480 Fax +44-1443-482285 e-mail: rmorgan@glam.ac.uk

⁽²⁾ Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Insular Coastal Dynamics, Foundation for International Studies, Univ. of Malta, St. Paul Street, Valetta VLT07, Malta

Tel +356-234121 Fax +356-230551 e-mail: a.micallef@icod.org.mt

Abstract

Tourism is Malta's main income generating industry, yet only 2.4% of the shoreline is composed of sandy beaches. Many thousands of coast users rely on rocky shore platforms for sunbathing, relaxation and access to the sea for swimming. Improved management and facilities at such platforms might encourage greater use and relieve pressure on the few sandy beaches. Some previous work has suggested that tourists who now use sandy beaches would be reluctant to switch to using rock platforms but native Maltese coast users might be more willing given good management and a clean, safe environment. A survey of 132 rock platform users (of whom 101 were native Maltese) was conducted during the summer of 1997. Convenience, attractiveness and space were common reasons for visiting these sites. Only a third of users were satisfied with management and most people attached a high importance to this aspect. There was a preference for platforms which had been engineered to smooth them and ease access, but most people wanted quiet locations which were undeveloped or with only basic facilities rather than sites adjacent to towns or resorts. Bathing water quality and rock platform cleanliness were prioritised highly. Low priorities were given to restaurant facilities and nearby car parking. Many opinions and preferences were remarkably similar to those of local users of sandy beaches (as opposed to visiting tourists) surveyed in the Mediterranean and elsewhere. Overall, results suggested that careful environmental engineering and management are to be preferred to large scale commercial development of such locations.