

## **SAVE THE VALLETTA SKYLINE RESTORATION APPEAL**

**10 April 2020**

**Dear Supporters of the Restoration Appeal,**

**As we write this brief report, we are extremely conscious of the strange times we are living through – locked down, in many cases separated from one another and our nearest and dearest by thousands of miles, but digitally connected and thankfully still well.**

**As Easter in Malta approaches – one of the most beautiful times of the year – churches and cathedrals are shut, the wonderful Easter processions cancelled. In an inspired initiative, the Chancellor of the Cathedral has organised virtual Sunday Mass and Services to provide the congregation with the spiritual nourishment and strength to see it through these difficult days.**

### **THE RESTORATION OF THE TOWER**

**We are glad to report that our efforts to restore Saint Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral to its former glory and to Save the Valletta Skyline still endure. The 3 million-plus euros contract, which we let a few weeks ago to a Joint Venture company comprising three of Malta's leading building contractors – Vassallo Builders Ltd, Agius Stoneworks Ltd and Vaults Ltd – is on the verge of getting restoration work on the ground started.**

**This will begin with preliminary preparations (such as the erection of safety hoarding around the steeple and tower) to be followed by the laborious process of the erection of the scaffolding surrounding the 67-metre bell-tower and spire of the Cathedral and the removal of the six bells.**

**This is a massive undertaking which will be tackling the crucial need for the repair and reconstruction of the most vulnerable part of the Cathedral. Indeed, it epitomises the tagline we have chosen for our Appeal: Save the Valletta Skyline.**

**The contract is the culmination of many months of architectural inspections and detailed technical tests of the tower and spire conducted by foremost restoration architects, AP Valletta. Their tests identified worrying signs of deterioration threatening the stability of the tower, the spire and the stonework throughout the Cathedral, making this work an absolute priority.**

**We are hopeful that, despite the pandemic, the start of restoration work will prompt interest in our project and lead to local businesses and trusts supporting our Restoration Appeal. We are also now in discussion with the government about further funding for other phases of the restoration project on which its ultimate completion depends.**

### **THE VISITOR CENTRE**

**In parallel, we have made huge strides in completing work on the Visitor Centre which has been established in the Undercroft. Under the guidance of the Visitor Experience Committee, an ambitious two-year plan has been drawn up with the aim of making the Cathedral and the Visitor Centre – of which it forms an integral part – dynamic and attractive to foreign and local visitors.**

**A first important step has been the recruitment of a Visitor Centre Manager, Josette Borg, and the start of work to recruit a team of volunteers to help receive visitors in both the Cathedral and the Visitor Centre itself when the lockdown is relaxed. The online presence of the Visitor Centre on the Cathedral website is being greatly enhanced as is the Cathedral's communication with the congregation, for example through videos of church services, more appealing presentation of newsletters and other virtual promotional material throughout the Covid-19 emergency.**

## **EVENTS**

**Regrettably, our wonderfully ambitious fund-raising efforts both in Malta, under EAT chairman Tony Guillaumier, and in London, under Joanna Oswin and her team, have fallen prey to the coronavirus. Undaunted, both committees have great plans to re-start their fund-raising programmes once conditions allow. Watch this space!**

## **CONCLUSION**

**The coronavirus pandemic has been a bolt from the blue. Millions of people around the world are facing the threat of illness and economic hardship. Our continuing work on the Cathedral restoration and the Visitor Centre enhancement project offers a tiny ray of hope that normality may soon re-assert itself. It may be many months before there can be any prospect of life returning to normal.**

**But we should console ourselves that all this will pass. Not soon. But with God's grace it will.**

**We wish you continuing good health and a Happy Easter!**

**Yours sincerely,**

**Martin Laing and Martin Scicluna**

**Joint Chairmen of the Save the Valletta Skyline Restoration Appeal**