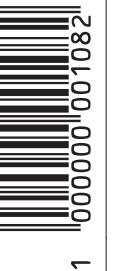




Anna Mallia
The Gasco affair pg 12 ▶



TWO YEARS WASTED

Two years have been wasted over wind power as Gonzi abandons 'fantasy' offshore farms, and drops government's veto on near-shore and land farms

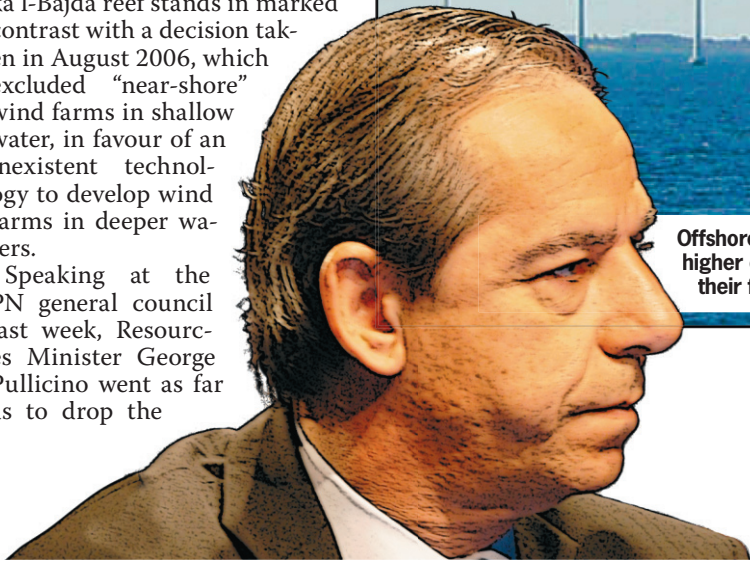
JAMES DEBONO

PRIME Minister Lawrence Gonzi's announcement that the government is now opting for a near-shore wind farm at the Sikka l-Bajda reef stands in marked contrast with a decision taken in August 2006, which excluded "near-shore" wind farms in shallow water, in favour of an in-existent technology to develop wind farms in deeper waters.

Speaking at the PN general council last week, Resources Minister George Pullicino went as far as to drop the



Offshore wind development zones are favoured since average wind speed is usually considerably higher over open water but offshore installation is more expensive than onshore due to the cost of their foundations and maintenance costs of corrosion.



government's veto on building wind turbines on land, a proposal which had been discarded two years ago.

The government's U-turn vindicates the scepticism expressed two years ago by physicist Ed-

ward Mallia, who had said the decision to shelve near-shore farms in favour of a in-existent technology "was a way of saying that we are doing something even if in reality we are opting for a solution which cannot be

Sikka l-Bajda reef.

Despite admissions that the technology was in-existent, the government claimed that the project would produce 9.5% of Malta's energy consumption.

considered realistic in the immediate future."

In August 2006, the Malta Resources Authority issued calls for an expression of interest in offshore wind projects, despite fully knowing that the technology did not exist to operate such wind farms at the depths proposed by the MRA.

On that occasion the government excluded all sites less than 20 metres deep, including the

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BPC withdraws 'smart deposit' initiative

RAPHAEL VASSALLO

BPC International Ltd, the press agency which handles the account for Smart City, has withdrawn its controversial initiative to request a Lm1,000 (€2,300) deposit from media outlets in return for comments from Smart City officials.

The "smart deposit" system was revealed in an article in last Sunday's MaltaToday, and provoked an outcry from media organisations such as the Journalists' Committee and Institute of Maltese Journalists.

Smarting from this criticism, BPC announced yesterday it would reconsider the strat-

egy after pointing out that the €200 million Dubai project had nothing to do with the original arrangement.

"We would like to clarify that the proposed terms of engagement are a BPC initiative," the agency's director Carmel Bonello said in a statement issued yesterday.

"We had not discussed these with Smart City at that point in time and we have instructions from Smart City Malta that this procedure should not be used for any press requests related to their project."

Bonello added that the strategy had been adopted only to ward against unfair or exploitative media coverage.

"Fortunately the majority

of news media in Malta operate according to the Maltese journalists' Code of Ethics and therefore, normally, there is no issue with journalists obtaining information or comments from client organizations via BPC.

"However sometimes, journalists request a face-to-face interview. Naturally, it is at the discretion of every client organisation whether to accept the interview or not and under what terms of engagement," Bonello said.

"Our professional role remains that of suggesting to our respective clients the most appropriate terms of engagement at that moment

in time to ensure

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Spinning breast cancer is cheaper than screening

KARL SCHEMBRI

ON the face of it, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi's strategically placed announcement on Xarabank that government will be including Herceptin – a hefty breast cancer drug – on the national health service, can only be met with applause.

For years, women in need of Herceptin have had to sell their family jewels to cope with the prohibitive expenses that can go up as high as €46,500.

Never mind the national breast screening programme promised a year ago and of

which there is still no trace in the government health service; who would not pat Gonzi on the back for this touch of benevolence amid widespread economic austerity?

A closer look at the actual announcement, however, reveals the real sinister side behind the Gonzi administration, going out of its way to spin anything.

What the prime minister's announcement effectively means is that the forthcoming Government Gazette will include a call for tenders, for suppliers to register their interest and give their quotes.

The tendering

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