

Comino kiosks: a tender from summer 2026?

*Testing the Minister for Tourism's 2025 promise against
the Malta Tourism Authority's own later statement*

THE CLAIM UNDER REVIEW

***“However, starting in the summer of 2026,
everyone will have to compete and pay
the right price.”***

Ian Borg, Minister for Tourism, as quoted by The Shift, 14 Apr 2025.

On Comino's kiosks and beach concessions, which stayed unchanged in 2025.

PLEDGE: MISSED

No tender for summer 2026, by the MTA's own account

Version 1.0 · 12 October 2026

Status: draft, pending right of reply

Prepared from public sources, quoted outlets and the MTA's Blue Lagoon Strategic Plan page.

Pledge label: missed (as of 12 Oct 2026). Repository: github.com/leandergrech/Mizien

MIŻIEN · AN INDEPENDENT FACT-CHECKING PROJECT

Contest a verdict, with evidence: github.com/leandergrech/Mizien/issues

TL;DR

On 14 April 2025 the Minister for Tourism, Ian Borg, told The Shift that Comino’s kiosks and beach concessions would stay as they were for the 2025 season, adding: **“However, starting in the summer of 2026, everyone will have to compete and pay the right price.”** [1] On 8 February 2026 the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) told the same outlet that no competitive tenders would be issued that summer: “this will have to wait until we have the permit” [2]. We checked whether the promise was kept.

- 1

The promise had a date and a scope. “Starting in the summer of 2026”, “everyone” (the kiosk and beach-concession operators on Comino) would compete in a tender [1]. That is measurable.
- 2

The MTA itself said it would not happen. Four months before the season, an MTA spokesperson said no competitive tenders for kiosks or beach concessions would be issued in summer 2026, because the MTA’s planning application (PA00738/26) was not yet approved [2].
- 3

Nothing we could find shows a change since. The Shift’s report of 24 June 2026 describes the same ad hoc extensions [3]; we found no tender notice for the kiosks (search log in the literature notes). Summer ended 42 days before this check.
- 4

The number of kiosks cannot be tested. The Minister gave “around 11” in March 2025 and the MTA still speaks of reducing them “radically” [4, 2]; we found no later count.
- 5

Pledge label: Missed (moderate confidence). The deadline passed and the MTA’s own statement and a later report show the tender did not take place. The evidence is outlets’ quotations of the MTA, not an MTA document.



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1 The claim and what we could verify

Our record came from a Lovin Malta report of 3 March 2025 [4], which states, in its headline, that the Minister pledges a revamp of Comino’s kiosks, and from a record paraphrase: “from 2026 all Comino kiosks and encroached public spaces will be awarded through competitive tenders and their number reduced”. That sentence is the intake’s paraphrase, not the speaker’s wording. We therefore rate the Minister’s own words, quoted in The Shift on 14 April 2025 [1], and treat the rest as context.

What was said	Who, where, when	Form
“However, starting in the summer of 2026, everyone will have to compete and pay the right price.”	Minister Ian Borg; The Shift, 14 Apr 2025 [1]	Quotation
“When I took over this responsibility, it was already too late to conduct a proper tendering process”; “We did not have enough time to change the situation this year.”	Ian Borg; The Shift, 14 Apr 2025 [1]	Quotation
“A competitive process (tender) is in the process so that everyone would have the chance to compete”	Spokesperson for the Minister; The Shift, 28 Feb 2025 [5]	Quotation
“The Malta Tourism Authority has annual concessions with around 11 kiosks, but this might be too many”	Ian Borg; Lovin Malta, 3 Mar 2025 [4]	Quotation
The MTA is considering limiting the number of kiosks and a standard design	The Shift, 14 Apr 2025 [1]	Outlet’s paraphrase
The Minister’s statement in the Lovin Malta video that he would eventually redesign the kiosks	Lovin Malta, 3 Mar 2025 [4]	Outlet’s paraphrase

What we rate. One pledge: that from summer 2026 the Comino operators would compete for their concessions in a tender. “Everyone” and “the right price” point to the kiosks and beach concessions the article was about. Reducing the number of kiosks is not in the Minister’s quoted words as a commitment, so it is context and not rated.

SCOPE AND FAIRNESS

This check is about a statement on public concessions, not about any operator or about the island’s planning status, which is before a tribunal (CC-002) and not discussed here. Earlier ministers made similar promises (The Shift, 8 Feb 2026 [2]); we assess this Minister’s statement, not the people. The MTA’s own explanation for the delay is reported in Section 3.

2 Method

Question. Did Comino’s kiosks and beach concessions go to competitive tender from summer 2026, as the Minister said they would?

Evidence. Two outlets’ reports of the Minister’s words [1, 4]; the MTA’s own statement of 8 February 2026, quoted by The Shift [2]; The Shift’s reports of 28 February 2025 and 24 June 2026 [5, 3]; the MTA’s Blue Lagoon Strategic Plan page [6], which names summer 2026 as the date for completing the transformation. We looked for a tender notice in web searches and a tender aggregator’s listings of MTA procurement for Comino (search log in *literature/CC-086/notes.md*). The dates are transcribed in *data/cc-086/statements.csv* and the date arithmetic recomputed by *tools/cc-086-report/calc.py* into *checks.csv*.

Literature. We searched Crossref and OpenAlex for peer-reviewed studies of kiosk or concession tendering on Mediterranean protected islands and found none to rely on. The general economics of franchise bidding (Williamson 1976 [7]) concerns whether competition for a concession can replace regulation; it does not bear on whether this tender took place, so we use it only as background. **Grades:** statements quoted in outlets are grade D (assertion) for what will happen and grade C for what an authority said it had decided; Appendix A.

3

What the record shows

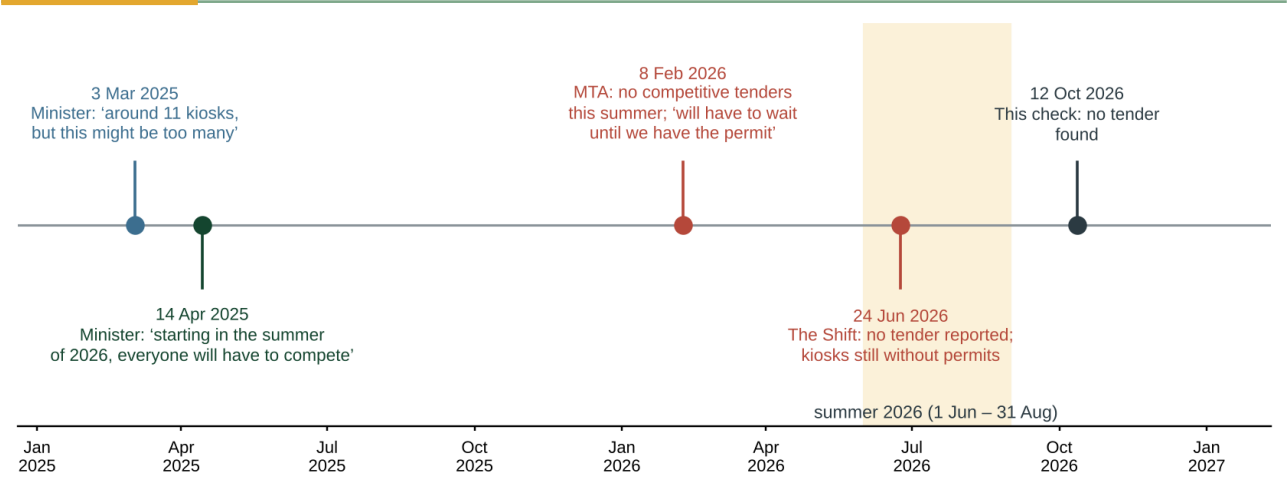


Figure 1. Statements about Comino’s kiosks, 2025–2026. Sources [1–5]; dates in data/cc-086/statements.csv.

2025. The Minister said in March 2025 that the MTA gave about 11 annual kiosk concessions and that this “might be too many” [4]. In April 2025 he said it was too late for a tender that year and that “starting in the summer of 2026, everyone will have to compete and pay the right price” [1]. The Shift reported that the MTA was considering limiting the number of kiosks (outlet’s paraphrase) [1].

February 2026. An MTA spokesperson told The Shift: “The intention remains to reduce kiosks radically and to issue beach concessions through a competitive tendering process. However, this will have to wait until we have the permit.” The outlet reports the MTA as confirming that no competitive tenders for kiosks or beach concessions would be issued that summer, and that the MTA’s planning application PA00738/26, filed in 2025, was at an early stage with no timeline (its paraphrase; we did not open the Planning Authority’s record, which is browser-only) [2].

June 2026. The Shift reported on 24 June that the kiosks have lacked valid Planning Authority permits since at least 2015 and that beach concessions continued through ad hoc arrangements extended annually [3]. It reported no tender. We found, in the places listed in the notes, no kiosk or beach-concession tender notice between February and 12 October 2026; this is a search result, not proof of absence (Section 7). MTA procurement for Comino that we did find concerned security, cleaning and visitor wristbands [8].

4

Where the evidence points different ways

Did the pledged tender happen?		NO TENDER FOUND
WHAT THE MINISTER SAID		
The Minister’s words set summer 2026 as the date [1]. The MTA’s strategic plan page also says the transformation will be complete “by summer 2026” [6] (the page carries no publication date).		
WHAT THE MTA SAID LATER		
The MTA said in February 2026 that tenders must wait for the planning permit and that the intention remains [2]. That is a stated reason for delay, and the intention may still be carried out. A tender after summer 2026 would not meet the promised date.		
WHY THEY DIFFER, AND WHAT IT MEANS HERE		
The MTA’s own statement and a later report agree that the 2026 season ran without tenders; no document shows otherwise. The pledge was dated; the deadline passed.		

5 Testing the claim

Sub-claim	What the evidence shows	Rating
A. “starting in the summer of 2026, everyone will have to compete and pay the right price”	MTA, 8 Feb 2026: no tenders for kiosks or beach concessions that summer; “this will have to wait until we have the permit”. The Shift, 24 Jun 2026: same ad hoc extensions; no tender found since [2, 3].	MISSED
B. Context: the number of kiosks to be reduced (the record’s paraphrase)	Minister: “around 11 kiosks, but this might be too many” (Mar 2025); the MTA “intention remains to reduce kiosks radically” (Feb 2026). No later count found; not a pledge in the Minister’s quoted words [4, 2].	NOT RATED
C. Reason given for the delay: the planning permit	MTA: it “will have to wait until we have the permit” [2]. The application’s status is the outlet’s paraphrase; the Planning Authority record was not opened ♦.	NOT RATED

6 Pledge label and requests for evidence

PLEDGE

MISSED

The tender promised from summer 2026 did not take place, by the MTA’s own account. As of 12 Oct 2026. Confidence: moderate.

Why. (1) The pledge is measurable: a competitive tender for the kiosks and beach concessions, from summer 2026. (2) Its date has passed: summer ended on 31 August (42 days before this check), or on 30 September on the most generous reading (12 days). (3) The MTA said in February that no tender would be issued that summer and gave a reason; The Shift’s June report shows the same arrangements; we found no tender notice. Under the scale, *Missed* needs a passed deadline and documents or data that can be shown: these are the MTA’s statement and the reports listed in the evidence box, which we read in full. (4) Confidence is moderate because the evidence is outlets’ quotation of the MTA, not an MTA document, and our search of tender notices was not exhaustive.

PLEDGE LABEL: MISSED (AS OF 12 OCT 2026)

A pledge can still be met later (the MTA says the intention remains); the label then moves to Met only if a tender is shown, and the report will say it was late. The label rates the date the Minister gave.

What this does not say. It does not say the planning permit delay was avoidable, nor that the policy of tendering is right or wrong, nor anything about an operator.

Evidence we are asking for

- ☐ Malta Tourism Authority: whether any tender or call for the Comino kiosks and beach concessions was published for 2026, with its date and result.
- ☐ Malta Tourism Authority: the number of kiosk concessions in 2025 and 2026, and the status of application PA00738/26.
- ☐ Ministry for Tourism: the text of the press statement of February 2025 on competitive tenders from 2026, which we could not find in a readable outlet.

RIGHT OF REPLY

Pending right of reply. The maintainer will decide whether and how to invite a response from the Ministry for Tourism and the MTA. A *Missed* label is not circulated beyond this site before the reply period has passed.

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Limitations

- gov.mt, mta.com.mt news pages and the Planning Authority’s site are browser-only for scripts, and the Wayback Machine reset connections; the Ministry’s press statement of February 2025 and the MTA’s tender page were not read. The MTA’s February 2026 words are as The Shift printed them.
- We found no tender notice, but searches of the web and of a tender aggregator are not a search of the government’s eTenders portal; an award we did not find would move the label.
- “The summer of 2026” is not defined by the Minister; we show the 31 August and 30 September readings.
- The Strategic Plan page [6] is undated; we use it only to show that the MTA itself named summer 2026.

References

- [1] Camilleri, I. (14 Apr 2025). Illegal kiosks on protected Comino to be allowed another year, despite promises. The Shift. Read in full 12 Oct 2026. <https://theshiftnews.com/2025/04/14/illegal-kiosks-on-protected-comino-to-be-allowed-another-year-despite-promises>
- [2] Camilleri, I. (8 Feb 2026). Broken promise as Comino illegal concessions to stay put for another summer. The Shift. Read in full 12 Oct 2026. <https://theshiftnews.com/2026/02/08/broken-promise-as-comino-illegal-concessions-to-stay-put-for-another-summer/>
- [3] The Shift (24 Jun 2026). Visit Malta officials filmed telling citizens to leave deckchair-occupied beach in Comino. Read 12 Oct 2026. <https://theshiftnews.com/2026/06/24/visit-malta-officials-filmed-telling-citizens-to-leave-deckchair-occupied-beach-in-comino/>
- [4] Lovin Malta (3 Mar 2025). Watch: No More Vans? Ian Borg Pledges Major Comino Kiosk Revamp. Read 12 Oct 2026. <https://lovinmalta.com/news/watch-no-more-vans-ian-borg-pledges-major-comino-kiosk-revamp/>
- [5] Camilleri, I. (28 Feb 2025). Yet another promise to address Comino concession problems. The Shift. Read 12 Oct 2026. <https://theshiftnews.com/2025/02/28/yet-another-promise-to-address-comino-concession-problems/>
- [6] Malta Tourism Authority (undated; © 2026). Blue Lagoon Strategic Plan. Read 12 Oct 2026. <https://mta.com.mt/blue-lagoon-strategic-plan/>
- [7] Williamson, O. E. (1976). Franchise Bidding for Natural Monopolies – in General and with Respect to CATV. *The Bell Journal of Economics* 7(1):73. doi:10.2307/3003191. Abstract read; background only. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3003191>
- [8] ♦ Tender aggregator listings of MTA procurement for Comino (CT2029/2026 security; wristbands SPD2/2026/009 and /024), seen in a search summary 12 Oct 2026; not opened.
- [9] Mizien. Data and calculations: data/cc-086/; tools/cc-086-report/calc.py (checks.csv).

Appendix A: series standards and verdict scale

Every investigation in this series follows the same rules so that verdicts are comparable and challengeable.

Verdict	Meaning
SUPPORTED	Evidence consistently backs the claim as stated.
LARGELY SUPPORTED	Backed by the evidence, with minor caveats that do not change the substance.
NOT SUBSTANTIATED	Stated more strongly than the evidence offered or available allows. May be true in some conditions but has not been shown.
MISLEADING	Omits material facts so that the overall impression is inaccurate, even if individual statements are defensible.
CONTRADICTED	The available evidence points against the claim.

Pledge labels

A pledge is a promise of future action, so it cannot be true or false when it is made. It gets one of these labels instead of a verdict, with the date of the evidence behind it.

Pledge label	Meaning
NOT MEASURABLE	The pledge as worded has no definition, baseline or date against which delivery could be checked.
NOT YET DUE	Measurable; the deadline or term has not passed and no progress data have been published yet.
ON TRACK	Published progress is at or ahead of a straight-line path (or the pledge's own milestones) to the target by the deadline.
OFF TRACK	Published progress is behind that path, and the target has not yet been shown to be met or missed.
MET	Documents or data show the target was reached, by the deadline if one was set.
MISSED	The deadline or term has passed, and documents or data that can be shown say the target was not reached.

Confidence

High: multiple independent lines of evidence agree. **Moderate:** evidence is relevant but incomplete or indirect. **Low:** evidence is thin, second-hand or conflicting.

Evidence grades

A experiment · B observational study with a control or gradient · C review, guidance or official statistics · D assertion or anecdote. ♦ marks a source known only second-hand (used for context only, never for a deciding figure).

Standards

- **Quote the speaker, not the headline**, with outlet and date, and link the original where possible.
- **Separate the claim from the evidence offered for it**, and say who made which statement.
- **Grade the evidence** and show differing views side by side where the evidence is unsettled.
- **State what we could not access or verify**, and what would change the verdict either way.
- **Ask for the missing evidence** in specific, answerable requests.

- **Offer a right of reply** where a check finds a claim Not substantiated, Misleading or Contradicted (or a pledge Not measurable, Off track or Missed), before wider circulation, and append responses.
- **Correct errors openly** with a version number and change log.
- **Whistle-blow only on evidence:** a verdict of *Misleading* or *Contradicted* requires documents or data that can be shown, not inference.
- **Check every side.** Government, opposition, NGOs and developers are held to the same standard.

Appendix B: revision log

Version	Date	Change
1.0	12 Oct 2026	First issue. Pledge label Missed (moderate). Pending right of reply.