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BUENAS PRÁCTICAS

Actuaciones Cofinanciadas

CONSOLIDATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE WALLED ENCLOSURE AND BELALCAZAR CASTLE (CORDOBA)

Regional Ministry of Culture and Historical Heritage

**Programa Operativo
de Andalucía**

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Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo Regional

CONSOLIDATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE WALLED ENCLOSURE AND BELALCAZAR CASTLE (CORDOBA)

The Belcazar Castle, also called of the Sotomayor or Gahete, in the region of Pedroches, Cordoba, consists of two distinct buildings from the time when a Christian castle was established in the middle of the fifteenth century, inside the walled enclosure of an earlier Muslim citadel. It is one of the most relevant examples of medieval Castilian defensive architecture both for its emblematic character and for its monumentality and landscape values.

The whole fortress has an approximate area of 2.5 hectares, enclosed by an irregularly shaped outer wall that adapts to the topography of the hill where it is located. Its towers correspond mostly to the tower-buttress model. Up to twenty-one towers are identified, among which two stand out. The first of these, known as Torre de los Vargas, is a *coracha* tower located next to the course of the stream. The second one is a watchtower attached to the enclosure by a large semi-circular arch that covers a span of 8 meters as a bridge. Both date back to the mid-15th century. In the highest part of the hill stands the Christian stately castle, quadrangular, with solid towers in the corners. The keep dominates the space with its 47 metres high.

The project subject to this action consists, in particular, in the consolidation and conservation of all the holes, walls and roofs of the site, as well as the enhancement of the keep, the adequacy of its access roads, and the transformation of the annexed Work House into a Visitor Reception Centre.

The total expenditure of this project has resulted in an investment of EUR 1,440,216, which has received 80% support from the ERDF (EUR 1,152,172). This action aims to increase the number of planned visits to places belonging to cultural and natural heritage and subsidised attractions, whose assessment is impossible to quantify due to the covid-19 pandemic. However, it is expected to reach 43.4% of tourists who carry out cultural activities during their visit in 2023, as compared to the value of 37.7% from 2017.



It is considered a Project's Good Practice since it meets the following criteria:

1. The ERDF's role has been suitably disseminated among the beneficiaries, potential beneficiaries, and the general public:

The Regional Ministry of Culture and Historical Heritage of the Regional Government of Andalusia, as established by the regulations, displayed a work sign during the construction works, and an information plaque at the entrance of the Visitor Reception Centre.



The official website of the Regional Ministry of Culture and Historical Heritage, registered on the management authority's single web portal, provides extensive information on the project and includes a data sheet expressly mentioning the EU participation through the ERDF:

<https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/organismos/culturaypatrimoniohistorico/areas/bienes-culturales/actuaciones-conservacion/intervenciones/detalle/197156.html?5>

It has also developed various materials for the dissemination of this rehabilitation project. First, it has published information leaflets informing of the restoration process and disseminating the ERDF's participation for the knowledge of all visitors of the site.



Secondly, it has issued a number of press releases which the local and regional written and digital press have collected to inform of the evolution of this action thanks to the ERDF's support:

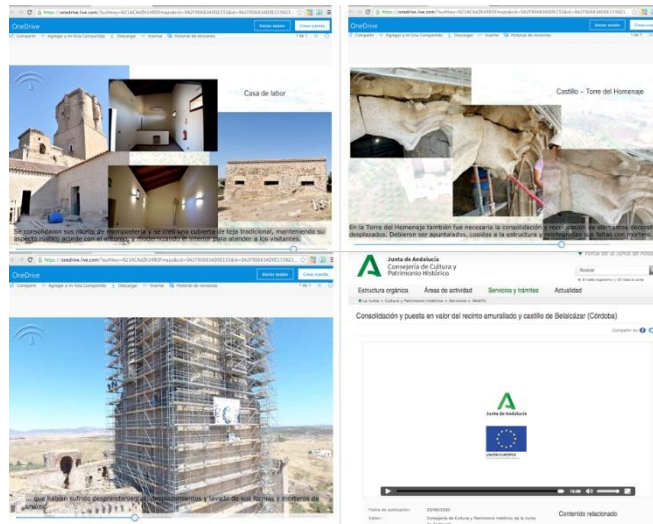
<http://www.hinojosainformacion.es/2017/03/24/el-castillo-de-belcazar-tiene-ya-proyecto-de-obras-para-su-recuperacion/>

<https://cordopolis.es/2017/05/26/abren-el-plazo-para-presentar-ofertas-a-la-restauracion-del-castillo-de-belcazar/>



Thirdly, an explanatory video of the process of the works and the results has been prepared, which will be broadcasted at the visitor and interpretation centre for the viewing of the entire audience, which is expected to reach 15,000 people a year once the state of alarm due to the covid-19 pandemic ends:

<https://juntadeandalucia.es/organismos/culturaypatrimoniohistorico/servicios/videos/detalle/198748.html>



On the part of the Directorate General of European Funds, its quarterly digital publication, "HUELLA", devoted a report to this rehabilitation action in its no. 12 issue (March-May 2020) as an example of a project co-funded by the ERDF:

<https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/economiaconocimientoempresasyuniversidad/fondoseuropeosenandalucia/huella1420/post-type-4.php?idC=3&idN=310&idR=73>



In addition, the new website of European Funds in Andalusia also includes a publication dedicated to this project in its section "Actions", providing a brief summary of the intervention and several images:

<https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/economiaconocimientoempresasyuniversidad/fondoseuropeosenandalucia/proyecto/289>

2. The action incorporates innovative elements:

One of the highlights of the complex is the keep, which today stands as the tourist attraction of the province. As an innovative element, a drone was used to obtain global images of the whole site so as to be shown in the audio-visual equipment of the keep. In this way, the aerial view and global views are made available to people with reduced mobility who cannot access the upper level of the castle.

In addition, the project of musealisation of the Work House as a visitor centre will have audio-visual equipment for the projection of explanatory videos, as well as augmented reality technologies, applications, and other RDI technology applications that help develop the exhibition.



3. Adaptation of the obtained results to the established objectives:

The Belalcazar Castle is part of the Network of Cultural Spaces of Andalusia. In this monumental site, the Regional Ministry of Culture has developed various previous actions aimed at the knowledge and conservation of this property that have now culminated with the project of "Consolidation and enhancement of the walled enclosure and Belalcazar Castle (Cordoba)", whose execution allows this heritage area to be opened to the public.

With this action, the consolidation, restoration, and enhancement of the property is achieved and, in this way, the intervention in the whole site as well: walled enclosure, castle, and interior elements, although in a strategic and timely way in order to respond to the most urgent aspects, given the poor condition of the property. Likewise, the execution of a small visitor reception centre is planned to occupy the current Work House.

It is worth noting the interior and exterior restoration of the keep, which allows access to the upper terrace and the view of the landscape of the region and the village of Belalcazar. The lighting systems that have been installed recover visibility inside the tower, giving a natural look and linking its various architectural spaces and levels.

For all the above, the objectives that were set at the time of the drafting of the project are achieved; these are no other than the recovery, restoration, research, and dissemination of this exceptional cultural heritage of the Andalusian Autonomous Community.



4. Resolution contribution of a regional problem or weakness:

The Regional Government of Andalusia acquired the Belalcazar Castle in 2007. Given its poor state of conservation, early actions were developed to prevent the loss of some elements that were in imminent ruin. Actions to complete knowledge of the castle were also planned, so as to enable the recovery and enhancement of this property for the public visit, key in the cultural and tourist development of the north of the province of Cordoba.



The actions carried out for the recovery and enhancement of the Belalcazar Castle are consistent with the regional strategic planning in the field of culture and tourism through the recovery, conservation, restoration, adaptation, and enhancement of an element of cultural heritage that will contribute to the sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development of the area.

5. High target population coverage:

With this action, it is intended to make accessible and open to the public visit a property like the Castle, that corresponds to the typology of Castilian stately castles of the late Middle Ages and dates back to the middle of the 15th century. By doing so, it is intended to develop this key point of cultural and tourism development in the north of the province of Cordoba.

The existing accessibility problem is addressed by recovering the path of access to the castle from the urban centre and creating an accessible itinerary to the keep that allows everybody of the public to visit the highest valued monumental element of the enclosure.



6. The horizontal criteria for equal opportunities and non-discrimination, environmental sustainability and/or social responsibility have been taken into account:

Means have been provided to allow the passage of the public in compliance with maximum security conditions. From the point of view of environmental sustainability, special care has been taken in the added elements so that they do not have excessive prominence and appear unnoticed or practically invisible to the visitor. The deployment of stairs, ramps, steps, protective elements, etc. has been limited to the essential so as to ensure public access by guaranteeing a stable transit area at all times, thus offering equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

The works contemplated in the conservation and enhancement action of Belalcazar Castle are not a single objective, as the protection, promotion and development of cultural heritage are also pursued.

7. Synergies with other public intervention policies or instruments:

The Law on Historical Heritage of Andalusia created the Network of Cultural Spaces of Andalusia (RECA, for its acronym in Spanish), constituted by an "integrated and unitary system formed by those Cultural Spaces located in the territory of the Autonomous Community". The Network of Cultural Spaces of Andalusia is articulated in three axes: the sustainable use of spaces and places as cultural resources through their protection, conservation, and enhancement; the promotion of scientific knowledge of their values, and therefore generating research; and the drive for local and territorial development initiatives based on the dissemination and revaluation of cultural spaces and sites integrated into the Network.

The actions included in the Conservation and Restoration Interventions Programme carried out by the Regional Ministry of Culture would be difficult to achieve if the action had been carried out alone, so the involvement of other actors with the same goal is extremely important.

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