AMINAL, Nature Department  
Els Martens

Your reference  
e-mail 26.04.2005.

Our reference  
television  

Appendix  
Website-links (references)

date  
9/05/2005

Proposed work on “wind farms and nature conservation”. DG Environment, EC.  
-Outline of measures/legislation/guidelines concerning wind turbines in Flanders (Belgium).  
-Proposal for participation in working group (WG).

The Institute of Nature Conservation (IN) – a scientific institute of the Flemish government in Belgium – currently performs a long-term independent project to study the impact of wind turbines on birds (nature) and to act as a consultancy for proposed wind farms in Flanders (Belgium). The project started in 2000, under the authority of the government. The results of the study until 2001 were published in the report (in Dutch) ‘Wind turbines and birds in Flanders. Preliminary study results in a European context’ (Everaert et al. 2002). A summary of the report with some additional new results was published as an article in the ornithological magazine Natuur.Oriolus (Everaert 2003). A bird-atlas with important bird areas and migration routes in Flanders (with suggested buffers) was also made in this context (Everaert et al. 2003). An article with more recent results (probable significant collision problem for terns) from the wind farm in the port of Zeebrugge, is currently in preparation (Everaert 2005 in prep.). See the references for more information.

1. Outline of measures/legislation/guidelines concerning wind turbines in Flanders (Belgium).

In September 2000 the circular letter EME/2000.01 of the Flemish government was published (Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap 2000) in which certain criteria and preconditions for the construction of wind turbines are mentioned. The authorities have the obligation by official order to strictly apply this circular letter. Some criteria and preconditions concerning ‘nature conservation’ are summarised below.

-Wind turbines need an ‘urban development permission’ and an ‘environmental permission’ from the local and/or regional authorities.

-It is not allowed to build wind turbines in European Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas like nature reserves, protected landscapes, nature areas (regional zoning plan) etc.

-Around nature areas, a buffer of minimum 250 meter has to be applied. Around Natura 2000 sites, nature reserves, and areas with specific important birds, a buffer of minimum 500-700 meter is necessary [Note. Possibly, in a future version of the circular letter, no distances will be mentioned concerning the buffers. In that case, a local study will have to determine what buffer is necessary. In case of uncertainty or too little information, a buffer will be applied taking into account the precautionary principle].
Breeding and roosting areas and migration routes of protected, endangered or vulnerable species, and areas with high densities of birds and/or bats, have to be avoided.

- Before the construction approval of the wind farm, all necessary information on the presence of birds/bats must be studied and the possible negative impact has to be determined (in case of Natura 2000 sites and other important bird area's, an “appropriate assessment” has to be made (within or outside of an “Environmental Impact Assessment”).

- In case of a plan with a minimum capacity of 20 MW or 20 turbines, or minimum 3 wind turbines with a possible impact on a protected area, an “Environmental Impact Assessment” always has to be made.

- The precautionary principle must be applied, certainly concerning the Natura 2000 sites.

2. Proposal for participation in working group (WG).

If possible, the Institute of Nature Conservation (IN) would like to participate in the working group (WG) of which the first meeting is planned in June 2005.

The IN has research and consultancy experience in Belgium concerning the possible impact of wind turbines on birds (and bats), and extensive literature knowledge of studies in other countries. The research experience with existing wind farms near/at the Nord Sea coast in Belgium could be of importance, certainly because at some of these locations one of the highest collision numbers of birds (per turbine per year) in the world were found. The IN is also involved with the planned off-shore wind farm on the Thornton bank in the Nord Sea.

Previously, the IN gave some comments and advice on the realisation of the literature review and guidelines in the Birdlife report (Langston & Pullan 2003), from which the Draft Recommendation of the Bern Convention was made up (Council of Europe 2004).

Dhr. Joris Everaert of the IN is available for any further questions.

Note.

Yours sincerely,

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References


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http://www.instatnat.be/content/page.asp?pid=FAU_VO_Windturbines
An English translation of this article is available on request.

Everaert, J., 2005 in prep. Impact of wind turbines on birds at the Eastern port dam in Zeebrugge (Belgium). Probable significant effect on breeding colony of Common Tern, Sandwich Tern and Little Tern. Institute of Nature Conservation, Brussels. A preliminary version is available on request.


http://www2.vlaanderen.be/ned/sites/ruimtelijk/Nrup/Planningsproc/PlPr_BG/Nuts/omzendbrief%20wind.pdf