



**EUROPA
NOSTRA**

Fédération européenne du patrimoine culturel
Pan-European Federation for Cultural Heritage

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EUROPA NOSTRA DECLARATION ON THE IMPACT OF WIND-POWER ON THE COUNTRYSIDE

1. The Council of Europa Nostra, Pan-European Federation for Heritage, meeting at Newcastle on 14 June 2008, debated the environmental and heritage implications of the rapidly increasing use of wind-power for electricity generation, and reached the following conclusions.

A. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

2. The Council recalled Europa Nostra's statutory commitment to the protection and enhancement of the heritage in all its aspects (immovable and movable, built and natural) in the wider context of the cultural landscape. *It recalled, furthermore, the view, expressed in the European Landscape Convention of 20 October, 2000 (otherwise known as the Florence Convention), that the landscape is a key element of individual and social well-being; and that its protection, management and planning entail rights and responsibilities for everyone.*
3. The Council fully recognised, and shared, the serious international concerns which exist about climate change, as reflected in the Kyoto Protocol of 11 December, 1997, and endorsed by the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali on 14 December 2007; as well as the need for all countries to have energy policies which take these concerns into account. *It will wish, however, to continue examining carefully the impact on the built and natural heritage of all forms of energy.*
4. The Council noted positions adopted by different Institutions of the European Union (EU), and in particular the commitment, made by the European Council in Brussels on 8/9 March, 2007 that the EU would make at least a 20% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 (in comparison with 1990); the Commission's Proposal for a Directive to further greatly promote the use of energy from renewable sources, dated 23 January 2008; the welcome given to this proposal by the European Council in Brussels on 13/14 March, 2008; and the European Council's declared readiness to contribute strongly to a global and comprehensive post-2012 Agreement at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in 2009. *It noted further that the Commission's Directive was intended to apply to all Member States of the European Economic Area, as well as those of the EU.*

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5. The Council held that energy policies must be comprehensive, addressing both demand and supply problems, and in the latter category considering all forms of energy supply; and must in particular focus on a reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases, notably CO₂.
6. The Council noted that measures to address the demand side of energy consumption, to save energy, and to promote energy efficiency, are assuming increasing importance in many countries; *but agreed that the measures so far taken remain inadequate in the light of the perceived threats, especially on the demand side.*
7. The Council believed that greater efforts should be made to promote all forms of *non-fossile* energy, *with an emphasis on those which offer the most reliability, the greatest capacity to abate greenhouse gas emissions, and availability at reasonable cost.*

B. CONSIDERATIONS SPECIFIC TO WIND POWER

8. Whilst the Council, therefore, supported the drive for all forms of renewables, including wind-power, it was insistent that wind-turbines must in all cases be sited in appropriate places.
9. The Council considered that many countries have so far tended to focus too heavily on wind-power, whether on or off shore. *It noted that wind-turbines are among the most costly methods of abating greenhouse gas emissions; and that heavy dependence - in certain countries - on wind-turbines, which constitute an unpredictable form of electric power supply, had led to very extensive power cuts.*
10. The Council noted that many Governments have provided heavy, direct and indirect, incentives for wind-power development, relaxed planning legislation, and failed to make a properly balanced assessment of its merits and demerits, with the consequence that vast areas of beautiful landscape throughout Europe are now dominated by groups of ever larger wind-turbines - each one of which constitutes a small power station - and are thus being effectively industrialised, with resultant serious damage to the natural heritage.
11. The Council held that, in many European countries, a situation now exists in which social, economic, touristic, historical, cultural, wildlife and landscape impacts are being insufficiently addressed, in the decision making process relating to wind-power.
12. Against this background, the Council took the view that, in relation to on-shore wind-turbines, or groups of them, the decision making process of public authorities should include wide consultation; be based on an understanding of the significance of local landscape character and values; and - for any project - always take into account the following considerations:

- a) The impact on the local Community
- b) The results of a careful and objective analysis of the validity of claims made by the developer, with regard to the saving of greenhouse gases; *of the structural security of the proposed wind-turbines; of the estimates of construction and dismantling costs; and of the planned lifetime of the wind-turbines.*
- c) The degree of visual intrusion, relating this to the character and quality of the surroundings, *and notably the natural and built heritage*, bearing in mind that modern wind-turbines are eye-catching because they are very large (often over 125 metres high and steadily growing), and usually prominently placed. *Authorities concerned must have in mind that the visual intrusion of wind-turbines can never be clearly demonstrated by photomontages, however carefully they are made, because photomontages cannot illustrate movement. The true picture can only be given by computer-generated visualisations, which can do exactly that.*
- d) The supplementary and often irreversible damage to the landscape, sensitive habitats, water courses, and other aspects of the environment, caused by the demanding construction process, including the provision of large new access roads, *often through unspoilt countryside*; and the erection of turbine-pylons, *including construction of their substantial concrete supports.*
- e) *The similar damage caused by additional construction needed for electricity generation and transmission, including transformer stations and, most importantly, lines of pylons for transmission cables, also with concrete supports, which pylons can be massive in cases where High Tension (say 440 kv) cables are involved.*
- f) The degree to which restoration of the site to its original condition at the end of the working life of the wind-turbines – *which should be made an absolute condition for every development - is genuinely feasible, and can be effectively guaranteed, given that Local Authorities may have limited financial resources with which to police observance and pursue infringements.*
- g) The impact on, and proximity to, sites designated internationally, nationally, regionally or locally as protected areas.
- h) The impact, on *individuals and communities* in the vicinity of wind-turbines, of noise and infra-sound nuisance, light interception, potential structural collapse, and/or reduction of property values.
- i) An assessment of the need for back-up capacity when the wind-turbines are inactive – *given that the load factor (i.e. the proportion of theoretically potential output which can be actually produced) is in the great majority of cases less than 30% - which back-up will usually be fossil fuels, thus affecting the claimed benefits of the project in terms of greenhouse gas production and real production costs.*
- j) The need to treat “repowering” (i.e. replacing existing wind-turbines with larger ones) on the same basis as the original project.

As regards off-shore wind-turbines, or groups of wind-turbines, some but not all of the above considerations apply. *Europa Nostra* is concerned about the massive intrusion into the marine habitat envisaged in coming decades, which is likely to cause long-lasting and irreversible damage to the habitat; dangers for shipping and aircraft; and even threats to national security (due to radar-blocking.) Nonetheless, and subject to the foregoing considerations, the further out to sea a wind-turbine can be placed, the less it is likely to give rise to objections.

In adopting the above Declaration, the Council of Europa Nostra agreed that it should be sent to the Institutions of the EU & the Council of Europe, and to Governments of all European States, and distributed as widely as possible to Regional and Local Authorities.