

Tobias Salathé
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Subject: Recommendations by the Ramsar Mission to the Son Bosc area, adjacent to the ALBUFERA OF MALLORCA

Dear Mr Salathé,

As you well know, the Convention on internationally recognized Wetlands, and especially on the habitat of aquatic birds (Ramsar 1971), carried out a Ramsar assessment Mission (MAR number 68) affecting the lands of Son Bosc which are adjacent to the delimited Wetland of S'Albufera de Mallorca (Ramsar Wetland since the agreement of Ministers of Spain of the 28th of July 1989. The results of the MAR assessment (November 2010) strongly advised against the construction of the Golf Course which had caused much debate in the press and amongst interest groups and therefore led to this MAR taking place. The MAR assessment conclusions states a clear incompatibility between the projected Golf Course and the conservation of the protected area, and even strongly recommends changing the current conservation law to a much stricter one.

The MAR report coincides with the technical reports which confirm that “the Son Bosc area is an integral part of the Albufera ecosystem” and recommends: extending the protected area to at least the park limits of 2003 (recommendations 1, 3, and 7); encourages the preparations of the Natural Resource Planning Instrument (PORN) which was proved by the Government of the Balearic Islands on the 26th of February 2010; extending the current ZEPA area (approved by the Balearic Government on the 9th of July of 2010; and suggests extending the current area of the LIC (recommendation 9).

Similarly, the MAR claims immediate repeal of Law 9 / 2010, of the 27th of July, declaration of interest in the regional construction of the golf course on Son Bosc (recommendation 3), appealing to: the requirements of the law 42/2007, of December 13th, Natural Heritage and Biodiversity; items 6.1 and 6.2 of the Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive); as well as the precautionary principle governing environmental regulations, in accordance to internationally recognised and widely accepted criteria.

In line with the recommendations, the government concluded the declaration of ZEPA affecting a significant part of the Son Bosc lands (agreed by the Governing Council of the 25th of February 2011, published on March 15th, the corrected version was republished on the 20th of May and again on the 11th of June). This area is now

included in the European ecological network of Natura 2000 and therefore its protection/conservation is now mandatory for all public administrations. In addition, the Government was also processing the natural resource planning instrument of the Albufera wetland, including in its scope much of the Son Bosc area.

However, the end of the political mandate brought a change of government and with it a change of attitude towards the golf course project for Son Bosc. In several statements to local media, government officials and the majority party in government have said that the project will be restored, and that all recommendations concluded in the MAR report (which were initiated by the previous government) have now been fully paralysed. In fact, the popular group has avoided with his negative vote that the Environment Committee of the Parliament of the Balearic Islands approved a motion urging that the government complies with the recommendations of the MAR on the Albufera and Son Bosc, alleging, as the Minister has made public statements that they are mere "recommendations" without the ability to bind. Which, needless to say, causes us deep concern about the future of the area to be protected.

It is for this reason that I appeal to you. To request you to be highly vigilant of the state of play of this issue in order to contribute towards the fulfilment and commitments stated on the Convention on Wetlands on the Ramsar in reference to the Albufera of Mallorca, with a specific emphasis on ensuring the follow-up on the recommendations stated in the report of the Ramsar Mission Assessment which was dated in November 2010.

Sincerely,

Mr. Antoni Alorda,
MP of the parliamentary group PSM-IV-EXM at the Parliament of the Balearic Islands