FUTURE OF MAJOR TOURIST ATTRACTION AND CONSERVATION PROJECT IN FRANCE, VALLÉE DES SINGES, UNDER THREAT FOLLOWING FINAL APPROVAL OF WIND FARM PROJECT

Wednesday 5 February, 2014

The future of the Vallée des Singes (Monkey Valley) in the Vienne department of France is under threat following a decision by the Prefect of the Vienne to defy the results of a Public Enquiry and approve the development of a wind farm.

To date, the park has hosted more than 2.5 million visitors (exceeding 200,000 in 2013 alone) and is home to over 400 primates of 30 different species. Bonobos (a group of 17 individuals) are the latest residents to be introduced to the Vallée des Singes, they are exclusive to France and the largest troupe in the world.

The Vallée des Singes is home to many endangered species in their natural environment. Excellent results in terms of breeding make the Vallée des Singes world-renowned in the scientific community. These successes are not only the result of painstaking and passionate work but also due to the local environment remaining untouched by any visual or noise pollution.

But now, the future of the Park is doomed, with a wind power project being established less than 1.8 km away (8 turbines, 160 meters high) around the nearby villages of Romagne and Blanzay. A “ZDE” (translates as: Wind Turbine Development Zone) was signed by the Prefect in October 2011, completely ignoring the location of the monkey park, despite Directeur Général Emmanuel Le Grelle’s on-going protests to the Administration. Mr. Le Grelle asked for an exclusion zone to be extended to 3 km around park to protect the monkeys and visitors from noise and visual impact.

In May 2013 following the public enquiry , the Public Enquiry Commissioner issued an ‘unfavorable’ opinion on the project meaning that the project should not proceed (see reports on the following link): http

In June 2013, the Vallée des Singes and the owners of the nearby chateau, the Chateau d’ Épanvilliers, referred the case to the Prosecutor for criminal acts of illegal conflict of interest that would be committed by two local Deputies and a Councillor should the wind farm project go ahead. The case is on-going.

On 5 December, the Departmental Committee on Nature, Landscapes and Sites (CDNPS) gave the project approval.

On January 8, 2014, the Madame Prefect of the Vienne department signed the decree allowing the wind farm to operate, completely ignoring the findings of the Public Enquiry Commissioner. It is understood that this is the first time a Commissioner’s advice on outcome has been ignored.The park had already overcome challenges posed by its rural location in the South of the Vienne, (low population density, away from all major highways), to attract over 200,000 visitors a year, all of whom bring income into the local economy.

The location of the wind farm would rob the park of the few advantages it has (quietness, tranquility, landscape), which would certainly condemn the monkey park to closure. More than 50 jobs, mostly local people, are directly threatened while the wind project itself will create only one part-time job.

All possible alternatives are being sought to protect animals and visitors from suffering after the erection of the turbines. Dozens of wind turbines are about to be given the green light in the rural South Vienne department - why was the Vallée des Singes not spared?

Ends

Editors’ Notes

Founded in 1998, the Vallée des Singes is an innovative zoo. To implement its mission "Educate to Protect", the Vallée des Singes has developed a concept initially created in the Netherlands that allows the monkeys to roam the park without barriers (except for the Chimpanzees and Monkeys that have natural enclosures), an ideal system to balance the welfare of monkeys with the visitors’ enjoyment.

Media:









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Scan Me:

High resolution photographs are available to download
http://www.la-vallee-des-singes.fr/presse_prs_11_fr.html
Password: gorille (copyright Vallée des Singes) then ‘valider’

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If any of the documents in French require translating into English, please contact
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www.la-vallee-des-singes.fr

An online petition has been set up, which to date has reached nearly 5000 signatures.

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