

APS: Hedwigepolder: European Commission asks further information

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Dit is een origineel persbericht.

In response to the reactions in the Dutch media today, the European Commissioner Potocnik confirms that the European Commission has sent a letter to State Secretary Bleker on 13 October 2011 concerning the nature conservation and restoration measures in the Western Scheldt.

The European Commission expresses doubts over the scientific underpinning of the proposed new alternative package of conservation measures in the Western Scheldt, which must correspond to the urgent ecological requirements of the ecosystem with its deteriorated habitats and species, and result in an appropriate step to halt the still on-going deterioration of such habitats in the Natura 2000 site 'Westerschelde & Saeftinghe'.

It is to be noted that Member States do not need the formal approval of the Europe Commission of measures they take under Article 6(1) and 6(2) of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). Under EU law, it is for the competent authorities of the Netherlands to decide on possible measures and to achieve results that would be equivalent to a flooding of the Hedwige Polder. But any alternative to the flooding of the Hedwigepolder must be scientifically demonstrated to be a valid alternative for that project, realistic in terms of the timing and represent an equivalent of at least 100% of what had earlier been recognized both by the scientific Community and the competent authorities as a necessary package of restoration measures.

The European Commission has invited the Dutch Authorities to provide further information and will subsequently revisit the case after this has been received.

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