



Press release

Dutch Government ignores the interests of the historic fishing village of Urk; Urkers sing in protest

Urk/The Hague, 16 January, 2011 – The Dutch government, after approving a controversial windpark in the heart of the country, is being heavily criticized by its opponents. On February the inhabitants of Urk, location of the windpark, will sing against the windpark in the government premises, Het Buitenhof.

On 2nd February a choir of Urkers in traditional dress will be singing in front of the Parliament building in the Hague to protest the windpark. Jaap Kroon, Mayor of Urk, will be directing the choir. This initiative by the political party SGP is supported by the entire Urk community including Urk Briest, leading campaigners against the windpark since 2008. The songs for the occasion are written by the people of Urk.

Windpark Noordoostpolder, the biggest in The Netherlands, will be build on both side of the historical fishing town of Urk, in the protected lake area of the IJsselmeer. With windmills up to 7,5 MW it is an experimental project that raised controversy from the moment its details were released by the national media, in May 2008.

The movement against the windpark is led by the inhabitants of Urk, a former island, now part of the mainland. Urk feels ignored by its government and says it was never asked for its views and participation. Not for the first time in history, says Urk Briest.

The first time when the Dutch Government brushed aside the interests of the historic fishing village of Urk, situated on an Island in the then Zuiderzee lake, was 70 years ago. At that time, the Dutch reclaimed land from the Zuiderzee by creating polders. In due time the Urkers found themselves to be part of the mainland, without ever having been asked about their opinion, and without information or even access to the new fertile agricultural 'polders', and with the passage of their proud fishing fleet to the Zuiderzee and North Sea blocked for ever.

The Urkers, a proud, religious and laborious community, somehow coped with the situation, relocating their fishing fleet and making a miraculous economic recovery, while preserving their unique identity.

History is repeating itself in 2011. This time the Dutch Government is using its full executive powers to force upon the community a windmill-park. Again the Urkers have not been asked for their opinion. They had to find out through the national media that these 'windmills' are in fact buildings of nearly 200 meters high. The people of Urk conclude the tranquil waters and polder surrounding them will turn into a major industrial zone with 86 huge windmills. Landowning farmers of the nearby municipality of Noordoostpolder are getting large compensations, while no compensation, nor information on the impact for fisheries and tourism, bird life and noise pollution is presented to the Urkers. Their village and the entire heart of the country will undergo a tremendous, irreversible change, the Urkers claim.

The community of Urk is asking the Dutch Government how it is possible that local interest and concerns are overruled in such a blatant manner for a windpark which has such a destructive effect on their community and landscape. The Urkers on February 2 want their parliamentarians to provide them with clear answers.

Urk is united and says: "No Iron Curtain around Our Village!"

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