



France Nature Environnement – Fédération Rhône Alpes de Protection de la Nature – Commission Internationale pour la Protection des Alpes

OPEN LETTER TO THE IOC EVALUATION COMMISSION

to the attention of Gunilla Lindberg, Chairman

Annecy, February 1st, 2011

The IOC Evaluation Commission has now received the Annecy candidature file and is about to initiate the inspection visits to the sites selected for the winter Olympic events.

We, FNE¹, FRAPNA² and CIPRA³, are among the main environmental associations active in France and in the territories that would host the games in 2018. We want to bring to your attention a series of issues that are wrongly stated – or avoided – in the documents describing the Annecy project.

The project committee claims that “all of the players affected by the Bid are represented on Annecy 2018” (volume 1 page 46 and 48). This is wrongly stated. We are in no way “stakeholders of the project” and we do not support Annecy 2018 in its present form. We have been driven to leave this committee because of diverging opinions concerning the environmental impact of the project.

The first major issue is that, except for one, the specific areas impacted by the project are not well “protected from human activities” (volume 1 page 80), and that the offsetting measures we are calling for have neither been enforced, nor even contemplated in the project.

Under the IOC’s pressure, the number of locations has been drastically reduced. As a consequence, the foreseeable direct and indirect environmental impacts will therefore be concentrated on three major sites:

- the Mont-Blanc valley and plain (Chamonix and surroundings)
- the Semnoz plateau (Annecy)
- and above all the Aravis mountain range (La Clusaz and Le Grand-Bornand)

Whichever outcome might result for Annecy’s candidature, these sites – with strong to very strong environmental stakes – will become the focus of real estate investors and developers in the wake of the Annecy 2018 project. We want to avoid that.

¹ France Nature Environnement (<http://www.fne.asso.fr/>) strong of close to 3.000 environmental associations in France

² Fédération Rhône-Alpes de Protection de la Nature (<http://www.frapna-region.org/>), a member of France Nature Environnement

³ Commission Internationale pour la Protection des Alpes (<http://www.cipra.org/fr/CIPRA/cipra-france>)

In the documents that are submitted to your scrutiny, the environmental impact of the project is widely – in fact, knowingly – underestimated: impact on agricultural areas, on water resources, on fragile natural settings... This project will definitely induce an extremely strong pressure on our constrained mountain territories, and the purposeful oversight of concrete offsetting measures is a mistake we cannot endorse. Let us clarify some of the issues:

- **The Semnoz plateau:** located just above Annecy, this peri-urban area is meant to host the free style competitions. This limestone plateau, frequently extremely windy, has no water resources available. Bringing water up there from the lake, some 1 200 m below, would technically be very risky, if not impossible. As an alternative, creating an artificial water damming constitute a strong adverse impact on this fragile environment. The argument we have heard that a water reserve would, all of a sudden, become a need for cattle breeding is biased. For us, it is extremely clear that we would collectively fight against this kind of short-minded decision.

As an offsetting measure, we have requested that, outside of the snow park, this very vulnerable Semnoz area and its forests are legally protected through a contractual classification (Sensitive Natural Area⁴) or a statutory protection (Regional Nature Reserve or Biotope Protection order⁵). Nothing has been done so far.

- **Mont-Blanc plain (Passy or Le Fayet):** which include the only flat agricultural areas of Sallanches, Domancy, Passy and Saint-Gervais, constitutes the last ecological corridor of the Arve river valley. The stake is not only agricultural, but also biological, as a unique link between two main wildlife areas.

To compensate for the denser Chamonix urban area resulting from the Annecy 2018 project, and the corresponding urbanization pressure in the valley, we have proposed as an offsetting measure the protection of the Mont-Blanc plain through its classification as an Agricultural Protected Area⁶

- **The Aravis coombs of La Clusaz and Grand-Bornand:** from a landscape and also from a biological standpoint, these still preserved mountain natural areas can be considered as the backbone of the south part of the Haute-Savoie department. They are as emblematic as the Mont-Blanc range for our co-citizens. As for the Chamonix area, the real-estate and development pressure will get to a point where the coombs will be seen as lucrative targets – the last virgin areas to be equipped – as a collateral damage resulting from the Annecy 2018 project.

We are calling for the classification of the coombs (from Bellacha to combe des Verts inclusive) under the 1930 law on sensitive areas and landscapes. This protective status is rejected by the local municipal council, with arguments that we cannot, and will not accept.

In addition to these environmental issues, we have reasons to believe that the lack of a consistent leadership in the project, followed by the last minute appointment of a businessman as head of the Annecy 2018 project committee, is already fuelling speculative expectations from some of the project stakeholders, definitely bringing down the environmental protection measures that we are calling for.

⁴ Espace Naturel Sensible (ENS)

⁵ Réserve Naturelle Régionale (RNR) or Arrêté Préfectoral de Protection de Biotope (APPB)

⁶ Zone Agricole Protégée (ZPA)

We do fear that the file you have in your hands, under these circumstances, is not much more than a “green-washing” exercise, far from the “exemplary games whose legacy will be a blueprint for the mountains of the 21st century” (volume 1 page 91) that the organizers pretend to push forward.

Through the present open letter, we do request that concrete protective measures are taken by the respective authorities, prior to the IOC decision next July, as a demonstration of their genuine interest in the exemplarity of the Annecy candidature.

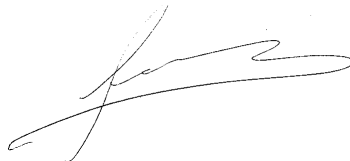
Falling to get these official commitments, we, environmental associations, will fight the project by all necessary means, in France and outside.

With the sincere hope that clear-sighted decisions will result from your visit,

Yours sincerely,



Bruno GENTY
President
FNE



Eric FERAILLE
President
FRAPNA



Patrick LE VAGUERESE
President
CIPRA-FRANCE

Media relations

Isabelle Bermond
+33 (0) 4 50 67 16 16