

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3539/03  
by Chris Davies (ELDR)  
to the Commission

Subject: Windfarms in EU special areas of conservation

The construction of electricity-generating windfarms can cause some significant and permanent damage to fragile habitats such as upland peat moorland. They require the building of service roads, and as much as 300 tonnes of concrete may have to be laid in deep pits in order to support the new generation of wind turbines.

There is also concern that in some locations wind turbines can kill very significant numbers of rare birds.

The range of measures available to most Member States to reduce energy consumption and increase the supply of electricity from renewable sources, together with the fact that the individual contribution of each windfarm to national electricity consumption is usually very small indeed, surely means that it is difficult for any Member State to justify the siting of windfarms in special areas of conservation on the grounds that they are of overriding national importance.

In what circumstances does the Commission believe that there would be grounds to challenge the construction of one or more windfarms within EU special areas of conservation on the grounds that they breach the intentions of the Habitats Directive?

What, if any, guidelines has the Commission issued on this matter?

In view of the fact that most SACs have yet to be declared by the Commission, and yet construction of windfarms is proceeding rapidly in many Member States, what steps can be taken to prevent irreversible damage being done prior to formal SAC declaration?