



CURLEW FORUM

*Conserving Curlews in
Lowland and Southern Britain*

Virginijus Sinkevičius
European Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries
European Commission
Brussels

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Dear Commissioner

The Curlew Forum brings together researchers and field-workers, mainly from the United Kingdom, but with extensive contacts in other countries, because of the migratory nature of the Eurasian Curlew and other waders with which it associates. More information on the Forum's activities is available from the website www.curlewcall.org.

The Forum has been alerted by colleagues in Portugal to the proposal to build a second Lisbon airport at the Montijo/Samouco military air base; it is surrounded by the Tejo Estuary, the second most important wetland in Iberia, and designated as a Ramsar Site and Special Protection Area. It holds internationally important numbers of wintering shorebirds (at least 200,000 individuals), including Eurasian Curlews which roost or feed within or near the military base.

Curlew Forum understands that the Portuguese government has held a consultation on the subject, during which the objections greatly outnumbered the expressions of support; there has been considerable criticism of the Environmental Impact Assessment carried out on behalf of the Portuguese Environment Agency. It seems that permission to go ahead with the proposal would contravene many aspects of European Union legislation, notably the Birds and Habitats Directives, as well as being in breach of multiple other international obligations.

The Curlew Forum therefore requests you to intervene with the Portuguese authorities to prevent this major degradation and disturbance factor affecting one of the most important protected wetlands along the Atlantic coast of Europe, used by migratory Eurasian Curlews breeding all over northwest Europe; this may well be the biggest threat to wetlands along the whole of the East Atlantic Flyway. The dangers of bird strikes at the site would surely be enough to make the proposal untenable.

The Curlew Forum remains at your disposal for any further information

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