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**'Harvesting wind with eyecatchers?'**

**advice of the Dutch Wadden Sea Council on the placing of wind turbines in the Wadden Region**

## **summary**

The Minister for Spatial Planning and the Environment, Mrs Dr J. Cramer, has asked the Wadden Sea Council to advise on the placing of wind turbines in the Wadden Region. The Minister would like to know how much scope current national policy, in particular the key planning decision Third Wadden Sea Memorandum offers for the placing of wind turbines in the Wadden Region, and the impact of wind turbines on how the region is perceived. The background to this question is the government's recent decision to work towards placing an extra 2000 megawatts of wind turbines nationally, in addition to the 1500 megawatts already placed in the Netherlands.

In view of the trend towards increasingly larger wind turbines, with shaft heights reaching as much as 80 to 120 metres, resulting in the turbines being visible over tens of kilometres, the Council judges that the national government should adopt a directing role, in cooperation with the provinces. The national government should also develop a national policy for the placing of wind turbines and of wind turbine parks. In its advice the Council subsequently provides an assessment of the permissibility of placing wind turbines in the light of the key planning decision Third Wadden Sea Memorandum. Up until now the planning permission policy has first and foremost been a matter for the municipal and provincial authorities.

The key planning decision only allows new highrise buildings on four locations along the Wadden coast, provided that they fit in the skyline. The key planning decision holds a separate case-by-case approach for wind turbines. The Council is of the opinion that wind turbines are high-rise buildings and that therefore the same policy should apply to wind turbines as to other buildings. The possible placing of the new generation of wind turbines must therefore be limited to Den Helder, Harlingen, Delfzijl and Eemshaven.

Large wind turbines can lead to bird fatalities in low numbers and disrupt bird migration routes. For that reason, the impact on birds must be taken into account when seeking suitable locations for wind turbines.

The Council then addresses the relationship between the placing of wind turbines and how the landscape is perceived. In that context the Council also makes reference to the opportunities offered by forms of sustainable energy other than wind energy.

Furthermore, the perception of the Wadden landscape must be established by means of a perception survey, also establishing how an optimum social return can be achieved, taking account of both the economic return and the experience value.

The Council does not confine itself to recommending a study, but also itself provides some pointers regarding the policy to be pursued. The Council advocates the clustering of wind turbines so that they can form a landmark in the landscape. For that reason the number of small out-of-date wind turbines present in the landscape must be cleared. Wind turbines form an industrial activity and fit in best in an industrial landscape, which must be subject to safety conditions. Furthermore, the wind turbines do not need to be permitted perpetually but for a limited period of time corresponding to the economic or technical life span of the turbines.

Finally, the Council would like to see the formulation of design criteria intended to integrate the wind turbine parks as closely as possible in the landscape and possibly to combine them with other spatial functions.