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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

40th meeting
Strasbourg, 30 November - 4 December 2020

Complaints on stand-by

**Possible negative impact on Breiðafjörður
Nature Reserve's authentic birch woods from
new road infrastructure
(Iceland)**

- REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT -

*Document prepared by
the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Iceland*

- August 2020 –

SHORT UPDATE ON COMPLAINT NO. 2017/06 - POSSIBLE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON BREIÐAFJÖRÐUR NATURE RESERVE'S AUTHENTIC BIRCH WOODS FROM NEW ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE.

It is with regrets that I inform you that the institute, IINH, have not been able to answer the Bureau before the deadline of 31st of July. IINH have been in contact with the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources of Iceland to obtain clear and timebound roadmap for the setting up of the Emerald Network etc. but a decision has not been taken on the matter.

IINH have earlier explained to the Bureau the status of the work already done by the IINH concerning mapping of habitat types and important bird areas etc. Based on that work the institute also proposed new protected areas in 2018 in relation to ecological network in context with Emerald Network. The proposals are still being processed according to the Nature Conservation Act.

The formal status of the road project, regarding the complaint on Breiðafjörður, is as described here below by Gunnlaugur and on that matter IINH refers also to its earlier answers on that subject where the institute have explained the process and its and the Planning Agency opinion on the matter e.g. in Environmental impact Assessment of the road project.

Hopefully the IINH will be able to give the Bureau an answer to its questions regarding Emerald Network very soon, as holidays are now mostly over. The IINH is still waiting for final decision from the ministry but the institute is in contact with the ministry to obtain a solution for setting up of the Emerald Network.

Best regards,

Trausti Baldursson

- February 2020 –

SHORT UPDATE ON COMPLAINT NO. 2017/06 - POSSIBLE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON BREIÐAFJÖRÐUR NATURE RESERVE'S AUTHENTIC BIRCH WOODS FROM NEW ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE.

The overall road building in Breiðafjörður is described in Gunnlaugur Péturson's comprehensive overview. The latest development in the process in Reykhólahreppur is that the municipality has sent out for comments a draft construction permit for the road construction according to route Þ-H. The municipality and the National Planning Agency accepted the master plan for the route Þ-H on 22 November 2019 and published 26 November 2019¹. As far as the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, IINH, knows a construction permit will be issued in near future. As the case stands now in Reykhólahreppur there is no longer any alternative routes in selection progress.

In the e-mail below from the Bern Convention, it says, "The Secretariat was also instructed to monitor the progress in the setting-up of the Emerald Network in the country, through the competent Group of Experts and the Standing Committee." The IINH sent a report on the matter dated sixth of August 2019. In April 2018 IINH proposed to the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources an ecological network of sites for protection of habitat types and important bird areas. The proposed sites are still in evaluation process at the Ministry and the Environment Agency of Iceland. A permission to submit the sites as proposed Emerald Network sites in SDF is therefore not in place. This process has been far longer than the IINH expected.

¹ The Master Plan Report can be accessed here (in Icelandic):
<http://skipulagsaatlanir.skipulagsstofnun.is/skipulagvefur/DisplayDoc.aspx?itemid=10637142537540807916>