



PRESS RELEASE

**BirdLife Cyprus condemns the decision by the Ministerial Council on the Akamas issue**

Nicosia, 13 January 2016

BirdLife Cyprus condemns the decision taken by the Ministerial Council on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2016, on the Akamas issue, which according to press reports includes:

- The declaration of a National Forest Park, which will include the whole State Forest and the public land in the Natura 2000 site, excluding all the private land.
- The preparation of a new local plan for the whole of the Akamas area from the Department of Town Planning and Housing within the next 18 months, and also the review of the previous decisions of the Ministerial Councils.
- The adoption and implementation of conservation and nature protection measures which are included in the management plan for the area, which was put to consultation, including those relating to privately owned land. Moreover, the decision included a provision for hiring a consultant in order to prepare suggestions for ways to promote the National Forest Park and also the management of the whole Natura 2000 area.

This decision contradicts the management plan for the Akamas area, and should have been taken after the approval of the management plan for the Akamas Site of Community Importance. It's worth noting that the management plan for the area, was carried out with public funds and went through a public consultation early in 2015. The final plan has not been adopted yet. Important provisions of this plan, included the absence of any 'development nuclei' within the Natura 2000 area and also the absence of public roads inside the area. The plan only includes provisions for improving the roads for management purposes. At the same time BirdLife Cyprus stresses its surprise for the reference to a second draft of the management plan- which was the subject of the public consultation, since there was never another draft management plan out in public.

This decision seems to open the way for a 'small scale' development inside the private land of the Natura 2000 area, even though the current town planning regulations do not allow any kind of development. Furthermore, this decision will lead to the fragmentation and paving over of the last natural coastal area of Cyprus, something that is expected to cause immeasurable consequences for the species and the habitats of the area, and of course for the unique landscape.

The decision of the Ministerial Council is not based on ecological or scientific criteria, and it seems only to serve the scope of some economic interests of the area. In parallel, it contrasts with the European environmental acquis and does not ensure the prosperity and the sustainable promotion of the local communities, the protection of biodiversity or the public interest.

BirdLife Cyprus will continue the fight for the effective protection of Akamas, along with other environmental NGOs in an effort to avoid the destruction of this important environmental heritage, called Akamas.

**ENDS**

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**Notes to the Editors:**

**1. BirdLife Cyprus** is a registered, non-governmental, not for profit organisation (NGO) that dedicates itself to the conservation of wild birds and their habitats in Cyprus. It was formed in 2003 through the merge of the two Cyprus Ornithological Societies and now has offices in Strakka, Nicosia comprised by professional staff. <http://www.birdlifecyprus.org/>