Title

A wind farm project soon to be approved by authorities in the North Aegean islands of Lesvos, Limnos and Chios in Greece is being questioned and can only be described as ‘self-destructive’ by the Hellenic Ornithological Society and the Society for the Protection of the Environment and Cultural Heritage. Indeed, 70% of the 353 planned wind turbines are located in Natura 2000 protected areas, which are world-famous for bird watching. Significant negative environmental and social impacts can already be predicted since this ecotourism destination will lose its ecological and cultural value, not to mention the great loss of income for the local communities. *“The installation of 353 wind turbines presents extremely serious problems and deficiencies regarding the protection of the landscape and cultural heritage, especially for Chios that has been hit hard by last summer’s forest fires”,* says Daphne Mavrogiorgou, Project Manager of the Society for the Protection of the Environment and Cultural Heritage.

Perfectly located at the crossroads between Asia, Africa and Europe, the North Aegean islands are visited by more than 4000 birdwatchers and nature-lovers each year. Eco-tourism focusing on the unique local birds and the magnificent biodiversity in the region generates more than three million euro annually. The authorities ignored the results of a public consultation that was conducted earlier this year and scientific evidence, which shows that the project takes inadequate consideration and is dangerous for two globally threatened species. Indeed, the two above-mentioned Greek NGO’s have already insisted on the fact that this project puts the Cinereous Bunting and Eleonora’s Falcon at risk by degrading their feeding and breeding grounds. Moreover, Greece holds great responsibility in the protection of these two species, since Lesvos is the only EU territory hosting the Cinereous Bunting and 85% of Eleonora’s Falcon’s global breeding population live in Greece. *“This wind farm project crosses the limits of ‘common sense’, and especially in times of crisis, when local communities really need their income to be stable. The decision of the Prefecture Committee is one to avoid, because it demonstrates how authorities can sometimes fail to prioritise long-term social and environmental planning over short-term profits. We hope that the final decision by the Ministry of Environment will be in the right direction”,* says Apostolis Kaltsis, President of HOS Board of Directors. Take action by joining the FaceBook group dedicated to the issue. For more information, please contact Elina Sarantou, Media and Communications Officer at the Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS/ BirdLife in Greece)