WILL YOU LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY FOR NATURE?

BirdLife Europe & Central Asia, EEB (European Environmental Bureau), Friends of the Earth Europe and WWF European Policy Office call on Commissioner Karmenu Vella to take decisive action in his remaining time as EU Environment Commissioner to improve the implementation and enforcement of the EU's world-leading nature laws – the Birds & Habitats Directives[1].

Tourism development: threats to the implementation and enforcement of the EU Birds & Habitats Directives

The #NatureAlert Countdown is on! But there is still time to take action to save threatened wildlife and habitats across Europe, such as the irreplaceable turtle-nesting beaches of Limni!

European biodiversity is in freefall. Major gaps in the implementation and enforcement of our nature laws are leaving nature dangerously exposed to serious threats from unsustainable tourism development – a major driver of biodiversity loss in Europe. Every year, millions of tourists flock to visit Europe's most stunning natural sites, excited to enjoy our sun-kissed beaches and beautiful countryside. But, all too often, tourism developments are trampling over protected nature and crowding out wildlife. Economic pressures are put ahead of saving Europe's precious natural heritage. We all enjoy visiting beautiful places, but to preserve them, tourism developments must be controlled. Sustainable tourism that works in harmony with nature conservation is possible and necessary.

SAVE THE TURTLES OF LIMNI, CYPRUS
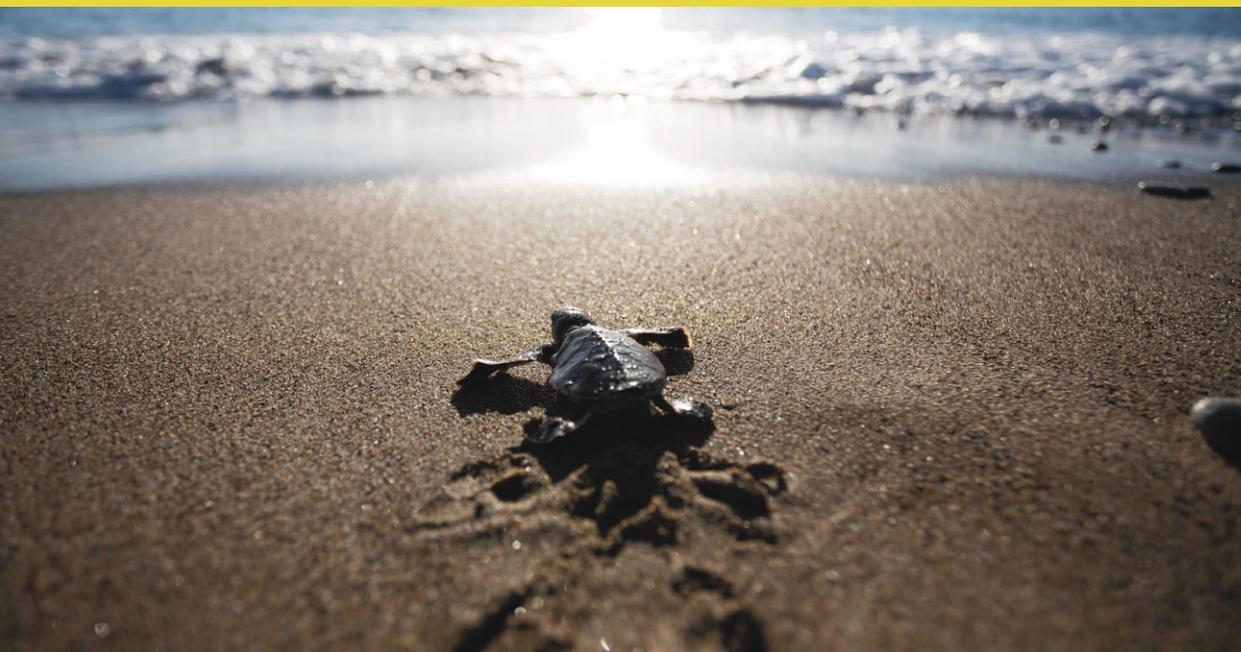
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Limni beach is a crucial breeding ground for Loggerhead turtles and a feeding ground for Green turtles. These turtles face a very high risk of extinction in the wild, and are strictly protected under EU law.
A controversial new tourism development, the Limni Bay Resort project, has been granted planning permission – involving two golf courses, a 160-room hotel and 792 residential villas adjacent to Limni beach. The increase in visitor numbers and light pollution will have a hugely detrimental impact on one of Europe's single most important sites for rare Loggerhead turtles to nest. It is estimated that a quarter of all Loggerhead sea turtle nests in Cyprus will be affected.

The Cypriot Urban Planning office gave the go ahead to the Limni Bay Resort back in August 2018 – but, critically, this green light does not include a vital 500 m no-build zone around the protected beach to safeguard the turtle nesting site – essential wildlife protection conditions that have been advised by both scientists and the European Commission.

Following a complaint to the EU (2014/4019), the European Commission issued a reasoned opinion in April 2015. But on 23 January 2019, Commissioner Vella decided to close the case, believing that proposed compromise mitigation measures with a much-smaller buffer zone – improve the project. NGOs maintain these mitigation measures are unrealistic and inadequate, almost definitely damaging the potential for rare turtles to breed. The 'Limni Bay Resort' development has now fallen into the hands of the Bank of Cyprus, after the development company fell into administration; however with the building permission granted, the iconic turtles of Limni are still at threat.

[1] January 2019, 'Joint Policy Brief on the Implementation and Enforcement of the Birds & Habitats Directives'

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The #NatureAlert countdown is on!
Will you, Commissioner Vella, leave a lasting legacy for nature?

Please support our call for the European Commission to re-open the Limni bay case against Cyprus and come out with a strong ruling against this environmentally destructive development.

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