

PRESS RELEASE

MP Tjeerd van Dekken will be asking questions in the Dutch Parliament about “this bizarre plan.”

EDF disgraces itself with weak presentation about plans for gas storage in Pieterburen.

The inhabitants of Pieterburen, Eenrum and the surrounding area have massively declared themselves against EDF’s plans to build an underground gas storage facility in Pieterburen. Member of Parliament Tjeerd van Dekken, who was present at the meeting, will be asking questions about “this bizarre plan” in the Dutch House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer).

Approximately three hundred local residents attended the information meeting. Among them were representatives of the provincial government, the major, several aldermen and council members of the De Marne council, as well as various environmental groups. Member of the Provincial Executive, William Moorlach, kicked off the meeting with the statement that the province is against underground gas storage in this area, especially as the province is in favour of developing tourism here. His words were met with an overwhelming applause.

At the meeting, EDF (Electricité de France) gave a presentation which was, according to action committee Pieterburen Tegengas (Pieterburen Against Gas), extremely inadequate, leaving most questions unanswered. The presentation also made clear that EDF will not be taking the opinions of the province, local government and residents into account in their decision whether or not to persist with the project.

Various technical details were disclosed: EDF plans to fill ten salt caverns with a total volume of 600 million cubic metres of natural gas, the site above ground will cover 5 hectares and the storage installation should start operating in 2019.

Local residents, who came to the meeting en masse, repeatedly questioned the need for EDF to carry out this project, but the EDF kept evading the question: “because there are salt caverns here.” Taken aside, a representative of EDF admits that the company is just in it to make even more profits.

At the meeting, Theatre group Tegengas sang “Pieterburen is in Sackcloth and Ashes... because of EDF and its greed...” Pieterburen’s newly-established protest theatre instantly got the audience quiet as a mouse. The remainder of the evening was chaotic, even though most of the people present behaved respectfully despite their anger towards their host, EDF.

Out of protest, Anne-Marie Smits, action committee Pieterburen Tegengas’ chair person, left the meeting before the end. The action committee feels that it is not being taken seriously. Out of thirty substantive questions, which were handed in prior to the meeting, only a few were answered. EDF showed a PowerPoint presentation with a film about a temporary drilling project, while everyone present was worried about the exploitation and storage phase. “We, as party involved, have studied the literature and have asked fundamental questions. EDF promised to discuss them during the information meeting.

I do not know whom they sent to us, but we are better informed than they are,” spoke the disappointed Smits to RTV Noord’s cameras afterwards.

When EDF’s Michel Bellec and his colleagues did come up with answers, it was to say that the light pollution “would not be so bad”, “a logistic plan would be developed” for the extra traffic, the installation above ground “would be made as compact as possible”. The concept of damage due to planning had to be explained to them instead of vice versa. And so the list continues.

If the project is to take place, EDF will have to drain off billions of cubic metres of salty waste water. One of the possibilities, EDF-engineer Roel Woudstra said shamelessly, would be to dump it all (a volume of 800 to 1000 cubic metres per hour) in the Wadden Sea. Pieterburen Tegengas sees this as an unprecedented lack of respect for the environment. The Wadden Sea is a wildlife refuge and UNESCO World Heritage site.

At the meeting, EDF guaranteed that the salt caverns will not be used for the storage of nuclear waste. The action committee is pleased with this promise, but it does not change their point of view.

During the meeting, the Natuur- en Milieufederatie Groningen (Federation for Nature and Environment) pronounced themselves against the project. “The Netherlands already has five gas storage facilities. There is no need for this one.”

Tomorrow, Tjeerd van Dekken, labour party MP, will be asking questions in the Dutch House of Representatives about, as he termed it, “this bizarre plan.”

Preceding the meeting, Pieterburen’s inhabitants held a protest march from the village to the hall where the meeting was held. En route, the participants were cheered on enthusiastically by bystanders from Pieterburen and Eenrum.

Pieterburen, October 18th, 2010.

Note to the editor, not for publication:

A photo for this press release can be found on <http://pieterburen-tegengas.nl>

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