



Bund für  
Umwelt und  
Naturschutz  
Deutschland



## **Press release BUND and SDW 15th May 2013**

### **Waiting for a bad decision**

### **BUND and SDW: Don't sacrifice the trees**

### **Environmental organizations ready to sue against a sports hall in waterside woodland**

Oberursel's Building and Environmental Council is due to meet on Wednesday 22 May 2013 and it is likely to vote in favour of the construction of a sports center for the Frankfurte International School (FIS). That's the information that has reached the environmental organizations BUND and SDW. This would be a decision against one of the best preserved riparian forests (woodland areas of land adjacent to a body of water) in the Taunus. Parts of the water system of the river Ursel will be relocated, which means that the Hessian water authorities and the Hessian environmental authorities will be involved. This river relocation will require a lengthy planning and approval process.

The SPD and the CDU intend to vote for the public disclose of the construction plan, in the knowledge that the local environmental department (Untere Naturschutzbehörde) has made clear that the plan in its current form, which requires an override of the environmental protection guidelines, will not be approved. Dr Dr Dieter Selzer, head of the department, stated this clearly during a closed-session meeting on 25th April in the town hall, but nevertheless Mayor Brum seems to be distorting the facts. It looks as though he intends to use questionable claims and assumptions to persuade the city representatives to vote for a construction plan that is not going to be implementable. Christoph von Eisenhart Rothe, Hessian Managing Director of the SDW, thinks that this is not just a waste of taxpayers' money. It's also a case of Oberursel giving in to blackmail by the FIS; the school is threatening to leave the town if its extension plans fall through.

The BUND Hochtaunus and the SDW Oberursel will use all legal means to stop this construction plan, which threatens to destroy the waterside woodland and its natural springs. Peter Gwiasda, deputy chair of the BUND Hochtaunus, thinks that things will escalate if the city grants a premature building approval and trees are thereby put under threat. The school, which is the biggest international school in Germany, is already doing its reputation no good by trying to disregard environmental protection laws. Dr Rüdiger Wittig, Professor of Biology, has already recommended the school to turn its fantastic natural surroundings into a selling point.

If the FIS does decide to take independent advice and have a neutral assessment of alternatives, building could start this year. It's possible to build without encroaching on any biotopes or springs, without any requirement for the provision of agricultural compensation areas, without felling a single tree. The sports centre could be build underneath one of the existing sports grounds. The Gymnasium Oberursel and the Grundschule Mitte already have underground or semi-underground

sports halls which fully meet all legal requirements.

The BUND and the SDW cannot understand why the politicians and the FIS insist on what is both the most environmentally destructive and the most expensive option. In the closed-session meeting in April, external experts presented their findings. Prof. Wittig confirmed the unique nature of the woodland by the school. The external experts for the city and the FIS (Firma Hydrodata) concluded, in a somewhat contradictory analysis, that the sports centre building would be acceptable. Their report included a statement about water conditions under the sports field, although this was not included in their survey.

The SDW and the BUND call on the politicians to check the following before they vote:

- Will the local environmental authority approve the plan to build in the woodland?  
No, as there is no evidence that alternatives have been investigated.
- Are there alternatives to the location favoured by the FIS and Mayor Brum?  
Yes, there are at least 2 alternatives that were not assessed.
- Do these alternatives offer facilities for all the sports at the FIS?  
Yes. Moreover this would mean that an existing sports ground would remain untouched.
- Do the alternatives meet the FIS security standards?  
Yes, they are on the FIS campus, which is secured.
- Do these alternatives require moving the river?  
No. this means that the lengthy planning stage is not needed, the whole process can go faster, and the building works could start this autumn.
- Is it true that ground water levels prevent the building of a semi-underground sports centre below the upper sports ground?  
Ground water has not been assessed. The sports ground already has drainage.
- Is the upper sports ground built on rock?  
That's an assumption by the mayor. It has not been verified.
- Is the woodland site the only one that Oberursel sports clubs would be able to use?  
No. The other locations would be easier to reach. So far there has been no evidence that non-school organizations would want to use it anyway.
- Have the authorities for historic buildings and for highway construction excluded any of the possible options?  
No. They have indicated that they are open to discussions.

For questions, please contact

For the Schutzgemeinschaft Deutscher Wald (SDW)

Landesverband Hessen e.V.

Christoph von Eisenhart Rothe

Managing Director

cellphone: 0175-20 74 54 0

for the BUND Kreisverband Hochtaunus

Dr. Claudia von Eisenhart Rothe

Chair

cellphone: 0175-56 70 228