

As usual, intransigence and vagueness

The management of the Gasques circuit SCI (property company *) probably thought they would surprise the Mayor of Gasques by submitting a second “interim suspension” (provisional suspension of the Mayor of Gasques’ veto of the circuit *) on the 28th of June last. With no warning, just before the holiday period. The attempt was certainly meant to be clever and disconcerting. Fortunately it did not succeed. We should remember that this is the third application made in a few months (the first one was not an “interim suspension”), the aim being to obtain a provisional permission to build the circuit, BEFORE the main court ruling which is due to be made at the end of this year or the beginning of 2014. On July 23 the judge **rejected** again this second “interim suspension” application. To justify their new request, the petitioners offered these new elements (extract of the judge’s ruling):

A study undertaken by the *Imagin’aires* agency to produce a virtual image of the controversial car circuit as it would appear in the near and immediate environment. This document misrepresents in 2 ways. It portrays the circuit as being lined with numerous trees and in such a way that the macadam sections could be mistaken for normal roads.

An affidavit by the court bailiff Me Garros on April 26th 2013 to help the judge grasp the distances between the proposed location of the circuit and certain relevant points of the area. This affidavit establishes that the circuit could not possibly be seen from the commune of Gasques, the photo produced at the first court hearing having been taken from a hot air balloon.

Details from “Google Earth” giving calculations of distances between the circuit and the relevant points, show its very limited impact on the countryside and noise levels.

If the whole thing weren’t so serious, we could have appreciated the irony of the situation. In fact, calling upon the *Imagin’aires* agency to produce a virtual image of what the circuit would be like, is the product of unusual humour. Unintentional humour? Furthermore, everyone of course will appreciate how relevant and trustworthy these so called new elements are. In addition to these quibbles the petitioners again refer to the deplorable financial state of the Gasques SCI, brought about by the refusal to allow the circuit. As usual, the SCI management is not forthcoming, even silent about its income and its connection to the Societe Civile d’Exploitation du Carme (smallholding *) of which they are also directors and partners.

After examining the different court rulings and after long and meticulous internet research, this is how we understand the situation:

The Gasques circuit SCI in 2008 acquired a 130 hectare property, a chateau, an orangery, a farm (where the holder pays rent in kind *) and a dwelling. To pay for it a loan of 147,000 euros was obtained involving a monthly repayment of 8,000 euros. The SCI had also to pay the cost of obtaining various reports and the usual expenses incurred by any business.

The SCEA of Carme (agricultural company*) farms a hundred odd hectares which it does not own, but there is no mention of rents paid to the SCI owners. The SCEA sells its production and obtains funds from the Common Agricultural Policy scheme.

It is made to appear that only the SCI bears the cost of acquiring the land and that at the same time only the SCEA benefits.

Our Association finds all this hard to believe, very vague and to say the least lacking in clear, precise details. The case presented by the circuit owners (SCI) of the difficulties they are

encountering and later its possible bankruptcy, are they not deliberately orchestrated or made to look worse to demonstrate the urgency of the situation? We can justifiably ask these questions. To any one examining the case, other questions also come to mind. How can the management at this level not have been aware of the time needed and the difficulties involved in carrying out such a project? Why did the petitioners take 2 years to lodge their planning application? And why would they be likely to go bankrupt after a few months of delay? Did they not foresee the possibility of unknown factors? Why don't they mention the costs involved in the building of the circuit (around 15 to 20 million euros)? Do they have access to this sum or will they have to obtain a further loan? If the situation is so catastrophic, which bank would grant such a loan in these circumstances? If on the contrary they have the necessary funds, how can they be in financial straits?

As we can see, many questions remain unanswered and we were very pleased that the judge in chambers, having listened to the comments of the Commune de Gasques, was not convinced by the explanations of the applicants and rightly rejected them. We are deeply concerned at these continued attempts to force the issue and we note again the vagueness over certain aspects of the project and the many inconsistencies in the explanations they give. In a later article we will deal with other vague aspects of the project to build the Gasques circuit. Well aware of the irreversible environmental damage it would cause, we remain more than ever alert and determined to stop this project.

The Committee.

*translator's note.