

‘Bulletin El Puente’

Bridging Cultures to Protect Nature - Issue 4 June ‘20



And they’re off!

June 1st marked the beginning of the period in which the public can voice their objections to the *convenio* (the agreement proposed between the Larios and the Ayuntamiento) by lodging an *alegación* at the Council. The various groups, as well as several key individuals associated with the campaign, have not been slow to respond in getting their objections aired.



First in were GENA (*el Gabinete de Estudios de la Naturaleza de la Axarquía*), sister organisation to *Ecologistas en Acción*, whose representative Rafael Yus went public with their 16-point objection to the plan. Town councillor Nieves Atencia responded via Facebook, condemning GENA’s use of the media and reassuring the public that not only will the Ayuntamiento be “scrupulous in observing the environmental protection laws,” but also that the Plan Larios is “a great project that will dynamize the local economy and provide employment.”

On Friday 5th it was the turn of Miguel Bueno Jimenez, who has written and researched extensively on Maro and other local issue (as well as working with the *Asamblea Maro no se Toca*). He presented his *alegación* with a group of around 15 supporters, including locals, visitors from Malaga and Sevilla, and a handful of foreigners.



Miguel Bueno Jimenez gets a final signature from *Mareña*, MariCarmen Casanova Muñoz, before submitting his *alegación* to the Council.

As El Puente goes to press, the Plataforma and Asamblea Maro no se Toca are preparing to submit their own *alegaciones* and are encouraging others to have a go as well. The cut off date is the **26th June** – so if you want to let your local representatives know how *you* feel about the deal being proposed between the Larios and the Council, check out the guide (in Spanish) here:

<https://noalplanlarios.wixsite.com/plataforma/guia-alegaciones>

and the handy template below:

https://f3431ce0-d274-4822-8ba5-10b9428a3f6e.filesusr.com/ugd/8a9436_1aa2940ee71d4a3b8bfd45d16a4e03cf.pdf

You can't eat Golf Balls!

What's food got to do with the Larios campaign? More than you'd think! Read on...

Whilst a few rich folk are planning to concrete over Maro with a golf course, luxury houses and elite hotels, an estimated quarter of Nerja's population has been experiencing food insecurity during the Covid crisis. Widespread unemployment resulting from the closure of hotels, restaurants and shops in a town that is heavily reliant on tourism has created an unprecedented demand at the local food bank. *Nerja Solidaria*, which serves 65 families in normal times, could not cope with the massive increase, so Nerja's Social Services stepped in with daily food distributions to a total of 1,500 families per week during the peak of the crisis. Fortunately, demand is decreasing as people return to work but there are still record numbers of people relying on the service.

The *Nerja Maro Via Comida Foodlink* was born when Judy Rust, an American/Belgian who has been living part-time in Nerja since 2017, explored the possibility of connecting growers in Maro, who sometimes have a surplus of certain produce, with families in Nerja who need support.

With a little help from her friends, and a lot of goodwill from a handful of farmers in Maro, Judy crowdfunded enough to subsidise a couple of months' worth of deliveries of fresh fruit and veg - some of it organic - to Servicios Sociales for daily distribution to those in need.



Judy and friends help unload fresh food from Maro farmers to Nerja's *Servicios Sociales*

Though the crowdfunding stage is complete, it's hoped that the Via Comida established between Nerja and Maro will continue beyond the crisis. If you want to find out more and support local, small scale farming in Maro please visit their FB page:

<https://www.facebook.com/MaroNerjaViaComida>

If all this isn't proof enough of the value of our agricultural land as a source of local food then I don't know what is; or, as one critic of the Larios plan put it recently, 'You can't eat golf-balls!'

Watch the Birdie pt. 1

With more than 70 golf courses, the Costa del Sol - or 'Costa del Golf' as its promoters have rebranded it - is one of the world's hotspots for the game. But can the region cope with the environmental impact of another course?

The Costa del Sol, on the coastal strip that runs from Sotogrande to Nerja, has 74 of Spain's more than 400 golf courses and, according to Francisco Salado, the region's President of Tourism, "generates an economic benefit of 1,410 million euros per year". It's been estimated that golf tourists generate four times more income than a normal tourist. Malaga's climate and highly developed infrastructure have made the region a favourite not only for regular players but also for prestigious tournaments like the Ryder Cup, the World Cup and the Spanish Open.

With figures like these, it's not surprising that Larios and Nerja's Ayuntamiento might want to cash on in the game - especially as the Axarquía has only 2 courses: Añoreta, in Rincón de la Victoria, and the troubled Baviera Golf at Caleta de Vélez. But at what cost?

According to a 2011 online report from www.nuevatribuna.es “the water consumption of a tourist is double that of the habitual resident of the area,” and that “the tourist activity that consumes the most water is that of golf courses.” The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) says “golf courses are threatening important habitats and the fragile water balance of the ecoregion” and puts the area in “critical/endangered” category.

It’s been claimed that the Maro project will use water from the newly-built *depuradora* (water treatment plant) and that the area is fed by unlimited water from the mountains, but should we really be relying on those claims? Estimates of the thirst of the average 18-hole golf course vary between one and a half and four million litres per day. To put this into context, an article on the website of the trusted American broadcaster NPR (National Public Radio) states that “each course each day in Palm Springs consumes as much water as an American family of four uses in four years”. Each *course*, each *day*! Think about that for a moment...

Of course, the real driver behind the Larios plan is not so much the golf course as the luxury housing/hotel development that comes with it. But that, as they say, is another story. Until then, we can practice the first official protest song (to the tune of Amy Winehouse’s ‘Rehab’):

***They wanna build another golf course, we say ‘No, no, no!’
We’re up for a change but no driving range, so ‘Go, go, go!’***

In the next Bulletin – What’s the Alternative?

It’s all very well to be against the Larios plan – but what do we want instead? Amongst the new initiatives emerging from the campaign is an *encuesta* (survey) to canvas local opinion. We find out what people are saying.

Also, in the next El Puente we talk to some local visionaries who have suggested alternative uses for the old Sugar Factory and the land around it, and we hear about a family struggle within the Larios dynasty which might just play in our favour. Til then, *hasta luego*!



“Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished” – Lao Tzu

This is the fourth in a series of updates on the campaign to protect Maro and encourage community action towards a more sustainable culture. The views are personal and do not reflect the opinions of other individuals or groups unless where stated and permission has been given. Permission to use photos and graphics has been sought where possible. Quotes have sometimes been translated from other languages.