



# Analysis of the UTN file concerning the extension of the Les Carroz Leisure Centre.

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 Translation, thanks to Michael Jackson

**23 July 2018 - Workbook**

We have already written several texts about this project that we profoundly disapprove of. At long last we have been able to consult the file, which up to now has been held secret, and so now possess an objective view of its contents. The main elements concern a golf and building developments.

<p><b>The Context</b></p> <p><b>Availability of the UTN file:</b> We cannot accept the excuses advanced by the village hall for not providing access to the file before the enquiry was to begin. Especially for file that is completed and supposed to be public from the moment it has been sent to the Préfet de Massif. The Préfet de Massif took his decision for the file to be made public on ...June 27th., after having studied the file that he had (supposedly )received well before hand, and therefore the file could have easily been made available as from June 28<sup>TH</sup>. We wonder what this wilfull withholding of information could mean. The UTN consultation relates exclusively to the project described in the file, and is linked to <b>public communal information</b>. We are open to discussion, and had the file been made available earlier together with a desire for dialogue, then certain points could have been settled. Unfortunately this has not been the case.</p>
<p><b>The context of Construction development.</b> Construction development in Flaine must now slow down. Our Association Flainoise is totally opposed to construction development other than that already programmed by the UTN Decree of 2003, that was modified in 2008. An important point raised in the golf file is the eventual building project to be set right in the central part of the Flaine Golf course. Twice already, during the Annual Greetings of January 29th, and at the meeting to present the PADD on March 15th, a summarized presentation of this project was made where the main points appeared to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 30 000 m2 Buildable gross floor area for the parking lot, the Club House and the golf Practice area.</li> <li>- a commitment to hand over to the SIF the proceeds of the land sales. This promise made publicly in front of esteemed witnesses (Sous-Préfet, Region..) also included the extension of the Gérats, in all about 40 000m2. With a price of roughly 440€/m2, this works out at 18M€. This has never been confirmed in any <u>deliberation of the municipal council</u>.</li> <li>- there would be no impact on the PLU, this would only be done through a UTN.</li> </ul> <p>This was never discussed during the PLU reunion of June 28th. It is out of the scope of the PLU. <i>Update. At the Communauté de Communes Council meeting of July 19th 2018, the Arâches' delegate indicated that the Funiflaine was linked to a construction project of an extra 47 000 m2. This project has not only been retained but has increased in size.</i></p>
<p><b>Funiflaine impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the Funiflaine will only take up the space of two golf greens (cf.Marc lochum during the PLU reunion), these could easily be replaced nearby – the choice however of the mayor of Araches is to use Greens 12 to 18 to build tourist public reception areas.</li> </ul>
<p><b>CRITICISM of the FLAINE GOLF COURSE</b></p>
<p><b>Flaine Golf Course running costs</b></p>

In our opinion the amount advanced today is over rated. It probably includes the total costs related to all the part-time employees that work on the course.

Saturday 14, on the way to play golf, one of the writers was overtaken by a gardener driving up to the golf course. Therefore he must have been working on the green areas in the resort.

Its nonetheless true that the actual running of the golf course is voluntary, or at a low rate for those that are paid, and that the situation cannot be envisaged to endure.

A simplified operation should not cost a great deal, but implies the use of personnel specially trained in the running and upkeep of golf courses, particularly at high altitudes and that start their interventions before the snow has completely melted. Proper commercial support is also really lacking, without even a website to provide basic information. For AF, a fair return of (Flaine) taxes from the Araches Municipality would probably take care of a small deficit, taking into account the revenue provided by golfers who come to Flaine to play. At the moment this is simply a dream, since the Araches Municipality keeps hold to far too many funds.

**The Flaine Golf Course is too difficult.** This is hardly the problem. No effort is made for the visitors, the golf course layout is very badly indicated, and this makes it difficult for a newcomer to find their way without becoming lost or without much useless effort. If funds had been regularly invested in the upkeep of this golf course over the last 30 years, today it would be possible to use golf carts and thereby allow access to players who dread too much physical effort. At present, the low quality unprofessional maintenance puts off our visitors.

Testimony : *ten days ago I went to Breuil- Cervinia (at the foot of the Cervin, in the Aoste valley). Maintenance was good for a high altitude golf course (2050m), directions were easy to follow, and although the club-house was not high class, the steep terrain was there (it began as a 9 green golf course 50 years ago, and was upgraded to 18 greens in 2009).*

**The future for Flaine Golf Course.** The mayor never mentions the qualities of Flaine's golf course, and only underlines its problems, mainly related to the serious lack of funding over the past 20 to 30 years (the mayor's parable during his presentation of the PLU).

For Flaine, if the golf was properly maintained, and used synthetics for some teeing grounds and greens (as programmed for the planned Carroz golf course), we could open from the 15th of June until the first snows on the ground (towards mid-November)\*. At present we can already enjoy wonderful golf here in October, even though the golf is considered closed. So the golf as is, already fulfils the criteria for diversification that the mayor demands.

A golf course should provide formative training. The training classes for children at Flaine provide good results. No doubt the technical difficulties of the golf course account for this.

\* In no way do we defend the idea of synthetic greens that create environmental problems and are rejected by some golfers. We must, however, compare comparable elements.

## **DETAILS OF THE 9 HOLE GOLF COURSE of the Leasure Centre project**

### **Different qualities of the golf project**

We heard the following from several golf players : "I would never choose a 9 hole golf course as a holiday destination. 9 holes are fine for a quick game after work, when the golf course is only ten to fifteen minute drive away, maximum."

Most 9 hole golf courses are set close to urban areas and allow for the training of beginners and for playing golf during the workweek. For this reason they are obviously enjoy full attendance. We doubt the feasibility of a 9 hole golf course like that of Morzine-Avoriaz or of Valserine in the Jura (at an altitude more like that of Arâches at 1100m ). A golf player on holiday will be more likely looking for an 18 hole golf course. The few residential golf players of Les Carroz and Cluses basin will not guarantee the project's profitability.

We are sceptical of the length of opening periods announced, that are much longer than that of similar golfs.

### **The coexistence the golf with other activities (walkers, mountain bikers, horse riders...).**

Playing golf has its dangers, and is not compatible with having walkers around, yet some wish to make us accept that this will be possible on the Araches commons. The French Golf

Federation (FFG) runs prevention campaigns specially for the golf maintenance teams and incites them to great caution. How then to manage walkers that have no awareness of the dangers?

On page 213 we find : "the "paths will be fenced in and made secure". Who will want to go for a walk behind « secure fences" ?

We also question ourselves about :

- the coexistence between non-golf players.
- the impact of the noise and disturbing movement of walkers, mountain bikers and horsemen around those trying to play golf ?
- the « partly removeable fences » will have a strong negative impact on wildlife. The local hunters are totally against interfering with this game reserve which must be protected.

**Cross country skiing.** There will not be enough snow for cross country skiing. Maintenance of the cross country skiing tracks of Lay was abandoned some 10 to 15 years ago, for lack of snow !

### **The impact of the Araches project on Flaine's Golf Course.**

We received a clear answer in March 2018 : this will depend on financial results, Marc lochum having committed himself to making investments to ensure improving management. Today, we don't know what to believe, we have no confidence at all in the transparency of an operator of the mutualized exploitation, especially if it happens to be the SOREMAC especially because of their close relationship with the municipality.

And with buildings replacing the Club-House, the parking lot and the golf practice area, it's a foregone conclusion. Flaine's golf course is condemned to disappear.

## **THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

**Impact on Fauna.** The idea of developing the leisure center is to attract more visitors, but this is harmful to the preservation of wildlife. The Carroz Common is a wildlife passageway, and how will a golf coexist with wild boars ? One has to also take into consideration the protection of rare and protected species. The file also mentions the woodland is unfit for wildlife food supply. In fact the animals go onto the common at night to feed and return to the woods during daytime to hide and rest. This is a planned destruction of their habitat.

**Impact on Flora.** We note that most golfs are considered as areas without flowers, and can therefore hardly be considered as places where natural flora is protected (even less so with synthetic greens!).

We are stunned by the conclusions of the UTN file on pages 216/217 :

*"the flower procession is not marked by any important issue, no protected, rare, or special species, or important conservational issues, are at stake or have been discovered on the site being surveyed.*

*An exotic intrusive plant has been observed on the site being surveyed. This is the Annual Vergerette (Erigeron annuus)"*

And concludes with: *"the main incidence of the implementation of the project will be the suppression and modification of a plant surface of little interest".*

At the public reunion to present the PLU, a botanist of renown (Denis Jordan) claimed quite the opposite while providing solid facts. Watch the video : <https://youtu.be/a0ZF0zmGdqQ>

### **Funding of the projet**

UTN file page 326 : funding through bank loans for the golf, and sale of land to the developer for the constructions.

5800 m<sup>2</sup> of land at 320 €/m<sup>2</sup> yields 1,856 M€ to be used to finance to golf course.

Total golf course Budget : 5,5 M€

Loan : 2,7 M€, Annuities : 137 k€

Sale of land : 2 M€, subsidy : 0,8 M€

In 2018, the municipal debt stands at : 14 M€ (probably not counting the summer sled).

Carroz Golf course management : SOREMAC

Should the new golf lose money (which will no doubt be the case), we can be sure that he will then approach the local authorities asking them to fork out funds ! Were there no doubt as to the golf's profitability, then the DSP would certainly have provided funding, as had been mentioned at one point.

## CRITICISM FROM MARC IOCHUM

**According to Marc lochum, at the public reunion to present the PLU on June 28<sup>th</sup> :  
« The Boissonnas built their golf in the wrong place, and did not consider the running costs »**

Before the development of Flaine, Araches was just a small village where most of the inhabitants worked in the watch industry down in the valley.  
We should not accuse the Boissannas for all of today's problems, we should on the contrary thank them for what they have accomplished.

In 1968 Arâches : 658 inhabitants and 1928 inhabitants by 2015. Mainly thanks to Flaine.

Such an attitude is particularly scandalous. The Boissonnas (via Gérard Chervaz and his first partner) saved the ski-lift in Les Carroz from bankruptcy. Without their help, skiing in Les Carroz would already have been just a memory by 1960. To scorn the golf because it was in part funded by the SEPAD (Marc lochum calls this sponsorship) is simply pure slander. The Boissonnas perfectly understood the importance of a Winter Sports Resort need to diversify, and this 40 years before the Araches Village Hall. It's for this reason that in their view, a golf course and tennis courts, were part of the indispensable infrastructure for the future of Flaine. As to insinuating that our golf was financed by unprofessional sponsors, when it is clear that it was created by what was to become the « Open Golf » company, which is still today in the hands of the Boissonnas family (more than 400 employees, 44 golf courses). We are therefore quite far from the picture of a millionaire's whim, but closer to the beginning of a golf empire, structured with the help of proven professionals.

Today, the green-keeper at Flaine's golf course ought to be offered proper training by specialists of mountain golf courses maintenance, and have adequate equipment at his disposal (and not have to mow the grass at the Forum).

**Marc lochum declares: The opponents did not dispute the environmental impact caused by the installation of the ski lifts and ski runs. They only attack all diversification projects.**

We are not opposed to skiing and ski lifts, it's simply a question of balance.  
Many of the recent ski lift constructions have proved an improvement for the landscape, with fewer stations and pylons, and the planting of trees.

Some projects are however open to criticism, and their programming is still unknown.  
The Village Hall delivers building permits without anyone being aware of any comments that may have been made, but it's the Village Hall that should be criticized.,  
Proceedings are now more strict, but we were shocked by the works undertaken at the end of 2016 at Le Portet, which were by far the worst in this category.

Photos : [https://associationflinoise.piwigo.com/picture?/5971/category/129-2016\\_nouveau\\_tsd\\_saix\\_express](https://associationflinoise.piwigo.com/picture?/5971/category/129-2016_nouveau_tsd_saix_express) and following.

We carefully studied the Building Permit file and have never seen anything like it. It must be said, that the thick file could only be consulted at the Village Hall, which makes it impossible to carry out a detailed study (we even had to sign an undertaking not to reveal the document publicly in order to have permission to take photos of some of the pages), but it is possible that this was not mentioned.

This horror shows that the mayor is not carrying out his duty with regard to the works undertaken in the Municipality. We can therefore expect anything to happen on the Commons (Les Communaux) !

We are outraged by the repeated blaming by the Municipality, for not having reacted against their actions that were open to criticism.

Note: In 2000 Marc lochum wanted to turn the Flaine Golf course into a Quad Circuit, which seems rather far from the ecological sensibility of the moment.



## Appendices

Plan of the projects presented in the PADD.

Caption on page 14 of the « Trace » magazine Summer 2018.

### PROJET D'AMÉNAGEMENT ET DE DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLES (PADD) - 2018

The planning axis for Flaine

The plan for the protection against natural risks neutralizes urban development in most sectors around Flaine. It therefore becomes necessary to localize the 17000m<sup>2</sup> of residual floor area of the UTN of 2003 and 2008 (for the two municipalities of Araches and Magland) on the Flaine Montsoleil sector.

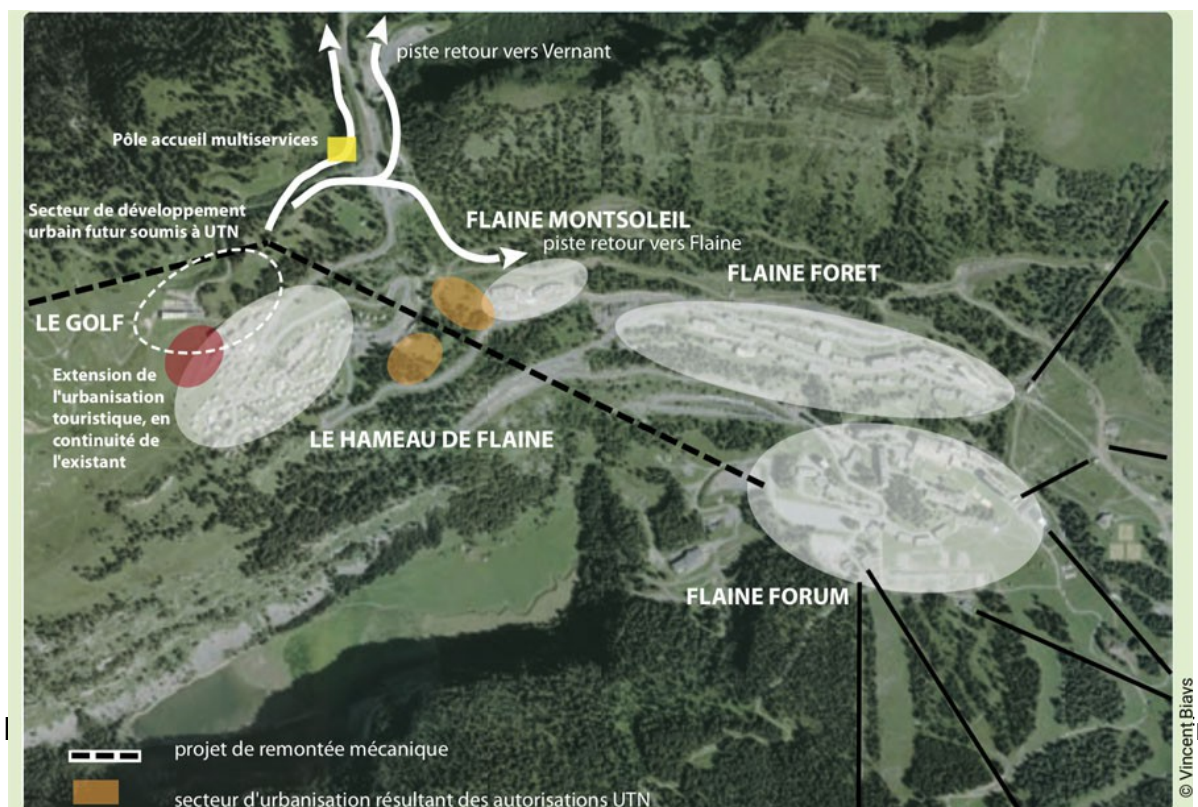
The target is to reach 15400 beds in the medium term to obtain a break-even point for all the social-occupational actors of the resort. An urban extension is programmed to continue beyond the "hameau" de Flaine. **In the longer term, and to accompany the structuring liaison Magland-Flaine, a new urban sector is envisaged on the golf sector (which will lose 9 holes because of the Funiflaine).** In effect, the mountain pass at La Pierre Carrée is a highly frequented passage used by tourists both in Winter and Summer. A development of the mountain pass is envisaged with the creation of a multiservice reception hub.

In Flaine center the objective will be to make soft mobility safer by creating pedestrian zones in the sectors of Flaine Forum and Flaine Forêt.

On the plan you can see the position of the new urban development which will cover the clubhouse, the parking lot and the golf practice area. This is a death sentence for Flaine's golf course.

During the PLU reunion of June 28<sup>th</sup>, Marc lochum announced that the Funiflaine would use the land of greens N°10 and 11, and that those of the greens 12 to 18 would be used for reception and services equipment listed below. This clearly illustrates the will to do away with the Flaine golf course.

The declaration concerning the project to make soft mobility safer by creating pedestrian zones in Flaine is laughable. This was an election commitment made in 2014, continuously delayed since 2010, finally abandoned in 2018 with a probable handout to the main contractor as compensation.





**Earthwork on the Portet ski run carried out by the Municipality in 2016 (on the Flaine Ski Domaine).**



**After this, they are no position to give lessons on how to respect Nature, and we know what to expect from the Municipality.**