

BELGIUM

Local development

Location

Chevetogne

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P6-Social Inclusion and Economic Development

Measure

M19 – LEADER/CLLD

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 1 209 000
EAFRD 387 000
National/regional 822 000

Project duration

2017 – 2021

Project promoter

Domaine Provincial de Chevetogne

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Website

www.domainedechevetogne.be

Restoring a wetland ecosystem and creating an observation area, for ecological, hydrological, educational and touristic purposes.

Summary

The project of the Chevetogne provincial park consists in the rehabilitation and the landscaping of part of the old caravanning area bordering the ponds. Over three hectares, this area is restored into wetland, a wetland ecosystem observation area and a biodiversity laboratory.



The restored area will accommodate a few picnic facilities and two children's play areas. An additional development is to extend the walking trail for people with reduced mobility.

Results

Creation of a wetland of more than two hectares, including a natural reserve for fauna and flora, with positive impact on groundwaters, watercourse cleaning, high waters regulation;

Creation of a picnic area, fostering links between cultures and generations;

Extension of the park's walking paths accessible to persons with reduced mobility;

Creation of an education spot around the willow tree (*salix alba*);

Creation of migratory bird habitats;

Creation of playgrounds for children under seven years old.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ The children's playground are conceived in a way that prevents them to be attracted by the riverside; among the various games, water pumps and Archimedes' screws are displayed in order to let the kids play with water without the danger of approaching the swampy zones;
- ❑ The changes in the watercourses' movement impact the landscape, creating a lovely contrast between the light green of the reeds in the bottom of the valley and the dark green of the timber forest at the back;
- ❑ The artistic dimension added to the project, with the design of a water sculpture, provides a philosophical metaphor to the natural environment.

Context

The Chevetogne Domain, located between Rochefort and Ciney in the Belgian Ardennes, is a tourism destination offering walking paths through woods and gardens, sports fields and fabulous playgrounds. With over 550 ha of beautiful landscape, the park has been open to the public for more than 40 years and now offers new types of entertainment.

Outdoor activities are available such as natural swimming pools, mini golf, romantic boats, gardens, small train, etc. The 18th century aristocratic residence is hosting a visitors' centre on youth literature about nature. Next to the main building, the Nature Extraordinary Museum (NEM) is another heritage site on nature, displaying imaginary objects such as a mermaid, a frogs' cabinet, a stuffed minotaur, a witch's pharmacy, etc.

The Domain is the property of the Namur county council since 1969. It offers catering and accommodation for all kinds of visitors, whether tourists in families or groups, or professionals (business meetings). The core business is however social tourism and educational activities (nature classes).

Objectives

The aim of the project was to create in the bottom of the Molignat valley which is bordering the old caravanning area, a wetland ecosystem observation area, for ecological, hydrological, educational and touristic purposes.

Activities

In order to restore this part of the Molignat valley into a wetland, 50 caravans need to be moved to the upper part of the camping area. The runway is cut down to traffic, taken away and recycled. The existing lavatories that belong to the caravanning infrastructures are maintained and covered up with a plant screen. The borders of the watercourse are redesigned in order to allow high waters to expand and to transform into a wetland. The cleared zone is dedicated to a children's playground and a picnic area. The transition area making the junction with the Meuse river is transformed into a reedbed where a wooden duckwalk is built.

Four components summarize the project:

Biological function

The Molignat wetland increases the backwaters areas of the Park that start nearby the village with the beaver reserve installed a few years ago as part of a Natura 2000 area. This wider amplitude of the wetland area attracts bigger groups of migrating birds. In addition, the new wetland is located next to a 100 hectares of forest that has recently been put under an 'integrated protected area' scheme for 100 years. This allows mammal species to get a complete food chain.

Hydrological function

The two small watercourses of Molignat and Miveau were redirected and covered since more than 40 years. The demolition of their concrete structures allows water to run freely in the open air, giving way to natural expansion during high waters and the growth of reed beds on more than one hectare. Furthermore, the new wetland area creates a storm water drain and a sediment pond for the earth carried along from upstream. The area improves the percolation towards groundwaters, mitigating the risk of flooding near the existing ponds and in the village.



Tourism function

A wetland is an ideal scene to put people in contact with nature as it offers a never-ending spectacle. It has its own visual dynamics with different bird species moving around at their own paces, delivering magnificent sceneries and genuine sounds. Observing animals in a wetland context is easier than in a forest as human movement is directed along the duckwalk.

Educational and citizenship function

The new amenity includes a circular open space to become a lacustrine observatory for several thousand kids attending nature classes every year. Beyond the obvious learning process in terms of botanical and biological sciences, the wetland offers a beautiful, original landscape that generates sensory experiences and some empathy with nature, leading to the development of this subtle notion of 'sensitive citizenship'.

Main Results

The following results are achieved:

- Restoration of natural landscape on an artificial site, marked by unsightly human presence (the caravanning area);
- Creation of a wetland over two hectares, including a natural reserve for fauna and flora, with positive impact on groundwaters, watercourse cleaning, high waters regulation;
- Development of eco-citizenship;
- Creation of a picnic area, fostering links between cultures and generations;
- Extension of the park's walking paths accessible to persons with reduced mobility;
- Creation of an aquatic monument as an artistic 'garden folly';
- Creation of an education spot around the willow tree (*salix alba*);
- Creation of migratory bird habitats;
- Creation of playgrounds for children under seven years old.

Key lessons

Particular features are of interest in this project:

- The children's playground are conceived in a way that prevents them to be attracted by the riverside; among the various games, water pumps and Archimedes' screws are displayed in order to let the kids play with water without the danger of approaching the swampy zones;
- Outdoor furniture and architectural features of the picnic area get their inspiration from former local woodcutters' camps;
- The changes in the watercourses' movement impact the landscape, creating a lovely contrast between the light green of the reeds in the bottom of the valley and the dark green of the timber forest at the back;
- The artistic dimension added to the project, with the design of a water sculpture, provides a philosophical metaphor to the natural environment.

Additional sources of information

https://www.domainedechevetogne.be/documents/fichier/1/54/20170323_132406dossier_zone_humide.pdf

<http://ciney.blogs.sudinfo.be/archive/2016/12/02/pres-d-un-million-pour-subsidier-l-assainissement-et-la-pays-209401.html>

<http://www.bep-developpement-territorial.be/actualites/un-projet-spectaculaire-et-ambitieux-a-chevetogne/>