

Strasbourg, 4 February 2015
[de03e_15.doc]

T-PVS/DE (2015) 3

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

GROUP OF SPECIALISTS ON THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA FOR PROTECTED AREAS

13 March 2015
Strasbourg, Palais de l'Europe, Room 11

---ooOoo---

**REPORT
ON-THE-SPOT APPRAISAL
DE WEERRIBBEN AND
DE WIEDEN NATURE RESERVE (NETHERLANDS)
JUNE 2014**

*Document prepared
by Robert Brunner (Austria)*

*This document will not be distributed at the meeting. Please bring this copy.
Ce document ne sera plus distribué en réunion. Prière de vous munir de cet exemplaire.*

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As stated in the 2010 resolution on the renewal of the European Diploma for De Weerribben and its extension to De Wieden Nature Reserve, the Diploma is granted until September 2015. The expert's on-the-spot appraisal of both sites as a single European Diploma protected area was carried out between 16 and 19 June 2014 and was perfectly organised by Staatsbosbeheer and Natuurmonumenten.

Special thanks go to Hans Schiphorst, Coordinator, Dutch National Parks, responsible for the organisation and the programme, Lammert Kragt, District Manager, Staatsbosbeheer, Bea Claesens, Manager of Natuurmonumenten De Wieden, Egbert Beens, Ranger, Staatsbosbeheer, responsible for information and visitors, and Geert Kooijman, Ecologist, Staatsbosbeheer, as well as to all other participants who shared their experience during the various parts of the visit.

PROGRAMME

16 June 2014

- Arrival at Steenwijk train station
- Evening talks and a short hike to the corridor between the two nature reserves

17 June 2014

- Introduction to the protected areas at the hotel in Geertien
- Visit to new sites ("New Nature"), which until recently are not part of the nature reserve De Weerribben, discussion with locals
- Visit to the visitor centre Ossenzijl, meeting with the owner of a tourist resort
- Boat trip to Weerribben, discussion on tourism versus nature protection, meeting with a reed cutter
- Back to the hotel, boat trip to Blokzijl and evening talks, including a restaurant owner

18 June 2014

- Visit to Beulakerpolder and discussion on water management and natural succession, and birds
- Visit to the information centre and the former water tower in Sint Jansklooster
- Boat trip to Wieden with presentation of reed management and quaking mires
- Final discussion on the 2010 recommendations and how they are being met
- Evening talks on landownership, future recommendations and conditions

19 June 2014

- Final talks with a ranger
- Departure from Steenwijk train station

The detailed programme including the names of the participants during different stages of the visit and their role or interest in the protected areas is attached.

ORGANISATIONAL REMARK

In 1992 De Weerribben protected area was founded as National Park, administrated by the Staatsbosbeheer. It was awarded the European Diploma in 1996. Along with the renewal of the Diploma of the nature reserve De Weerribben in 2010 the Dutch Ministry for Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality nominated the nature reserve De Wieden for the European Diploma. The nature reserve De Wieden is neighbouring the nature reserve De Weerribben and is administrated by Natuurmonumenten. Since 2010 these two protected areas have been appearing under the common name National Park Weerribben-Wieden with still two separate administrative organisations, but in close co-operation and with common leaflets, maps and one homepage, although they individually call

themselves nature reserves. Signposts at the respective entry points show the new common name of the two adjoining sites.

According to the annual report 2013, the European Diploma site is called “Weerribben- Wieden National Park” Nature Reserve. Nevertheless the European Diploma logo is used on maps and signposts which bear the name National Park Weerribben-Wieden. In the nomination letter for the De Wieden Nature Reserve in 2010 the Ministry advised to strive for a joint European Diploma for the entire National Park Weerribben-Wieden by 2015. This is also recommended by the expert.

DESIGNATIONS

Despite the name National Park, both sites are nature reserves with a high emphasis on management. According to the IUCN criteria for protected areas, both sites are classified as protected areas aiming to protect particular species or habitats, and managing the area (IUCN category IV) with the primary objective to maintain, conserve and restore species and habitats.

In 2003, the two sites elaborated first proposals for a Habitat Directive designation process and started to jointly develop a NATURA 2000 management plan. Finally in 6 January 2014, they were designated as NATURA 2000 sites. A management plan, drafted in 2009, has not been officially adopted yet, but has been used by both authorities for day-to-day activities and both administrations are acting within the framework of the document. The special bird area is not identical with the border of the reserves.

Both sites are also listed as RAMSAR sites.

AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

Official documents concerning the European Diploma are the expert’s on-the-spot appraisal report 2009, the nomination of De Wieden Nature Reserve for the European Diploma 2009, resolutions 2005 and 2010 regarding the renewal and the 2010 extension of the European Diploma to De Weerribben and De Wieden Nature Reserves, and the annual reports 2012 and 2013. The management plans for the areas are available only in Dutch and were explained to the expert during the visit. The annual reports 2012 and 2013 refer only to the 2005 not the 2010 recommendations.

Other information material like brochures and maps was provided by the representatives of the visited areas.

DESCRIPTION

De Weerribben and De Wieden Nature Reserves build together the largest freshwater wetland in North-West Europe. They are situated approx. 120 km north-east of Amsterdam. Two thirds of the total 10,000 hectares belong to De Wieden Nature Reserve. De Weerribben is mostly owned by Staatsbosbeheer, the National Forest Service, whereas large parts of De Wieden are owned by Natuurmonumenten, and several hundreds of hectares are in private ownership.

Both sites are former peat extraction areas. Landscapes in the two parts differ. De Weerribben is a wetland with many canals and large reed beds. De Wieden is an open landscape with large lakes surrounded by reed belts and quaking mires as a special habitat.

Landscape

Although the landscape nowadays gives an impression of untouched nature, it was shaped by human intervention and exploitation. Due to large peat extractions since the 16th century the former peat land was turned into a wetland area. The typical aspect of the Weerribben is the result of so-called “Weeren”, where peat was cut out of the bog and the “Ribben”, small stripes, used to penetrate the bog and carry out peat. The “Ribben” in the De Wieden Nature Reserve were damaged by floods and storms, which led to large open water areas. The landscape is maintained through permanent human intervention. Without cutting hay meadows, reeds and floating fens, the area would be overgrown by aquatic vegetation with marsh wood in the ecological succession.

Fauna

Beside the otter (*Lutra lutra*), which was partly reintroduced in The Netherlands and whose population is growing due to enlarged wetland habitats and improvements in water management and water quality, the Weerribben-Wieden National Park is an important bird area. Various warbler (*Acrocephalus*) species use the reed belt: Sedge Warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*), Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*), Great Warbler (*Acrocephalus arundinaceus*), Savi's Warbler (*Locustella luscinioides*), Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella naevia*) or Bluethroat (*Luscinia svecica*) and Bearded Titmouse (*Panurus biarmicus*). Larger species like Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*) or Purple Herons (*Ardea purpurea*) use the site as a nesting place.

The population of endangered bird species seems to thrive better in the Wieden than in Weerribben. The Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*) with over 100 pairs in the Wieden uses mainly artificial floating mats for breeding. Only a few are breeding on natural ground. The situation is similar for the Common Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) and the Spotted Crakes (*Porzana porzana*). Probably the new marshlands (like Wetering Oost) have a positive impact on the further development of the birds' population.

Furthermore populations of dragonflies, butterflies, amphibians and reptiles are developing well. More details and recent figures are provided in the annual reports.

Flora

The most common plant in the peatland is the bog moss (*Sphagnum*), which is the base of the peat, and has been developing in a very slow process over centuries. Also cranberry (*Vaccinium macrocarpon*), sun-dew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) and heather (*Erica*) can be found there.

On the meadows orchids are common, some of them rather rare species, which are totally protected.

APPRAISAL VISIT - FACTS

Day 1

- First overview of the protected area including a walk to the new ecological connection between De Weerribben and De Wieden.
- Visit to the new ecological corridor at N333. As mentioned in the 2010 recommendations and proposed for several years, the main traffic route N333 has been modified. Beside the old bridge over the canal and a local street a new bridge was built with a wide span, to allow species to migrate easily between both sites. The new connection is still under construction, but will be finished by the end of 2014. The new road is already open for traffic, but terrain work is ongoing. After prior discussions about costs, the new road is now widely accepted as it also increases road safety.

Summary Day 1

- It could be helpful for any evaluation of the project to monitor the effects of the new ecological corridor. The results could also provide arguments for any similar project in the future.

Day 2

- Overview of the area in an introductory PowerPoint presentation.
- Field trip to Wetering-West and Wetering-Oost polders, which were either completed this year or to be finished later in the year. Both sites are not part of De Weerribben site yet, but they help to widen the link between the two parts of the European Diploma site. Introduced under the term "New Nature" they were converted from arable land into wetland. They are also part of the water management in the area and function as water storage in times of heavy rainfalls.
- A new viewing point was established at the edge of Wetering-Oost, hiking and biking routes were diverted, and artificial breeding places established and accepted by various bird species.

- Discussion with a local inhabitant about the new situation, especially the protection against mosquitos, for which a minimum distance between water and residential areas was agreed. The New Nature and the increasing number of birds are appreciated by many locals.
- The visitor centre in Ossenzijl is the most northern point of the European Diploma site. Until 2012 it was co-financed by Staatsbosbeheer. Since then the centre should work as a self-financed enterprise. Because of these financial considerations, it is more of a shop with additional information for visitors, and can therefore hardly act as an educational centre for the wetland De Weerribben.
- The owner of a tourist resort with hotel, camping area and restaurant explained that the number of visitors has been decreasing for several years. Compared to 150.000 visitors in the visitor centre a few years ago, there are now approximately only 90.000 persons.
- Boat trip through the canals in De Weerribben along marked routes. Canals only accessible with canoes and electric boats (electric boats). Most tourists keep to the signposted route. Smaller canals are blocked by wooden barriers or are partly overgrown.
- Due to natural succession some canals are overgrown and will turn into meadows. Some meadows tend to be converted into forests. To avoid this succession, a permanent management is necessary.
- Since peat digging stopped, reed cutting became an important source of income. Discussion with a local reed-cutter. At present, approx. 300 reed cutters, 125 cutters in the Weerribben and 160 cutters in the Wieden. 20 cutters manage 50 % of the area, other reed-cutters work in a secondary employment. For nature management reasons and to maintain the habitat, reed-cutting shifted from winter to summer. But only winter reed can be used commercially. Reed from the area is of high quality and better than imported reed.
- The main route for larger boats is the Kalenberger Gracht. The management of the Kalenberger Gracht is under responsibility of the Province Overijssel. Along the Gracht are second homes, a remarkable number of houses are for sale. Due to the decreasing number of tourists, the number of boats on the Kalenbergergracht is also decreasing. Lately no additional restrictions have been necessary, but monitoring is recommended.
- Evening trip to Blokzijl with discussion on tourism with a restaurant owner, specifically and in general. Discussion on the use of the logo, referring to the guidelines of the Council of Europe.

Summary Day 2

- Management in De Weerribben area is very intensive, ranging from water management to the design of New Nature. These interventions are necessary to maintain the ecosystems and to provide undisturbed habitats for various species.
- The site is not only a natural area, but also includes permanent and secondary homes, with all the impacts of housing and tourism. Nevertheless, management seems to be sufficient to avoid negative impacts on the ecosystem.
- Although an informal agreement exists with local stakeholders on the management and access to the area, an officially endorsed management plan is urgently needed and should be determined by the responsible authorities.
- As far as could be seen, communication between the administration, stakeholders and locals is excellent and facilitates the acceptance of the rules and regulations implemented by the Staatsbosbeheer

Day 3

- Visit to Zuidereiniger wiede, part of De Wieden nature reserve, but separated from the main area. The situation was the same as in Wetering-West and East. Arable land was converted into New Nature. Non-intervention and a higher water level enforced the natural succession and changed the ecosystem within a few years.

- Remarkable birdlife could be seen from an observation point. Even this part of the polder lies in close neighbourhood to the town of Steenwijk with a highway nearby, the area is an excellent habitat for birds. It is a model for the recently implemented management in Weerribben.
- In the southern part of this area, hay meadows provide a good habitat for meadow birds, which can easily be observed.
- Visit to De Wieden information centre in Sint Jansklooster, approx. 80.000 visitors per year. The centre is situated close to the water in small houses, former homes of peat diggers. Information for visitors and children's programmes provided, preferably pupils between 5 and 12 years. In addition, there is a youth club for local children once a week.
- The former water tower in Sint Jansklooster is now a perfect outlook tower over the whole De Wieden area. There is a significant difference in the landscape between De Weerribben and De Wieden. Instead of small canals, huge lakes dominate.
- To encourage breeding of the Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*), around 500 artificial rafts were installed. Originally Black Tern nested in "Water Soldiers" (*Stratiotes aloides*), but now they prefer the wooden rafts. Nevertheless, the number of Black Tern decreased from 220 in 2011 to approx. 100 today. They overwinter in Mauritania.
- 1200 hectares of reed harvested every year. About 100 hectares remain untouched to provide living space for birds like the Marsh Harrier, the Great Reed Warbler and the Bittern.
- Some areas in De Wieden can be reached by boat only. Between the canals there are hayfields, which are mown once a year. The hay meadows actually lie in the water. When rootstocks and roots of water plants grow, floating vegetation develops, which sometimes becomes thick enough to walk on. The wet grassland with some rare plant species becomes thicker and turns into meadows. Because of the swampy area, the grass can only be cut with special machines, which are light enough to be used on swampy ground. For this reason, some farmers create innovative machineries for these special areas.
- Reflection on the 2010 renewal of the European Diploma including the extension to De Wieden and on the conditions and recommendations, considering also the 2005 recommendations and conditions.
- Discussion about contracts with haymakers and reed cutters, with a focus on the duration of contracts. Contracts running for more than six years turn automatically into permanent contracts. This means that new restrictions and revised management plans cannot be imposed, but have to be negotiated.

Summary day 3

- With the open water, De Wieden differs significantly from De Weerribben.
- There are more settlements around De Wieden, some with typical houses of this area.
- In De Wieden professional fishery is still a source of income. The eel breeds there after its long journey from the Saragossa Sea. Intensive management is necessary to allow the eel to overcome the dikes, locks and weirs. Recently the number of eels in De Wieden started diminishing.
- If the management of hay meadows and reed beds was stopped, they would change rapidly into woodland and would lose their diversity.
- Reflections on prior recommendations and conditions are listed below.
- Duration of contracts to be reviewed.

Day 4

- Final talks with Mr. Beens on management and educational programmes.

USE OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA LOGO

The 2008 revised regulations for the European Diploma of Protected Areas define the use of the European Diploma logo in Article 7, Paragraph 4.

So far the European Diploma logo has not been widely used by the two parties, Staatsbosbeheer and Natuurmonumenten. It appears on new common signposts at some entrance points to the sites and on a joint map of the National Park Weerribben-Wieden, but not on newly released brochures, the websites or at the two visitor centres.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2010 CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Condition 1)

The condition that both sites should have an official management plan approved by the responsible authority within five years has not been fulfilled, but the responsibility lies in the hands of the provincial government.

Since 2009, a NATURA 2000 management plan exists, which has still not been officially approved by the Government, but is being used by the management of both reserves for day-to-day work. The plan has been elaborated and further steps do not lie within the competence of the nature reserve administrations. So far the 2010 condition is not fulfilled.

Management plans for NATURA2000 sites have no fixed period of validity, but should be regularly adjusted as a result of monitoring programmes and research studies.

Recommendation 1)

The broadening of the physical connection either took place or is in progress. The improvement is visible. The recommendation has been successfully implemented.

Recommendation 2)

The new wildlife corridor is under construction and should be completed by the end of 2014. The project is clearly in line with Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 3)

All regulations falling under this recommendation are part of the NATURA 2000 management plan and therefore still not adopted. The management of the nature reserves uses the draft management plan for day-to-day work. There is a national code of conduct for management activities in general, agreed by the stakeholders in 2007. For management activities in reed beds all activities are prohibited between mid-April and end of July, for hay meadows the period is mid-March to end of July. It is up to the responsible authorities to adopt the management plan in a near future. An open issue is an agreement on alternative waterways and canoe trails.

Recommendation 4)

The number is under control as larger boats have to pay a fee at the Kalenberger Bridge. Quiet zones are not accessible by larger (motor-) boats, routes for canoes or electric boats are designated and widely accepted. Smaller canals are artificially blocked with a barrier or naturally by overgrowing water plants.

Recommendation 5)

Again the main obstacle is the absence of management plan. But 200 ha of winter reed cutting have been turned into summer reed cutting. There are at least two tenants' meetings a year to discuss reed management. This recommendation is to be extended.

Recommendation 6)

The fish stock management plan and regulations are part of the management plan to be adopted. The Reest en Wieden Waterboard coordinated the fish management plan 2012, which was agreed upon by all stakeholders (Natuurmonumenten, Staatsbosbeheer, Organisation for sport fisheries, Organisation of professional fishermen). The management plan aims to improve the living conditions

of the eel. In Weerribben there is no professional fishing anymore, only sport fishing. A permit is given to the local sport fishing association, which can be used by its members only. Apart from that, a daily permit can be given to individual sport fishermen. This permit defines management of the designated fishing locations (fishing not allowed in other places!), a non-feeding policy, a time window for fishing etc. The recommendation is to be extended.

Recommendation 7)

The missing link between De Wieden and Staphorster Veld is not part of the European Diploma area, but is considered to become part of the protected area. Other threats like intensification of agriculture, impacts from changes in water management or construction of wind farms are not completely solved and should be under permanent observation.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

European interest

As mentioned, the National Park Weerribben-Wieden, consisting of two nature reserves under two separate administrations, is the largest freshwater wetland area in north-west Europe, which can only be maintained through permanent management. Apart from its importance for the protection of habitats and species in an intensively used agricultural landscape, there is also a cultural component as the recent landscape is the result of a century-old traditional form of use of natural resources. Traditional land use like reed cutting, hay making etc. is necessary to maintain the wetland area and avoid overgrowing. It is carried out in line with the management plan.

Administration and Management

The situation of National Parks in The Netherlands has recently become difficult. Due to substantial budget cuts the Dutch national parks are left to “stand on their own feet”, which means that the park administrations have to apply for funds and projects (e.g. LIFE from the European Union), find sponsors and other sources of income such as entrance fees or donations. The Weerribben administration (Staatsbosbeheer) does no longer employ staff for field work, but concentrates on administrative and coordinative tasks. The way in which the Council of Europe decides to deal with European Diploma sites that loose public support from the authorities remains to be discussed.

Status of Conservation

The wetland area depends on good co-operation with the water management and can be rated as good. Also the extension of the wetland, called “New Nature”, was done in co-operation with the water authorities. The construction of wind farms is still under discussion and would cause an impact on the bird life in the area. Recent negotiations with public authorities have shown positive results.

The construction of a new road along the border of the two reserves is an excellent example for a better connection for the wildlife.

Leisure activities, tourism, fishing and housing are concentrated in certain areas and should not cause threats to the environment, but should be monitored regularly.

Further threats caused by changes in water management or intensification of agriculture could not be identified, but might occur due to the economic situation.

Climate change might lead to more frequent and heavier rainfall, which cannot be handled by existing water management installations. The new polders increase water storage in extreme situations.

Zoning

In general the area is managed under the control of Staatsbosbeheer and Natuurmonumenten. Some areas designated as Quiet Zones, are located mainly in the Eastern part of the diploma site, and touristic zones are concentrated along the larger waterways and in open waters.

Development

Beside the new highway N333, the recent ongoing conversions of arable land into wetland, called “New Nature”, will lead to an enlargement and noticeable improvement of the quality of the protected

area. Further extensions of the area have been proposed and would connect the separate eastern part of the De Wieden with the main area of the National Park. Other enlargements will be postponed due to budget cuts.

Management plan

Although the management plan has not been officially adopted yet, management is based on this unofficial document, elaborated for the NATURA 2000 site. As the management plan was a condition of the last renewal of the Diploma, the authorities should be urged to implement the management plan officially.

Awareness, information and education

Although the European Diploma is used to raise awareness, the European Diploma logo appears rarely on publications and not at all on the website. There are several common information brochures for the National Park as well as for the two individual nature reserves, which can be a little confusing for external visitors.

The visitor centre Ossenzijl was renovated, but still has limited possibilities due to budget cuts in the last years and should in future be self-sustaining. Unfortunately, this will lead to fewer opportunities for educational programmes. Close to the New Nature at Wetering Oost a new bird hide was opened as observation point for bird watchers.

The De Wieden visitor centre Sint-Jansklooster is a small, but charming locality and offers programmes for children.

Public access and infrastructure

The area can easily be accessed on foot, bicycle and by boat. Access to the natural areas by boat is limited to certain areas with small (electric-) boats. Larger boats are limited to a few waterways like the Kalenberg Gracht or the Beulakerwijde. With only a few exceptions, both the protected area and the visitors' infrastructure are easily accessible for people with restricted mobility. Public transport with electric boats is also available.

The former water tower at Sint-Jansklooster (de Wieden) has been restored and offers a fantastic outlook over De Wieden and its surrounding area.

Scientific research

Publications and research studies:

Weerribben Audit Report published in 2013 with an emphasis on ecological development, biodiversity, public relations and coherence of the area within the social context.

- Various reports on dragonflies, butterflies and the black tern, and a peat hole plan in De Wieden completed.

Further research is recommended on the new corridor between De Wieden and De Weerribben, and the effects and developments of the new polders in Wetering Oost and West.

Connectivity with other areas

Progress has been made in developing buffer zones. The buffer zone between De Wieden and the Staphorster Veld has been completed whereas the area for the buffer zone to Rottige Meente, north of Ossenzijl-Weerribben, has been purchased.

Other recognitions

Both nature reserves are NATURA2000 sites and listed as Ramsar sites. The National Park Weerribben-Wieden was awarded the European Charter for sustainable tourism in protected areas by EUROPARC in 2009.

Relations and partnerships

Due to budget cuts by the national government and the province, the Weerribben nature reserve has to find other financial resources. These could be secured through new partnerships with sponsors. First steps have already been taken, e.g. for the marketing of local products under the name of the protected area.

Relations with land users, local communities and inhabitants seem to be good. Regular tenants meetings are being held and management discussed. A revision of the reed cutters and farmers contracts might be necessary to avoid issuing contracts for unlimited periods of time.

RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA

It is recommended to renew the European Diploma for another period, although there is an obvious lack of financial security.

It is also recommended to award the European Diploma as a single diploma to both sites under the common name “National Park Weerribben-Wieden” Nature Reserve.

CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (DRAFT)

Conditions

- (1) Urge the responsible authorities to adopt the joint NATURA 2000 management plan by the end of 2016 as an official and binding document to be also used for the European Diploma area;
- (2) With regard to raising awareness for the European Diploma, commit the nature reserves De Weerribben and De Wieden (jointly presented under the common name “National Park Weerribben-Wieden” Nature Reserve) to making a broader use of the European Diploma logo, whenever possible, on the websites of their respective areas, in joint presentations, new brochures, maps and leaflets, and in the visitor centres, together with an explanation of the reasons for awarding the European Diploma, e.g. with a link to the Council of Europe website, according to Council Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)1, Article 7 (4).

Recommendations

- (1) Implement a monitoring programme to evaluate the effects of the new connection between De Weerribben and De Wieden to be opened by the end of 2014, at least on important and/or endangered species, considering the exemplary role of the project.
- (2) Monitor the further development of fish stock with an emphasis on the eel to strengthen the ecological function of the reserves and the natural reproduction in line with NATURA 2000 requirements;
- (3) Limit the impacts of fishery by defining a maximum number of licenses or limiting the catch; define methods to avoid secondary catches of otter or other species; and ensure the further development of a fish stock management plan covering all species, as requested for in the previous Resolution on the renewal of the European Diploma;
- (4) Carefully observe the further development of boating on the Kalenberger Gracht and set limits (e.g. max. number and/or size of boats) or provide for measures in case of a rising number of larger boats;
- (5) Continue with the designation of adjoining areas as extension or buffer zones aiming to become part of the protected areas, especially to the north (Rottige Meente) and south-east (Staphorster Veld), and build up a connection between the two separate parts of De Wieden nature reserve between the Zuideindiger wiede and the Bovenwiede;
- (6) Review contracts with entrepreneurs and landowners with regard to habitat management and the duration of these contracts to ensure that management can be steered by the responsible authorities, and to prevent long-term and irredeemable contracts with limited leverage of the park management;

- (7) Observe possible threats, which may occur due to intensification of agriculture, impacts from changes in water management or construction of wind farms;
- (8) Secure adequate funds to convert the Ossenzijl information centre at least partly into an educational centre with an emphasis on young people.