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## Wortel and Merksplas Colony: a cultural landscape revalued

### Vzw Kempens Landschap



Wortel and Merksplas Colonies together form an exceptional cultural landscape. This 1,000-hectare, man-made compartmental landscape, developed in the 19th century, consists of open and closed areas, farmland, forest and nature reserves. No less than 32 kilometres of historical lanes and other linear elements, such as canals and hedges, divide the territory into orthogonal forms. Some of the remaining heaths and fens illustrate how, with no external influences, this landscape was before the creation of the colonies. Following more than 150 years of agricultural practices, the territory became largely untended. The area was briefly under threat, until citizens were mobilised. Over recent decades, public authorities and associations have successfully worked together to secure and restore the identity and unity of both colonies. Thus, everyone can continue to enjoy this historical landscape.

The Committee of Ministers acknowledged the great value of the achievement presented for the 6th Session of the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention 2018-2019, and the importance to make it well-known as a source of inspiration.

In accordance with Resolution CM/Res (2017)18 of the Committee of Ministers, the project is thus part of the Landscape Award Alliance of the Council of Europe.