European Diploma of Protected Areas for the Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve

Reaction from Staatsbosbeheer on the 'Report on the expert appraisal of the Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve (Netherlands) 30-31 August 2018.

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1. Introduction

Staatsbosbeheer is very proud of the award of the European Diplomas for Protected Areas EDPA for four of its nature areas as it is a recognition of our right management for the conservation of important nature reserves. The Diploma for the Oostvaardersplassen was adopted by the Council of Europe in September 1999, and we are now facing the fourth renewal. For that occasion, expert Maurice Hoffman visited the Oostvaardersplassen on August 30 and 31 in 2018 to review the conditions and recommendations. We would like to thank Mr Hoffman for his time, shared expertise and shown interest in the area and the people. With this note we would like to give our reaction and point of view on the expert report of March 8, 2019, especially condition 2.

The reason for our reaction is that Staatsbosbeheer has a different point of view on the execution of the 'Van Geel advice'. Staatsbosbeheer is convinced that the implementation of the Natura 2000 management plan together with the execution of the 'Van Geel advice' will meet the criteria, conditions and recommendations belonging to the European Diploma.

In the following paragraphs we will explain how we meet the criteria, conditions and recommendations. In the appendices more explanation on the various themes is given.

2. Aim and vision for the Oostvaardersplassen: intervention is a necessity

The most important goal for the Oostvaardersplassen is the conservation of the wetland (the marsh surrounded by the grazed area) and its related plant and animal species (biodiversity), as wetlands are an endangered ecosystem and the Oostvaardersplassen is an internationally important area for migratory birds. This general goal encompasses the Natura 2000 bird species for this area and many red list bird species, and importantly, Natura 2000 serves as a powerful tool to legally protect the wetland. The Bern Convent on protected species and biodiversity endorses this goal and gives a responsibility to maintain and develop biodiversity in the broad sense.

One of the key features of the Oostvaardersplassen is the spontaneous outburst of nature, caused by natural processes such as precipitation and evapotranspiration which drive the natural process of water level dynamics. It is these kind of processes we want to give room to. Herbivory by large herbivores is one of these processes we can use to create these spontaneous outbursts and a dynamic landscape with gradients that will benefit biodiversity. However, we also have learned that in this man-made wetland intervention is needed every now and then. As the Oostvaardersplassen is far from a complete natural system and therefore lacking some important natural processes (e.g. predation, migration, energy/nutrient cycles), the outcome of the management can be different from a natural situation. This might sometimes even endanger the conservation of the wetland. As a result of that we will, for example, actively lower the water level in the marsh to reset the reed vegetation in order to meet the goals for the Natura 2000 species, as the present water level dynamics are insufficient. Another example of intervention is the lowering of the large herbivore numbers. Due to unnaturally high numbers of large herbivores in the past years, not all wetland related bird species have benefitted from the former large herbivore management; e.g. 28 breeding bird species with a conservation status decreased or did not breed in the grazing area any more. By lowering the number of large herbivores and subsequently simulating natural population dynamics and age and

sex structure of the herds, a more divers and dynamical landscape in time and space can be achieved. This will create opportunities for biodiversity.

3. Response to Condition 2 by Hoffman: herbivore population management as a process

We agree with integrally respecting and implementing the Natura 2000 management plan, which we do. However, based on monitoring and research of the past years, we concluded that the former herbivore management did not fully meet the goals for the conservation of the wetland and the related plant and animal species, and therefore the Natura 2000 goals. To meet these goals in a better way, a reduction of large herbivore numbers is needed. We get the impression that the authors feel the same way as they conclude that the former management of the large herbivores was far from ideal and led to unnatural high numbers of large herbivores with undesirable consequences for some of the habitats in the area, especially grasslands. By changing the management, i.e. lowering the number of large herbivores as advised by the committee Van Geel, we are convinced that this is the only way to respect the Natura 2000 goals and management plan. We agree with the authors that the new management should not be a deterministic approach as their concern is with the advice of Van Geel. We fully agree with their advice on how to carry out the new management by taking action at the level of the entire area, both in terms of the marsh (water level management) and the grazing regime. We are also thinking about simulating natural population dynamics and natural age and sex structure of the large herbivore populations in order to get as close as possible to the natural behaviour of large herbivores in the way they graze an area. In this way we can get the wanted dynamics in the area that will drive vegetation dynamics and create gradients that are essential for biodiversity. We think we should do this in two steps: first, we need to know what the average number of large herbivores will be to meet the goals for conservation; second, how much fluctuation in population numbers is needed to get the desired dynamics in the system. To answer the first question we have to lower the number to a certain amount and based on monitoring and research try to find out what will be the best number for this area. The committee Van Geel advised to reduce the population to 1,100 animals, which was the number around 1996 when the landscape was still divers and dynamical. We will use this number to start with. Monitoring and research will show if this is too high or too low. After a few years we will evaluate and determine what will be the optimal range of the number of herbivores. If the number, advised by Van Geel, is too high, we will lower the number. If the number appears to be too low, we will increase the population. After that step, which will take approximately 5 years, we will go to the next phase in which we will determine what population dynamics are needed to meet the conservation goals.

In appendix A there are some specific responses on the report by Hoffmann and is explained in more detail how we will apply the new management of the large herbivores.

4. Response to conditions and recommendations by Hoffmann: update

In general we can meet the conditions and recommendations given by Hoffman. In appendix B we give a response to these conditions and recommendation. For completeness, we also updated the previous conditions and requirements. These were already mentioned in the report by Hoffmann, but in that report it is based on the results up to 2017. Here we have updated up to 2018, based on the annual report of the Oostvaardersplassen 2018. In Appendix C the update is given.

5. Criteria European Diploma for Protected Areas: Oostvaardersplassen still meets the criteria

In the resolution on the award in 1999 the Oostvaardersplassen is described as "*a unique example of successful large-scale wetland development in a densely populated country*". We are convinced that this description is still applicable to the Oostvaardersplassen and that we still meet the criteria for the EDPA. In short:

- We are currently executing the N2000 management plan to ensure the habitat of the N2000 species;

- We are working on strengthening the nature values by working together as a bigger nature area in the National Park New Land;
- We have a thorough zoning policy by which we protect the vulnerable core area and upgrade the possibilities for people to experience nature in a sustainable way. We believe that people should be able to enjoy nature in order to understand and recognize the importance of the area;
- National laws and regional nature policy provides sufficient protection for the nature area;
- Staatsbosbeheer owned and managed the nature areas of the Netherlands for over 120 years. Our mission is to protect nature, let people experience and enjoy nature and durably supply sustainable products for society.

In appendix D we give our interpretation of how we fulfil the criteria.

6. Conclusion

Based on these considerations we think we can meet the criteria for the EDPA when we respect and implement the Natura 2000 goals and plan and at the same time implement the advice of Van Geel as a starting point. Ultimately we want to end up with management that creates a natural dynamical landscape as close as possible, which meets the goals for the conservation of the internationally important wetland the Oostvaardersplassen.

We hope that this explanation and our point of view on the expert report convinces the council to renew the European Diploma with reconsideration of the conditions, especially condition 2.

Appendix A. In response to the ecological remarks and conclusions by Maurice Hoffmann and Jan van Uytvanck in the "*Report on the spot expert appraisal of the De Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve (Netherlands), 30-31 August 2018*".

General response

- Chapter 9, Condition 2, page 34

"*The N2000 management plan should be integrally respected and implemented in order to maintain the top reasons of the original EDPA appraisal, i.e. the large bird diversity and the Minimal Intervention Ecosystem Approach, with as limited as possible human intervention in large herbivore dynamics, but at the same time with great emphasis on an appropriate water dynamics management as given in the N2000 management plan. Hence, the Van Geel advice should not be implemented."*

We agree with integrally respecting and implementing the Natura 2000 management plan, which we do. However, based on monitoring and research of the past years, we concluded that the former herbivore management did not fully meet the goals for the conservation of the wetland and the related plant and animal species, and therefore the Natura 2000 goals. To meet these goals in a better way, a reduction of large herbivore numbers is needed. We get the impression that the authors feel the same way as they conclude that the former management of the large herbivores was far from ideal and led to unnatural high numbers of large herbivores with undesirable consequences for some of the habitats in the area, especially grasslands. By changing the management, i.e. lowering the number of large herbivores as advised by the committee Van Geel, we are convinced that this is the only way to respect the Natura 2000 goals and management plan.

We agree with the authors that the new management should not be a deterministic approach as their concern is with the advice of Van Geel. We fully agree with their advice on how to carry out the new management by taking action at the level of the entire area, both in terms of the marsh (water level management) and the grazing regime. We are also thinking about simulating natural population dynamics and natural age and sex structure of the large herbivore populations in order to get as close as possible to the natural behaviour of large herbivores in the way they graze an area. In this way we can get the wanted dynamics in the area that will drive vegetation dynamics and create gradients that are essential for biodiversity.

We think we should do this in two steps: first, we need to know what will be the average number of large herbivores to meet the goals for conservation; second, how much fluctuation in population numbers is needed to get the desired dynamics in the system. To answer the first question we have to lower the number to a certain amount and based on monitoring and research try to find out what will be the best number for this area. The committee Van Geel advised to reduce the population to 1,100 animals, which was the number around 1996 when the landscape was still divers and dynamical. We will use this number to start with. Monitoring and research will show if this is too high or too low. After a few years we will evaluate and determine what will be the optimal range of the number of herbivores. If the number, advised by Van Geel, is too high, we will lower the number. If the number appears to be too low, we will increase the population. After that step, which will take approximately 5 years, we will go to the next phase in which we will determine what population dynamics are needed to meet the conservation goals.

Based on the authors concerns, our thoughts on how to manage the large herbivore populations, the two way strategy of implementing the large herbivore management, accompanied with monitoring and research, we think we can implement the advice of Van Geel as a starting point and at the same time respect and implementing the Natura 2000 goals and plan. Ultimately we want to end up with management that creates a natural dynamical landscape as close as possible, which meets the goals for the conservation of the internationally important wetland the Oostvaardersplassen.

Following this general response, some more specific responses are given on different themes the authors mention.

Specific responses

1. Section 4.8, first paragraph, page 16

   "*We notice a complete shift from a Minimal Intervention Ecosystem Approach to a management approach entirely in function of more or less deterministic nature goals (N2000, mainly bird populations and 'animal welfare'. As such, there's nothing wrong with such an approach, but in this way, the earlier, basic philosophy behind the OVP to install a process driven management has largely been abandoned, and a much more deterministic approach has been installed. The Minimum Intervention Ecosystem Approach has always been experienced in science and nature management as a unique feature of the OVP, distinguishing it …… We always considered it one of the primed added values of the newly created nature area next to its high waterfowl and marsh bird species richness. Other qualities of floristic, landscape, vegetation driven, historical nature are of minor relevance, and were in our opinion never to be considered as main drivers for awarding the OVP Nature Reserve with EDPA."*

   The authors give their opinion about the change of management and the value of the former large herbivore management (minimum intervention ecosystem approach MIEA) for science and nature management. We do agree with their point of view regarding scientific interest. However, as a manager you always have to keep in mind the most important goal of this area, which is the conservation of the wetland and its related plant and animal species (wetland biodiversity), as wetlands are an endangered ecosystem and the OVP is an internationally important area for migratory birds. This not only encompass the Natura 2000 species but many other red list species. The choice of management is following this major goal. When the applied management is no longer effective, one should look for other management options for the conservation of the wetland and its related plant and animal species. The MIEA worked satisfying during the first 25 years. Goals were met and the Natura 2000 management plan adopted the large herbivore management as being a way to manage vegetation and achieving the Natura 2000 goals. However, based on monitoring and research of the past 10 years, it became clear how the once diverse landscape changed to a landscape dominated by grasslands as large herbivore populations increased. From this change, some bird species, such as geese, ducks, lapwings and golden plovers, benefitted, but other species, such as little grebe, spoonbill, heron, egret, harrier, and birds of meadows, tall herbs and scrub, did not as the quality of their foraging areas decreased. Due to the intensive grazing, the area became dominated by short grazed grasslands, leaving little or no room for abundant insect communities or vole populations which serve as food for the species that did not benefit from the intensive grazing.

   We agree that the former management of large herbivores was unique and is interesting in a scientific and nature management point of view, but again the major goal for this area is conservation of the wetland and its related plant and animal species as wetlands are endangered ecosystems. As this is the major goal and the former management is not effective enough in achieving the goal, we cannot go on with this kind of management just for scientific purposes. If we would like to go on with the former management, lots of things have to be done to make that kind of management more effective. This is something we have to think about in managing areas like the Oostvaardersplassen in the long term in relation to 'rewilding'.

   The primary goals for nature (i.e. high waterfowl and marsh bird species richness) have not changed as the large herbivore management changed. However, as biodiversity is a world-wide problem, we feel we are also obliged to put effort in creating more room for other animal species related to wetlands, and not just the ones on the Natura 2000 list. As the former management strategy mainly benefits geese, ducks, lapwings and golden plover, we opt for a management

strategy that also enhances possibilities for the other species that did not benefit the high grazing pressure.

2. Section 4.8, 1st Header "**Why the shift in management**?", first bullet, page 16
"*These "values" cannot be reached when we keep and treat animals as agricultural livestock*."

We agree that non-intervention, i.e. truly free living herds, will have a different effect on the behaviour of animals than intervention. However, the new intervention management of the large herbivores does not mean that the remaining herds will be treated as agricultural livestock; this is a misunderstanding. Even with intervention you can have large herds that graze year-round and showing behaviour driven patterns. Which animals will be taken out of the herds and how and when it will be done depends on the strategy. For example, when some individuals stay during their entire life in the herd, these individuals will pass their experience and knowledge to younger generations and so this will drive habitat use in a way similar to non-intervention. When taking care of sex-ratio and age distribution (simulating natural populations), social behaviour can be very similar. Population dynamics can be simulated by varying the number of animals taken out of the herds. For example, a strong population decrease of about 50% in a natural population caused by a severe winter can be simulated by taking out more animals during a certain year. During the subsequent years, the population can grow naturally up to the desired maximum number. This kind of 'dynamic' management will benefit vegetation dynamics and will enhance biodiversity. It is our goal to manage the herds in a way, as described above, close to the natural process of herbivory.

3. Section 4.8, 2nd header "Deterministic N2000 goals", page 16
"*Next to ...., the other driver is the deterministic approach of the European bird and habitat directive or at least the way it is interpreted by managers and administrations. It urges managers to be equally deterministic in their management measures, leaving less opportunities of basic characteristics of nature, such as spontaneity and naturalness."*

We agree that there are situations/areas in which deterministic N2000 goals are taken too literally, leaving no room for spontaneity and naturalness. However, this is not the way we want to approach this at the Oostvaardersplassen. First, it must be clear that we have to deal with the Natura 2000 goals. The area is designated as a Bird Directive, and as long as it will be that way, we have the obligation to achieve the goals. We do not have a problem with that, as this is a powerful instrument to protect the wetland and its related plant and animal species, and therefore wetland biodiversity.

Second, we know that one of the key features of the Oostvaardersplassen is the spontaneous outbursts of nature, caused by natural processes such as precipitation and evapotranspiration which determine water level dynamics. It is these kinds of natural processes we again want to give room to; that will not change. For example, we are now exploring the possibilities to give even more room to water level dynamics by connecting the wetland to the large lake Markermeer. At this moment the lake and the wetland are separated from each other by a dike. Connecting these two ecosystems will give opportunities to exchange water, nutrients, dead organic material, silt and organisms between wetland and lake and therefore complete the energy and nutrient cycles. As this (water) system will be driven mainly by climate, spontaneity and naturalness (even within this man made area) still determine the natural events in the wetland to a large extent. Another way in giving more room for water level dynamics, especially in the horizontal level, is to decrease the number of hydrological units in the area. The ultimate goal will be to have just one hydrological unit in which elevation determines the dry and wet areas within the wetland.

Third, intervention management of large herbivores does not necessarily mean that spontaneity and naturalness will be gone. Of course it will be different from a non-intervention management, but as mentioned above, it is possible to simulate more natural population dynamics. By using climate parameters (severe winters, dry summers, wet years) that will have an effect on food supply and therefore body condition, these parameters can be used to determine when and how many animals will be culled/taken out in a specific year. In that way, climate is the spontaneous determining factor affecting vegetation development and therefore the abundance of insects, voles, birds, etc. In this way, vegetation development will be more dynamical in space and time as can be expected in more natural systems.

Fourth, it has already been recognized for several years now by the authorities who are responsible for achieving the Natura 2000 goals, that in a dynamic system like the Oostvaardersplassen, the deterministic approach is not the right way to manage these goals. For areas like the Oostvaardersplassen, the average species diversity and animal numbers over longer periods are leading instead of achieving the given species number and animal numbers each year.

4. Section 4.8, 3rd header "**General comment on the new management choices**", page 16
"*To our opinion, ..., while something is put in place of which there is also little salvation to be expected with regard to vegetation development. In combination with the planting there seems to be a chance that something like an English landscape park will develop with short grazed grasslands and bushes, rather remote from 'wild nature'.*"

The authors opinion is that the former non-intervention management was interesting from a scientific point of view and that we will not know the outcome of this type of management now is has stopped. We agree with that, but as we have explained in 1, we feel that in this case conservation of endangered ecosystems and plant and animal species takes precedence over the scientific goal as the non-intervention management did no longer benefit all of the wetland related birds for which the area is important.

According to the authors, the intervention management does not bring salvation with regard to vegetation development. We agree when this intervention management means using a herd of one year old cows, that are replaced every year as sometimes is carried out in nature reserves. However, as explained in 2 and 3, there are ways to simulate spontaneous natural population dynamics and to get as close as possible to natural herd structure so the herds can display as much natural behaviour as possible. It is our intention to manage the herds in this way to get the vegetation dynamics which creates gradients important for biodiversity.

The planting of shrubs and trees is a necessity to give shelter for the large herbivores in the short term. Natural establishment of shrubs and trees will take a long time. First, the polder is still young which means that sources of seed are not present yet or are far away. Second, in areas with low grazing pressure the chances for establishment are low because of competition for light as the tall herbs (stingy nettle, thistle) and reed grow very fast in this environment. Echoing on the reset of the marsh vegetation by actively lowering the water level in the marsh because the natural water level dynamics are too low at the moment, the planting can be seen as actively creating shelter in the short term and creating conditions for further natural establishment. It also creates opportunities for many animal species that were gone or which numbers decreased in the past ten years. We have no intention to create a park-like landscape for aesthetic reasons. We use plant species (hardwood and softwood) that can be expected in an highly productive wetland as the Oostvaardersplassen and the aim of the spatial distribution is to create gradients from short grazed grasslands to tall herbs/reed, shrubs up to trees. We see the planting as a one-time large-scale measure to speed up the development of a diverse landscape after which, with an appropriate herbivore management, this landscape will be able to sustain and develop in a natural way.

Truly 'wild nature' as the authors mention will not be present in the Oostvaardersplassen in the short term (depending on the definition of course), but in our opinion, the former non-intervention management was also not truly 'wild nature'. During the non-intervention management, the area was far from a complete natural system to be truly 'wild nature'. We decided which herbivore species were to be introduced, we fenced off the area so the introduced herbivores could not freely migrate to other areas if they wanted to (no free choice in where to live and where not to live), many natural processes were not present (e.g. predation, migration) or not operating to their full extent (e.g. energy and nutrient cycling, water level dynamics), and the manager had to intervene a lot (e.g. managing embankments and weirs, reset marsh vegetation, early reactive culling). This means that the outcome (i.e. the landscape and its dynamics) of the management was not only determined by the 'natural process' of the large herbivores, but also by the intervention of the manager and the natural processes that were not present. We believe that in a complete system with no fences, the landscape could be 'truly' wild nature and this would look different than it has looked the past 10 years. However, we believe that with the intervention management it will be possible, when simulating population dynamics and social and age structure of the herds (see examples in 2 and 3), to come closer to 'wild nature' with the needed dynamics than "*rather remote*" as the expectation is of the authors.

We agree with the authors opinion about the marsh management which is aimed at restoring dynamics, even if it goes hand in hand with artificial reclamation every 10-20 years, and about creating more gradients. For the intervention management of the large herbivores we also aim for dynamics and gradients, and maybe sometimes artificial reclamation is necessary.

5. Section 4.8, 4th header "**How about the Minimal Intervention System**?", page 17
"This management is also far from ideal, especially in the grassland area. To give natural processes and rich nature real opportunities, more than the current design and the introduction of large herbivores is needed. ..... In this respect it is extremely unfortunate that an ecological connection with the Horsterwold has been abandoned, as a connection to the Veluwe is. This could partly have remediated problems of the presently existing overgrazing in the OVP."

We agree with the authors that the non-intervention (or minimal intervention) system was also far from ideal. We believe that the former management was not the right management anymore for achieving the conservation goals for this area (see 1). The reasons for this are mentioned in 4. As the area is far from complete (see 4) and the manager still intervenes a lot, the outcome is (far) different from a natural situation. If one aims at domination of short grazed grasslands with thousands of geese, lapwings and golden plovers, and accept the mortality of 30% of the large herbivore population due to starvation each year, then this kind of management is the right one. And by doing so, it means that this kind of management is just as any other type of management that is used to achieve certain goals made by us. It is therefore as far from 'truly wild nature' as is the now chosen intervention management.

The connection with Horsterwold, would only be a temporary solution if other necessary measures (making the system complete: e.g. other natural processes, no fences, more abiotic heterogeneity) would not be taken. In the end it would be the same as during the former management in the Oostvaardersplassen, ending with domination of short grazed grasslands, thousands of geese, lapwings, and annual 30% mortality of large herbivores due to starvation. If one aims at more diversity, more dynamics, more room for other natural processes and other wetland related animal species, than the former management is insufficient.

Although at this moment we are not working anymore on a connection with Horsterwold and Veluwe, it does not mean we do not consider this opportunity. In the 'Van Geel advice' for the area there will be no irreversible developments which could impede a possible future connection. This leaves the option open in order to be able to realise the connection in due course.

6. Section 4.8, 5th header "**General conclusions on management choices**", page 17
"*We are in favour of a system where action is taken at the level of the entire area, both in terms of the marsh system (water level management) and the grazing regime. In addition, natural populations fluctuations (due to migration, diseases, predation) must and can be simulated. ..... In any case, the current grazing pressure in natural system is never as high as in the OVP, also with the implementation of the van Geel management advice, and will never result in a more variable vegetation structure referring to the shifting mosaics model ...*"

   We fully agree with this paragraph of the authors. In 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 we mention different reasons why to change the former management and in most cases it has to do with the un-naturally high numbers of large herbivores because the system is not complete. In our new management we opt for integral management of the entire area in which water level dynamics and herbivore dynamics are the major drivers for the dynamic and gradient rich landscape. We believe that we can achieve this by connecting the wetland to the lake Markermeer to introduce more water level dynamics and energy and nutrient cycling and by simulating natural large herbivore population dynamics and natural age and sex ratios within the herds of large herbivores.

   We do not think that the large herbivore numbers mentioned by Van Geel are too high. One should take into account that the area is highly productive (comparable to fertilized grasslands for dairy or meat production). The numbers are based on experiences of the Oostvaardersplassen. But beside that, the point is that the number of animals should decrease a lot. How far the numbers should decrease, will be based on monitoring and research. Once we know how many animals are needed on average to achieve the conservation goals, we can take the next step and find out what kind of populations dynamics are needed to get the desired dynamics and gradients.

7. Section 6.2, Recommendation 6, header "*Expert observation and comments:*", page 25
" Very regrettably, ... I consider this as a major missed chance to create/maintain a unique almost entirely process driven approach, that would long be exemplary for future management approaches all over Europe (e.g. rewilding initiatives .....)."

   We also regret that the former non-intervention management of large herbivores did not meet the goals for conservation of the wetland in the end. It looked promising in the beginning, but, based on monitoring and research, we have learned that in the end, and probably in the long term, the area stayed and will stay in a phase of short grazed grasslands. This will not be beneficial to all of the wetland related bird species the area is meant for. In 1-6 we have explained the reasons for changing the management of the large herbivores. We also explained that the former non-intervention management of large herbivores was far from a natural situation as the system is not complete (lacking or not fully operating essential natural processes; lots of human intervention; isolated area; etc.). This leads to a wetland landscape that is far from 'truly wild nature'. The authors also concluded this in their paragraph "**How about the Minimal Intervention System**?". We have explained that managers sometimes have to prioritize the goals. We feel that in our case conservation of nature goes beyond science or being an example for other nature reserves once it is clear that the management no longer fully meets the goals for conservation. The international importance of the area for migratory birds plays an important role in these considerations.

   This does not mean that we don't have a vision for the long term in which non-intervention plays an important role again. We agree that in the long term large areas and robust corridors with non- or minimal intervention will be the solution for the conservation of biodiversity. We think that this can be introduced in the Oostvaardersplassen once the area is made more complete (room for all other natural processes, enlarging the area to increase abiotic heterogeneity, changing conditions hydrology by connecting the wetland to the large lake,

preparing surrounding areas for corridors to other large nature reserves, etc.) to meet the definition of rewilding. According to us, rewilding is not about non-intervention of just one of the many natural processes which was the case at the Oostvaardersplassen. It is more about complete systems, non-intervention of all natural processes and free migration (no fences), and this was not the case at the Oostvaardersplassen.

8. Section 6.2, Recommendation 6, header "*Expert observation and comments:*", page 25
"*There are several indications that the new management is not anymore within the philosophy and concrete management measures and goals of the N2000 management plan, that was accepted in 2015 (Kuil et al. 2015). Several measures, not in the least shooting of large numbers of large herbivores, interferes with the N2000 management plan and its goals*."

We do not know which indications and measures the authors refer to when they say that these interfere with the N2000 management plan and its goals.
The goals for Natura 2000 and the measures taken right now are clear. The former management of large herbivores did not interfere with these goals or measures when the project of the Natura 2000 management plan was carried out. We also would like to explain that at the time the Natura 2000 plan was made and accepted, the writers of the plan expected a strong decrease of the large herbivore populations, based on a graph of 2013. On page 31 of the Natura 2000 plan they write:

" *De populaties grote herbivoren in de Oostvaardersplassen zijn direct na introductie sterk gegroeid en vertonen de laatste twee jaar een aanzienlijke daling."*
(Transl. The large herbivore populations of the Oostvaardersplassen increased strongly after introduction and showed a significant decline in the past two years.).

We now know, that there was no significant permanent decrease. After 2013, the populations increased again up to 5,000 animals in December 2017 and on average about 3,500 in May after winter mortality. This means that some of the expectations in the Natura 2000 plan were not based on the right assumptions.

After the Natura 2000 plan was ready, it became clear that the former management of large herbivores did not fully meet the goals for Natura 2000, and more importantly, for biodiversity in general anymore. In the Natura 2000 management plan the following sentence on page 23 explains:

"*Wanneer uit monitoring blijkt dat begrazing door grote herbivoren, tegen de verwachting in, het behalen van de Natura 2000-doelen structureel en op lange termijn in de weg staat, zal er opnieuw naar deze aanpak gekeken moeten worden*."
(Transl. Where monitoring shows that grazing by large herbivores, contrary to expectations, is no longer achieving the Natura 2000 goals structurally and in the long term, the management of the large herbivore should be evaluated)

Based on monitoring and research, we have evaluated the former management and explained the reasons for changing the management strategy in 1-6, but changing the management strategy does not mean that we do not have to account for these Natura 2000 goals. We believe that the new strategy takes the Natura 2000 goals and biodiversity in general more into account than the former management in the end.

We do not fully understand the remark of the authors on the shooting of the animals and the interference with Natura 2000. The new strategy involves culling of red deer by shooting. However, the former management of large herbivores also included shooting. On average 30% of the total populations of large herbivores died each year of starvation. To prevent unnecessary

suffering of animals because of starvation, more than 90% of the animals had to be shot according to the so called 'early reactive culling' protocol as advised by ICMO-2. This meant that 800-1,200 animals were shot each year. In the new situation as the large herbivore numbers will be much lower, the total number of animals to be shot will be much lower, up to 200. So, the shooting itself is not different, the difference is that in the new management less animals are shot.

9. Section 6.2, Recommendation 6, header "**Conditional**", page 25, 26
"*Conditional for the renewal of the EDPA is that the present intensive management is not in conflict with the accepted and implemented N2000 management plan (Kuil et al. 2015) and the N2000 goals that were defined when registering the OVP Nature Reserve as a N2000 site.*"

We agree that the new management strategy should not be in conflict with the Natura 2000 goals and management plan. In 1-6 we have explained how we think to manage the large herbivore population by simulating natural population dynamics and age and sex ratios of the populations as much as possible, in order to create optimal conditions for the Natura 2000 species.

We think that lowering the total number of large herbivores and the annual culling of red deer by shooting in the new management are not contrary to the Natura 2000 plan. The Natura 2000 plan assumes the presence of large herbivores for management of vegetation. Lowering numbers and annual culling does not change that and it is not a radical change in the Natura 2000 plan as significant populations of large herbivores remain in the area to manage the vegetation. Furthermore, as mentioned in 8, shooting and transporting dead animals already took place during the former management on an even larger scale than will be the case in the new management strategy will be.

Appendix B. In response to the conditions and recommendations by Maurice Hoffmann in the "*Report on the spot expert appraisal of the De Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve (Netherlands), 30-31 August 2018*".

Conditions

1. *In the context of the development of the Lelystad airport ensure that the flight paths as determined in 2016 exclude overflights of the Oostvaarderplassen Nature Reserve. Obviously, in case the airport is expanded for larger planes and intercontinental flights in the future, the same condition holds.*

- Response applicant

Our response is based on the results of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA; in Dutch MER) of Airport Lelystad. The EIA reports can be found on:
https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2018/02/21/201833069-11-mer-actualisatie-hoofdrapport

The two paragraphs below are translated citations of the report on the research of bird movements carried out for the EIA. The last paragraph is the confirmation by the Council of States in which significant effects on the Oostvaardersplassen are excluded.
The report from which the paragraphs are citated, can be found on:
https://www.uitbreidinglelystadairport.nl/uploads/documents/17-0139-rapport-nulmeting-vogels-vlieqveld-lelystad-def-20181010.pdf

Citation report:
"*In and around Flevoland are several Natura 2000 areas. Two of these areas will be overflown by air traffic to and from Lelystad Airport: 1) Ketelmeer & Vossemeer; 2) Veluwerandmeren.* ***Oostvaardersplassen is passed at a distance of a few kilometres but is not overflown****. The said Natura 2000 areas are designated for a large number of breeding and non-breeding bird species. The designation is translated into a conservation objective. This objective oversees the conservation (or expansion) of the size and quality of the habitat (the capacity to carry) for a number (mentioned elsewhere) of breeding pairs and/or resting birds during bird migration and/or winter. The protection regime for these areas and their inhabitants is strict."*

"*In the decision-making process for Lelystad Airport it is judged that significant effects have been ruled out from overflying these areas on species and their objectives (Lensink 2015).* ***It is also judged that significant effects have been ruled out from passing Oostvaardersplassen at a distance of a few kilometres on species which partially forage or otherwise stay underneath the flightpath*** *(RvS 201600993/1/R6, 18 januari 2017)."*

2. *The N2000 management plan should be integrally respected and implemented in order to maintain the top reasons of the original EDPA appraisal, i.e. the large bird diversity and the Minimal Intervention Ecosystem Approach, with as limited as possible human intervention in large herbivore dynamics, but at the same time with great emphasis on an appropriate water dynamics management as given in the N2000 management plan. Hence, the Van Geel advice should not be implemented.*

- Response applicant

The 'Provincial Policy Framework for the Management of the Oostvaardersplassen' (i.e. 'the Van Geel advice'), which was adopted by the Provincial Council of Flevoland in July 2018, gives top priority to the implementation of the Natura 2000 management plan for the Oostvaardersplassen. The aim of the Provincial Policy Framework for the Oostvaardersplassen is: *"... realization of the Natura 2000 goals for the target species of the bird directive and realization of a nature area of high quality that is appreciated as such ..."*. Important urgent measures that have been taken to achieve these goals are:

the reset of reed vegetation in the marsh by lowering the water level for three years; the increase of the water table in parts of the grazed area (up to 5 km^2) to create inundated grasslands and a gradual transition between the marsh and the grazed area; the installation of fish ladders to connect the area to its surroundings and provide food for birds. Part of the Provincial Policy Framework is to reset the number of large herbivores and lowering the number of large herbivores to a population of 1,100 animals.

In July 2018, Staatsbosbeheer and the province of Flevoland have signed a covenant to jointly and energetically implement the measures, as referred to in the Provincial Policy Framework. Staatsbosbeheer has committed itself with the covenant to this new policy for the Oostvaardersplassen.

Recommendations

1. *Thoroughly monitor the effects of future flight activities at Lelystad Airport on birds, achievement of Natura 2000 goals, recreational impact and interest and general tranquillity of the core area and buffer zones of the Oostvaarderplassen Nature Reserve.*

- Response applicant

The effects of Lelystad Airport will be part of the existing monitoring and research programme whenever necessary.

2. *To give the Minimal Intervention Ecosystem Approach optimal chances in its contributions to management goals, the recommendation 6 of the 2009 expert report would best be partly implemented, i.e. the further extension of the reserve through establishing a wide corridor to Horsterwold, with free access of large herbivores to both corridor and Horsterwold.*

- Response applicant

The Provincial Policy Framework for the Management of the Oostvaardersplassen identifies that migration of large herbivores to other nature reserves in the province such as The Horsterwold area, is not allowed mid-term. For the long-term, the Policy Framework indicates not to take any measures in the Oostvaardersplassen area which can obstruct possibilities for future generations to create a corridor for the migration of large herbivores to other areas in order to create a more open and complete system.

3. *Maintain and further strengthen the cooperation between the management authorities, the surrounding municipalities and the province in order to limit the impacts on the Nature Reserve when reviewing urbanisation and zoning plans and ensure enough buffer zones around the core area of the Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve.*

- Response applicant

This will be carried out as is taking place in many projects concerning the area (e.g. National Park New Land: the two entrances to the Park at Almere and Lelystad).

4. *In cooperation with all layers of stakeholders (representatives of the local and regional authorities, managing authorities, scientists, NGOs and civil society associations) design a transparent and widely accepted control mechanism of the populations of large herbivore mammals. Keep on raising awareness and keep on informing the public at large about the objectives of such a mechanism, about its direct effect on animal welfare, and about its impact in the long term on the biodiversity of the nature reserve.*

- Response applicant

The Provincial Policy Framework for the Management of the Oostvaardersplassen gives the direction for the management of the large herbivores.

5. *Following the integration of the edge zones – i.e. Hollandse Hout, Oostvaardersveld, Kotterbos and Oostvaardersbos - into the nature reserve, finalise their management plans and ensure they are consistent with the management of the core area of the nature reserve.*

- Response applicant

For the Oostvaardersplassen area, a management plan is made. We started to fill in the management plan for the Natura 2000 area and in time, the edge zones will become an integral part of this management plan.

6. *Monitor the increase and impact of visitors to avoid any negative impact either on the quality of recreational experience or on the natural values of the Oostvaarderplassen Nature Reserve. Take remediating measures if monitoring results indicate negative effects on the intrinsic values of the NR.*

- Response applicant

The effects of visitors will be part of the monitoring and research programme for the Oostvaardersplassen.

7. *Give more visibility to the logo of the European Diploma and raise awareness about its aims and objectives on the website of the nature reserve, through social media, flyers, brochures, website and information panels in the visitor's centres and in the field.*

- Response applicant

We are proud of our European Diploma and will, once renewed, work to increase the awareness of the diploma and its aim following our communication strategy and National Park guidelines.

8. *Pursue the reflection about the creation of the National Park Nieuw Land encompassing the Oostvaarderplassen Nature Reserve and envisage applying for the European Diploma for the national park.*

- Response applicant

Since October 2018 National Park New Land is formally established. We think that with the next renewal of the European Diploma in five years, we will consider to broaden the application in consultation with our National Park partners

Appendix C. Update on the execution of earlier conditions and recommendations of the 2009 renewal.

The response below is supplementary to the report '*On the spot expert appraisal of the De Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve (Netherlands)*' by Hoffmann August 2018. The report of Hoffman is based on the results of the Annual Report of 2017, whereas the response below is based on the Annual report of 2018.

Conditions

- *With regard to new information received concerning the development of the Lelystad regional airport, despite the condition attached to the award in 1999, any development of the airport must not have any negative impact on the reserve; this is to be confirmed once the full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedure, including public consultation, has been finalised, and this should examine in particular:*

  - *all alternative locations with least disturbing effects on the De Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve and its surroundings;*

  - *all flight routes and heights and their risk of disturbing the fauna making use of the reserve and its surroundings as well as the risk of collision of birds with airplanes;*

- Response applicant (source Annual report 2018)

As reported in last year's up-date the flying-routes have been established respecting the Natura 2000 requirements. This means that airplanes fly only at high altitudes over the Oostvaardersplassen and that the upward and downward movements occur outside the nature reserve. Last year, it was decided to postpone the opening of the Airport until 2020. On 4 December, the European Commission lodged legal objections to the traffic division scheme required for airline companies to move from Schiphol to Lelystad. At the moment, a debate is being held in Parliament (the Second Chamber) about the Minister's new proposal to offer companies cargo flights as well as charter flights at Lelystad Airport as overflow from Schiphol Airport. This could mean that a new postponement will be requested for the opening of the Airport after 2020.

Recommendations

1. *the annual reports must include a specific paragraph on all developments in relation with Lelystad regional airport;*

- Response applicant (source Annual report 2018)

Around Lelystad Airport, developments are in full swing. An exit from the Larserweg is laid out towards the Airport. Staatsbosbeheer is involved in the construction of the exit and provides sand for the construction of the road. There are no new developments in this area compared to last year. Last year, the plans for the gate area developments on the Almere side were finalised and preparatory work has begun. This concerns the previously-initiated woodland changes in the Oostvaardersbos and the improvement of the roads and paths in the gate area. For the gate area on the Lelystad side (Hollandse Hout), the plans are still in an exploratory phase. The planning includes the improvement of the recreational infrastructure (bicycle paths, footpaths and parking spaces) and the construction of a water feature (Slenk) between Buizerdweg and Torenvalktocht. It is expected that in 2019 a start can be made with the first phase of the implementation.

2. *the authorities of the surrounding municipalities and the province must be persuaded to decrease external impacts on the reserve by reviewing urbanisation and zoning plans where appropriate;*

- Response applicant (source Annual report 2018)

In 2018, as part of the gate development on the Almere side, investments were made in personnel expansion for the Oostvaarders Visitor's Centre. From the summer onwards, two new staff members were recruited to shape the activities programme. The Municipality of Almere, Stichting Stad en Natuur and Staatsbosbeheer are working together on this project. This mainly concerns activities in the domain of nature education and experience. A complete activity programme for 2019 is currently being finalised with excursions, nature activities and events. Furthermore, the National Park New Land is taking into account zoning to decrease external impacts by developing two entrances.

3. *the optimal functioning of the two visitor's centres (Almere and Lelystad) should be ensured by increasing the budget for personnel, particularly with regard to the recruitment of communication experts;*

- Response applicant (source Annual report 2018)

In addition, a manager has been appointed for the gate area who will be responsible for improving the quality and expanding the recreational infrastructure in the Oostvaardersbos and Kotterbos woodlands. Last year, extra efforts were made in the domain of communication and environmental management with regard to the preparations and implementation of the new policy framework for the Oostvaardersplassen. Last winter, the discussion of the former management and the policy for the large grazers in the Oostvaardersplassen became harsher and the new policy framework, which has been in force since July 2018, has not yet reduced this tension. From March 2018 onwards, extra efforts were made to communicate the policy and the new policy framework and, in the course of last year, we were able to take the first steps in the implementation of the new policy.

4. *the further integration of adjacent green areas such as Hollandse Hout into the reserve management should be completed; priority should be given to rebuilding the railway along a new route to the south of this zone and opening a new railway station at Lelystad-Zuid;*

- Response applicant (source Annual report 2018)

The gully in Hollandse Hout is still being developed. This is expected to be completed in 2021. As part of these activities, it is not yet desirable to start introducing red deer in Hollandse Hout. Any possible policy adjustments for the peripheral zones (Hollandse Hout, Oostvaardersveld, Kotterbos and Oostvaardersbos) will be worked out next year. This also includes how to deal with the grazing and management of the large grazers (more specifically Red deer) in the peripheral zones.
In the Master Plan for the Nieuwland National Park (completion January 2019), the development of an 'Oostvaardersplassen' station near the Kitsweg-Knardijk intersection is being discussed. This is to increase public accessibility to the National Park. The idea for a station is on the agenda again.

5. *the visual impact of the urbanisation in Almere should be further minimised with the aim of a better gradual integration of the city into the open landscape by fully respecting the border and buffer zones of the reserve and by still further lowering the agreed building heights and volumes;*

- Response applicant (source Annual report 2018)

In the Oostvaardersplassen Almere gate area (new name for the gate area), a start was made last year with the planting of individual trees and shrubs. This is to create a more attractive landscape in an area dominated by poplars and open space, on the one hand, and to restore the woodland area after removal of standing crop of ash and poplars, on the other. This version takes into account a clearer separation between the town and the open nature of the Oostvaardersplassen, by creating a

denser plant population along the edges (greenhouse area and outer ring) and a more open plant population in the transition from the peripheral zone to the Natura2000 area.

6. *the recommendations of the ICMO (International Committee on the management of large herbivores in the De Oostvaardersplassen) report related to the management of the reserve and the further extension of the reserve should be implemented by building a corridor to Horsterwold; all efforts should be concentrated on establishing the De Oostvaarderswold as a multifunctional corridor with combined importance for nature conservation, recreation and water management; the existing windfarms along the future Oostvaarderswold corridor should be reviewed to reduce the risks of bird collisions and make it appear as "wild" as possible; new developments, infrastructures and investments in the future corridor zone other than those related to its specific ecological functions should be avoided; future ecological interconnection potential should be maximised by constructing wildlife crossings and tunnels where necessary.*

- Response applicant (source Annual report 2018)

As indicated in previous reports, the development of the Oostvaarderswold is no longer a topic on the political agenda and will no longer be reported. In order to achieve provincial nature objectives, the Province of Flevoland has been developing the New Nature programme since 2014. A broad initiative in which the nature objectives in other areas within the province are being realised. For the Oostvaardersplassen area, this means that investments were made last year and will continue in the coming years for the development of Marsh harrier compensation areas (Trekweg and Hollandse Hout Zuid). The recommendations of the Van Geel Committee do include a section on the Oostvaarderswold zone. There must be no irreversible developments in this area which could impede a possible future connection. This leaves the option open in order to be able to realise the connection between De Oostvaardersplassen and the Horsterwold in due course.

Appendix D. Overview criteria for the award of the EDPA and response applicant.

General criteria

A European interest		Response applicant
1	**Areas of particular importance for the conservation of biological diversity in Europe. They may comprise:**	
a	remarkable or threatened examples of plant or animal communities, as well as areas inhabited by a large number of species;	a. The Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve is a wetland of international importance for threatened migratory birds that breed, forage or rest in the area during the year, as the area is situated along the fly-way of many migratory bird species. Examples of bird species are the 31 Natura 2000 species the area is designated for. During May-July, the area is visited by up to 30,000 Greylag geese that use the area as a moulting site. During winter, the area is visited by tens of thousands of geese, lapwings and golden plovers. The Oostvaardersplassen was the first area in the Netherlands where the White tailed eagle started to hatch in 2006 and continued do to so each year.
b	highly representative samples of types of habitats and plant or animal communities constituting typical examples of the various kinds of ecosystem in Europe;	b. The Oostvaardersplassen represents an extensive wetland with large open water bodies, extensive reed beds, inundated and non-inundated grasslands with ponds, and softwood shrubs and trees. Given the fact that wetlands are world-wide an endangered ecosystem and the importance of the Oostvaardersplassen wetland for migratory birds (see a.), makes the area particularly important for the conservation of biological diversity in Europe
c	habitats in a an unfavourable state of conservation;	c. The present state of the wetland is favourable, and measures are taken and studies are carried out to make it more favourable (robust) for future (e.g. climate change).
d	habitats of endemic species or species in an unfavourable state of conservation, particularly endangered species;	d. This does not apply to the Oostvaardersplassen
e	breeding grounds of animals protected under the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (ETS No. 104) and resting and feeding areas for migratory species.	e. Besides the Natura 2000 breeding and non-breeding bird species, many more bird species on the Bern Convention list (appendix II and III) are present in the Oostvaardersplassen as breeding or non-breeding (migratory) species.
2	**Areas aimed at conserving remarkable natural phenomena or geological or physiographic formations characteristic of the Earth's history. These may include:**	
a	sites or complexes of major importance for the conservation of significant evidence of the Earth's history;	a. This does not apply to the Oostvaardersplassen

b	noteworthy palaeontological sites;	b. This does not apply to the Oostvaardersplassen
c	outstanding examples of geological, geomorphological, volcanic, hydrographic, physiographic or biogeographical phenomena;	c. This does not apply to the Oostvaardersplassen
d	particularly grandiose or spectacular examples of protected natural features such as waterfalls, caves, rock formations, glacial cirques, glaciers.	d. This does not apply to the Oostvaardersplassen
3	**Areas of particular importance for the conservation of landscape diversity in Europe. These may comprise:**	
a	sites or landscapes of outstanding aesthetic or cultural value or of a spectacular nature;	a. The Oostvaardersplassen is located in a man-made environment (the polder of Flevoland) and is bordered by two cities and agricultural fields. It is a unique example of successful large-scale wetland development in a densely populated country.
b	complexes conserved as evidence of the history of the countryside or woodlands in Europe;	b. This does not apply to the Oostvaardersplassen
c	country or wooded areas which are cultivated using extensive methods and constitute typical examples of European landscapes.	c. This does not apply to the Oostvaardersplassen

B Protection measures	**Response applicant**
1 have a legal protection status, by means of an act or decree of the competent authorities certifying that the area is adequately protected;	1. The area is protected by the Dutch law 'Wet Natuurbescherming' which protects Dutch nature areas and in the wild living plants and animals. The Province of Flevoland is the regional competent authority for the protection of nature areas and plant and animal species and for granting exemptions and permits. The Oostvaardersplassen is a designated Natura 2000 area for 31 bird species and as such protected by the Dutch law 'Wet Natuurbescherming'. The area is also part of the National Nature Network and designated by the Province of Flevoland as a nature area where certain designated goals are to be achieved (.e.g. marshland, forest). And, although this does not provide legal protection, the Oostvaardersplassen is part of the National Park New Land since October 2018
2 be taken into account in regional planning in order to prevent the approval of projects which run counter to the objectives of the area;	2. In regional and local policy, the area is designated as nature area which guarantees a thorough procedure is to be followed when new developments are being suggested. Procedures have to take into account the above mentioned legal protection status.

3	**be the subject, if possible, of a zoning, which must indicate the objectives of each subdivision described; the boundaries between the area for which an application is submitted and the surrounding area must be clearly marked on a plan or a geographical map, particularly where there are nearby protected areas with different objectives (as is often the case in a biosphere reserve); failing that, the uses of the land which are authorised should be clearly indicated;**	**3.** The National Park New Land zoning system works similar as the Man and Biosphere Programme where nature core areas are surrounded by more multifunctional nature areas that are finally surrounded by areas that are not nature by function but do take into account the special status of the National Park.
4	**be the subject of a development and management plan (finalised or in preparation). As management constitutes an important point in judging the application, the various aspects of management will need to be presented in detail and objectively assessed, principally with regard to those entailing more extensive subsequent development;**	**4.** Staatsbosbeheer has management plans for all nature areas they manage.
5	**be assessed taking into account the impact that the surrounding area has or is likely to have on it;**	**5.** Based on monitoring and research the effects will be assessed.
6	**have an organisation which provides guarantees concerning staff and financial resources. The latter must be sufficient to ensure management that meets the objectives of the protection area. A staff organisation chart applicable at the time of lodging the application, and a presentation of the budget for the two previous years, will constitute useful information for evaluating the form of management of the applicant area.**	**6.** Staatsbosbeheer owns and manages the national nature areas of the Netherlands for over 120 years. Our mission is to protect nature, let people enjoy nature and durably supply sustainable products for society.

Specific criteria

A The essential goal of the protected area is to preserve biological and landscape diversity and ecosystems.	**Response applicant**
1 existence of strict regulations on any artificial change in the environment or any biological and geological depredation (no hunting, fishing, picking, cutting or uprooting), with certain possible exceptions for justifiable scientific purposes aimed at controlling or maintaining certain species and/or environments;	1. In the area there is no hunting, fishing, picking, cutting or uprooting allowed. For the protection and conservation of the Natura 2000 species, measures are taken (see Natura 2000 management plan) to create habitats or improve habitat quality. These measures include: actively lowering the water level in the marsh for 3 years to regenerate the marsh vegetation; increasing the area with inundated grasslands by increasing the ground water level; the creation of ponds within the inundated grasslands.
2 absence of permanent human occupation and of economic activities such as agriculture, forestry, mining, industry and tourism (no development). Certain traditional activities may be authorised for the sole purpose of maintaining the environment. Certain obligations, previous to the award of the Diploma, can be allowed to continue, provided they are localised and controlled and do not interfere with maintaining the biological and landscape diversity of the area. An attempt should be made to minimise or even eliminate them	2. There is no human occupation or economic activity other than the management building and visitor centre. Excursions in the area are guided tours by the manager.

3	guarantees that the existing human activities and installations in the surrounding area cannot damage the physical and biological integrity of the protected area;	3. Human activities are: management tasks, monitoring and research, and guided field excursions. These activities are fitted to the capacity of the area with regard to disturbance of plants and animals.
4	supervision, arrangements for patrolling by wardens or any other means with the possibility of enforcement, such as the power to report offenders;	4. The area is visited by the rangers on a daily basis, several times a day. Some of the rangers have the power to halt and report offenders
5	no access for the public unless specially authorised and in any case regulated and/or channelled in a manner appropriate to the habitats;	5. Public only have access when authorized by the manager or by participating guided tours. A small part close to the visitors centre is open for public.
6	presentation, in keeping with the ecological interest of the area, of research and monitoring programmes.	6. We have made a monitoring and research programme for the area and cooperate in the monitoring and research programme of the National Park Nieuw Land. We seed the cooperation with universities and applied universities for carrying out our monitoring and research programme.

B	**The objective of the protected area is to preserve biological and landscape diversity, together with harmonious and sustainable development of socio-economic and educational functions.**	**Response applicant**
1	**the type of use of the land must be clearly indicated, especially where agriculture, forestry, tourism, leisure activities, buildings and infrastructures are concerned, as well as the respective owners;**	1. This does not apply to the Oostvaardersplassen
2	**permanent human occupation and socio-economic activities must be conceived in such a way as to uphold the principles of sustainable development; they must not damage the integrity of the natural and cultural values of the protected area;**	2. This does not apply to the Oostvaardersplassen
3	**hunting and fishing may be tolerated providing that it is subject to a strict regulation to avoid weakening the animal population;**	3. This does not apply to the Oostvaardersplassen
4	**there must be adequate supervision, including the possibility of enforcement, in order to prevent damage those aspects specifically protected;**	4. This does not apply to the Oostvaardersplassen
5	**public access must be authorised and regulated; in certain cases it may be unrestricted. Provision must always be made for reception centres and educational facilities in order to channel the public and thereby avoid damage.**	5. This does not apply to the Oostvaardersplassen