



Planning Multifunctional Green Heritage

A **TOOLKIT** for planning
the revitalisation of
underused green
heritages zones



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Contents

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 1. | Introduction..... | 3 |
| 2. | Description of the local projects: 5 case studies | 4 |
| A. | Purpose..... | 4 |
| B. | Applying the toolkit | 6 |
| 1. | <i>Find your basics</i> | 7 |
| a. | <i>Focus of the Key Actions</i> | 7 |
| | 1. <i>Strong foundations</i> :..... | 7 |
| | 2. <i>Don't do it alone</i> :..... | 8 |
| | 3. <i>Think large and think supportive</i> :..... | 9 |
| | 4. <i>Inclusive but innovative</i> :..... | 9 |
| b. | <i>Building Blocks/ Puzzle Pieces</i> | 10 |
| c. | <i>(recommended) Result: a shared target</i> | 11 |
| 2. | <i>Plan, act and manage</i> | 12 |
| a. | <i>Focus of the Key Actions</i> | 12 |
| | 1. <i>Plan and manage</i> :..... | 12 |
| | 2. <i>Act!</i> | 12 |
| b. | <i>Building Blocks/ Puzzle Pieces</i> | 13 |
| c. | <i>(recommended) Result: a shared and viable plan</i> | 14 |
| 3. | <i>Local embedment and involvement</i> | 15 |
| a. | <i>Focus of the Key Actions</i> | 15 |
| b. | <i>Building Blocks/ Puzzle Pieces</i> | 16 |
| | 1. <i>Spatial and physical connection</i> : | 17 |
| c. | <i>(recommended) Result: a shared programme</i> | 19 |



| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 4. | <i>Create coherence in versatility and stake your attractions</i> | 20 |
| | <i>a.Focus of the Key Actions</i> | 20 |
| | <i>b.Building Blocks/ Puzzle Pieces</i> | 20 |
| | 1.Principal assets | 20 |
| | 2.Attractions: | 21 |
| | 3.Activities | 22 |
| | 4.Functions | 22 |
| | <i>c. (recommended) Result: a shared identity</i> | 23 |
| 5. | <i>Provide clear and accessible access</i> | 24 |
| | <i>a.Focus of the Key Actions</i> | 24 |
| | <i>b.Building Blocks/ Puzzle Pieces</i> | 25 |
| | 1.Attractive Gateways | 25 |
| | 2.Transport hub | 25 |
| | 3.Regional narrative | 26 |
| | 4.Signage | 27 |
| | 5.Message | 28 |
| | 6.Interpretation: app's and modern technologies | 28 |
| | 7.Logo | 29 |
| | <i>c.(recommended) Result: a sense of unity</i> | 30 |
| 6. | <i>Market Uniqueness!</i> | 30 |
| | <i>Result; a unique selling position and strong brand</i> | 31 |
| | <i>Schema</i> | 32 |

Front Page Photographs:

Top left: Belfairs Woodland Centre; Top Right: Rumst Cycle Path, Antwerp

Middle left: WWII gun on Atlantic wall Raversyde, West Flanders; Middle Right: Le Ferme des Aigrettes

Bottom Left: Thames Estuary Path, South Essex; Bottom Right: Water Square, Rotterdam

1. Introduction

The MaxiGreen project across the Two Seas area seeks to address common cross border issues of poor access, an industrialised and degraded landscape and negative images of larger underused, (green) zones. This project seeks to collectively tackle these negative issues by turning them into positive features. These coastal areas of the MaxiGreen projects have experienced industrial or urban decline leading to extensive disused sites, which nature has reclaimed creating habitats that are exceptional for biodiversity. In addition, the vacated space, the variety of habitats and the differing features, such as old railway lines, canals and flooded mineral pits, have the ability to create multifunctional and connected parks, providing multiple benefits. This multi-historical green infrastructure is referred to as Green Heritage.

The challenges of the MaxiGreen projects were multiple: not only was its aim to bring new use to green heritage zones with great potential. Also, it aimed to turn a negative image into positive attractions that can lever regional development. Finally, it aims to raise the awareness of those Green heritages and their specific interests for their surroundings, environmentally as well as socially.

Based on six case studies, MaxiGreen partners have shared their experience and knowledge on how to revitalise those zones and provide other projects with some anchors, when developing similar projects.

As one of the outputs of 3 years of MaxiGreen-cooperation, is the development of 3 different reports for 3 major Work Packages that the project partners undertook: The planning and visioning of the future of the green heritage, the raising awareness concerning those zones and the accessibility of the zones to welcome visitors and users.

All three reports however, should be seen as a whole. If we are planning and creating a vision for future zones, the access, social function and image of the green heritage zone are important parts and “building blocks” for the project itself.

This document is a toolkit for the planning and visioning element of projects, Work package 1. Many interactions and cross overs with the “raising awareness” and “accessibility” work packages will also be mentioned in this toolkit.



2. Description of the local projects: 6 case studies

MaxiGreen conducted 6 case studies for the first work package. They were all very different in size and aim, but all based on the same problems and opportunities; turning large underused, green spaces into new green spaces and levers for regional development.

1. South Essex Marshes
2. Excavation area Boom-Rumst (Rupel Project)
3. Ferme des Aigrettes
4. Raversijde-domain
5. The Belfairs and Daws Heath Living Landscape
6. Water Square Benthemplein, Rotterdam

3. A Toolkit for future projects: Key actions, puzzle pieces and stepping stones

A. Purpose

During the MaxiGreen-project, all the different case studies were different in project-design and process, but **6 key actions** were commonly identified as key factors for planning a successful revitalisation process.

They all appeared to have the capacity of tilting the processes in the right direction, and therefore seem crucial to be taken into account for turning a promising plan into a successful project: These being:

1. **Find your basics**
2. **Plan, act and manage**
3. **Local embedment and involvement**
4. **Create coherence and stake your attractions**
5. **Provide clear and accessible access**
6. **Market uniqueness!**

Using these 6 key actions as a guideline through the planning process, a MaxiGreen toolkit for planning multifunctional green heritage emerges. By taking a closer look at the different steps to be considered in regards to the final result, the MaxiGreen toolkit is made up by a multipath flow chart consisting of practical and philosophical tips and tricks, important puzzle pieces and recommended actions.

All individual processes for each project were tailor made, but these key actions and pieces of the puzzle provided a thorough backbone for the MaxiGreen local projects to build upon. Therefore, for all of the actions this toolkit will provide some tips and tricks, examples and lessons learned from the MaxiGreen projects. Rather than providing others projects with fixed prescription, it allows flexibility in the planning process, since one size will not fit all projects. Because of the difference in backgrounds, size, priorities or settings of the MaxiGreen projects, the toolkit did not become a detailed roadmap for planning processes. It aims at sharing our mutual understanding and knowledge of leading Green Heritage revitalisation projects and hand out some firm and already tested approaches when planning multifunctional green heritage.

The different “tools” described, will be illustrated by concrete examples and events of the MaxiGreen case studies and visioning processes.

‘MaxiGreen examples are shown like this in italics throughout the toolkit.’

MaxiGreen Project Name

B. Applying the toolkit

The **accompanying schema** is a summarised representation of this complex but flexible toolkit. There are three elements/issues within the toolkit which are fixed these being;

1. There are key actions that need to be taken into account, consisting of;
2. multiple puzzle pieces, but emerging in;
3. concrete result as a stepping stone, which results in a vision (Unique Selling Proposition).

How you get from the first to the last stage, which pieces of the puzzle you lay out and where, will be different in all projects. Action, puzzle pieces and result **provide the key elements needed** for the planning and development of a sustainable project, as seen and experienced by the MaxiGreen-consortium.

The toolkit states 6 key actions: but to implement them, there is a variety of puzzle pieces, stepping stones to be taken and to be laid out. As a third part of the toolkit, this should result in a proposed result. Results of all six key actions should be streamed into a final plan.

Note that the building blocks set out in the schema can be mixed up and are not entirely fixed in any of the key actions. But this also goes for the actions itself: they are intertwined and will not follow one chronological pathway to the final plan.



1. Find your basics

a. Focus of the Key Actions

1. Strong foundations:

Derelict or underused spaces have their own strengths and assets. In many cases, they are not all that clear or visible. Historic industrial usage leaves unique traces and stories, abandoned and inaccessible sites producing new habitats, abundance of provoking multiple yet informal uses. Many of those things have been emerging through long and sometimes undisturbed processes. This makes strong foundations to build upon. Although it is not always easy to see, let alone know and comprehend them, they provided strong assets for revitalising these places. Finding and identifying the basics for further elaboration is the first but necessary step to take.

Not only will hidden assets be present, but also other considerations such as; multi-ownerships, environmental hazards, financial consequences or legal constrictions that need to be examined and included in the further planning process.

Don't forget to analyse the potential and considerations of the location (i.e. puzzle pieces). Including, what are the anchors to their surroundings [i.e. nature, heritage...]. But also what local needs are already present in and around? What regional assets can be strengthened by this green heritage zone?

The foundations identified for the sites/spaces will need to be consistent, strong and provide clear building blocks for the further elaboration of the project.

'The assets of the site were identified and found to have interlinking values – there are landscape and nature values that have a heritage value and are important locally. Regionally it is an area of interest as the largest area of ancient woodland in South-east Essex.'

Belfairs and Daws Heath Living Landscape

'Reviewing existing studies, incorporating proposal for recent and future committed spatial projects, site surveys and number of public consultations were for us the start to produce a cohesive vision for the whole of the South Essex Marshes/the clay excavation area Boom-Rumst'

South Essex Marshes & Excavation area- Boom, Rupel Region

'Starting from analysing the overall uses of the area, and the main challenges needed to be take into account (i.e. nature preservation, sport facility's needs, parking requirements, neighbouring negative externalities) we were able to design a more precise and relevant vision for the overall area.'

Ferme des Aigrettes



2. Don't do it alone:

Many assets are, as mentioned, hidden. Dialogue and cooperation with current users and connoisseurs will be necessary to be able to 'find your basics'. It is necessary to start building a network of (local) partners from day one, because a broad knowledge is necessary to build up expertise about i.e. future use, opportunities and possible conflicts (which can prove to be fruitful!!). It is also necessary, on the other hand, to be able to successfully integrate the future results of the project into social, societal, ecological or economic circumstances.



'The province of Antwerp worked together intensely with the Flemish and municipal governments and organisations, local stakeholders and inhabitants. Cooperation is essential and pays off! We started from the beginning with a letter of intent to cooperate, signed by the policymakers of province and the communities.'

Excavation area- Boom, Rupel Region

'Pull together a consultation group to understand the interlinking threads of a site with landowners, site managers etc. It may be worth having service providers and environmental bodies involved at this stage also.'

Belfairs and Daws Heath Living Landscape

'Many partners (institutional, expert and citizens) were involved in the process; the sooner they are aware and involved, the more successful the project! It even helped to choose the street name that would lead to the site - "Allée de la Découverte".'

Ferme des Aigrettes

3. Think large and think supportive:

Reducing certain disturbances, maximising visitors' numbers, etc... are targets that need to be set. They will also need to be demonstrable and can easily measure the success of the projects. But agreeing on a target that is more imaginable can also provide enthusiasm and positive involvement. Based upon the strengths and shared visions of all stakeholders this can create a new positive identity, and a new driving force.

'The public consultation proved to be a valuable tool to help shape the final Landscape Vision and to create and identify for the South Essex Marshes and the overall response was very positive, as many respondents were not aware of the range of facilities on offer across the area.' – think supportive.

South Essex Marshes

'It was agreed with partners, that by the first year, the Farm should reach at least the number of inhabitants of the town (10,000). We actually got nearly 3 times this figure; therefore it was a good thing not to be too demanding at once, but always to have new objectives.'

Ferme des Aigrettes

'Although the Rupel area (5 communities) has a bad reputation of being an abandoned industrial landscape with blue-collar community, the region has many assets. The MaxiGreen project however involved only 2 of the 5 communities: Boom and Rumst. In the early stage of the project we were always confronted with the problem where to put the physical borders of the project area as we couldn't reflect on Boom and Rumst without taking the 3 other communities in account. Finally we decided to think larger and we chose to make a spatial Framework vision for Boom and Rumst AND also a conceptual masterplan for the whole region.'

Excavation area- Boom, Rupel Region

4. Inclusive but innovative:

Incorporating expectations and fears from the start of the process will help to define a target that can be supported by all. Of course, realistic aims need be set to make the target feasible.

'An area within the Rupel project was destined to become a golf course, but most of the local inhabitants were not agreeable to this idea. Therefore, making a vision for the golf course area had to incorporate this stumbling block from the beginning as it was an important issue which could lead to a failure of the project. So, we faced this fear and looked for an inclusive and innovative solution. By doing so the defensive attitude of some partners became a cooperative one.'

Excavation area- Boom, Rupel Region



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b. Building Blocks/ Puzzle Pieces

As mentioned above, the basics of your vision need to be firm and sustainable. MaxiGreen defined 6 stepping stones that could be moulded into a solid basis to build upon for underused green heritage zone;

1. Nature and landscape assets
2. Heritage and heritage value
3. Assets of the specific localisation
4. Local needs
5. Regional assets
6. Current (informal) use and image

These building blocks could then be laid out as puzzle pieces; the formats will vary differently for all different cases/projects, so the way they are jig sawed together can differ greatly. However, MaxiGreen did experience that the local speciality for each of the blocks could provide the solid base needed.

'The Farm is a great example of the local history of farming and agriculture; with this in mind, the local community also needed a green space to rest and relax, which there was nowhere similar in the city. Also there was a need for a strong educational centre in the urban area near Calais.'

Ferme des Aigrettes

'The South Essex Marshes has a wealth of Green Heritage offering recreational and educational value from its historic industrial usage and biodiversity. The landscape is dominated by creeks and marshes, European Special Protected Areas and Ramsar sites, bordered to the north by settlements and to the south the shore of the Thames, all important features to be considered in the vision planning for the area.'

South Essex Marshes





c. (recommended) Result: a shared target

As a result, these building blocks should be built to produce a clear and firm target – a target which is common, shared and realistic.

Fitting the puzzle pieces together with all stakeholders, gives you the possibility not only to manage their expectations, but also to tackle possible discussions from the start of the process. Even if it takes more time to lay out the puzzle, the first stepping stone could smooth the later visioning and planning process.

'Different stakeholders from different sectorial departments (nature, heritage, mobility, spatial planning...) agreed upon one shared target: to create a new, green and public space'

Excavation area- Boom, Rupel Region

'The aim of the South Essex Marshes is to turn the marshes into a more attractive and visitor-friendly place, offering a haven for people seeking recreation or place to relax. The creation of a Thames Estuary Path, signage and mobile app enhances visitor's experience.'

South Essex Marshes



2. Plan, act and manage

a. Focus of the Key Actions

1. Plan and manage:

Once your basics are laid out and agreed upon, it will help to keep future management in mind whilst planning. Many of the MaxiGreen partners have made up management plans to link present with future use and keep the plan alive after the project is delivered. Adopting this in the initial planning process will not only ease the road of implementation, but has also eased the planning process itself by defining feasible plans. Use what there is – i.e. financially viable.

'A project plan was drawn up taking consideration of the landscape value, the community and stakeholder involvement and the project implications. This 'Activity Plan' was then used to understand the financial costs of the project and fundraise.'

Belfairs and Daws Health Living Landscape

2. Act!

Draw a clear process line, stating milestones and results that can be prepared, tested and depicted by concrete actions. They are a powerful tool for visioning expected results, for staking the importance of future plans, processes and investments, but also for adopted grassroots ideas into concrete realisations. Pilot projects can pull up possibilities for heritage and nature assets. While planning 'Green Heritage Zones' the position of the green heritage could be an Achilles heel for development. Stating its importance by acting upon it first, can set out directions and raise awareness.

'As the spatial Framework Vision was a difficult and long term process, we decided to focus on an activity plan for smaller or bigger realisations to keep the project alive. An important milestone i.e. early in the project, was the creation of a foot and cycle path through the clay excavation pits. This important shortcut for the locals was opened with a public winter event with a lot of activities to explore the landscape of the clay pits. Other milestones were the renewing of a walking route, the transformation of an old water tower in a visitor centre with a panoramic view, a new cycle path connection between the river Rupel and the recreational domain De Schorre etc.'

Excavation area- Boom, Rupel Region



b. Building Blocks/ Puzzle Pieces

1. The pieces of the **puzzle** to be laid out here are many and varied; for example, the Economics, ecology and educational. In most cases, these will coincide spontaneously. Combining ecological with economical target and expectations, or historical with recreational will not be easy, but can be empowering for all sides.

Giving each of the pieces a specific place and role will be a complex process and need to be tailor made (and thus based upon thorough and correct analysis). Indeed, defining the pieces of the puzzles itself need to be sharp and shared, before finding a way to jigsaw (piece them together) smoothly.

2. **Multi-:** Multi-functionality is not always evident, whilst allocating different uses to one area is not always preferable. And if it is, there are different ways of going about it: for example, it can be achieved by making clear cuts between (mono) functional zones, but it can also be achieved by layering well thoughtout and well defined functions on just one zone. With regards to to the latter, coherence will more easily be achieved by extending ‘red threads’ (like trails, paths, habitats, plantings, functions, etc.) through different zones.

Multi-zoning (the first case) will be easier, but will also be less extraordinary and appealing in the long term. Nonetheless, there are also other “multi” aspects that play a role and will need to be considered: such as, multi-stakeholders, multi-ownership, multiple layers (i.e. historical, environmental...): therefore, thorough knowledge and analyses will be needed,

3. **Connectivity:** Incorporate existing ideas. Undoubtedly, many ideas may exist about the zones concerned. Harvesting them and incorporating strong parts in the planning process or the final plan will be a benefit for making it a broadly shared plan. But, more importantly, there is no need to “reinvent the wheel” - Good ideas and their authors need to be valued.
4. **Conflict and /or disturbance** of any kind. Frictions and conflicts can be powerful engines, which needs to be steered in the right direction. Dealing with them, instead of avoiding them has proved to be constructive for the MaxiGreen project (which often could be hardening or delaying the process if ignored).
5. **Added Value:** it is a cliché, but 1+1 has to equal 3. There has to be some added value in the puzzle as a whole; because it’s unique, for instance it has spin offs in awareness, conservation of nature or heritage, social cohesion, or economically.

'The ambition of the Province of West Flanders was to develop the Provincial domain Raversijde as a public-friendly heritage site in a nature environment and as an important all-weather visitor attraction. Therefore a coherent master plan for the site, a vision on green management, a museum study and a promotional plan and implementation of those visions were executed.'

Raversijde domain

'Once we had established the 'multi' – the multifunctionality of the site, the multi-ownership, the multipurpose, we could work out the connectivity of the site and from that any conflicts that appear. This ensured a good understanding of the project and potential pitfalls.'

Belfairs and Daws Heath Living Landscape



c. (recommended) Result: a shared and viable plan

... can work miracles in the short and long term. MaxiGreen strongly believes that especially the indirect impacts of these kinds of revitalisation projects will be present in many years to come. In many cases, the MaxiGreen projects therefore had experts involved who could objectively figure and calculate scenarios and outcomes.



'The South Essex Marshes Landscape Vision created a composite spatial framework, showing and orientating principle assets, attractions and accessibility through the Thames Estuary Path and local train network. The vision plan formed a useful starting point to generate more detailed proposals for the marshlands.'

South Essex Marshes

'After the decision of the shared target, we started with different sectorial plans from the different sectorial partners: mobility plan, nature exploitation plan, heritage inventory, spatial plan, to focus deeper on the details. All the sectorial plans were integrated in one spatial Framework vision plan'

Excavation area- Boom, Rupel Region



3. Local embedment and involvement

a. Focus of the Key Actions

A major key to success is local involvement and support.

It makes little sense to aim for sustainability without aiming for local support. There are many ways in which local opponents can express their concerns, but not many in which they can express their support and their belief. Constant communication, constant involvement in many different ways is necessary, but it is hard work. It is also indispensable for sustainable use and success of the project. MaxiGreen believes the investment in involvement and participation activities are necessary from the start of the project and will, in the end achieve a major 'return on investment'.

'A series of events were developed for a wide range of audiences to make them feel involved and eager to join in (i.e. family workshops, conferences and educational activities); whilst getting ideas from the visitor and neighbouring inhabitants themselves. The more neighbours feel involved in a project, the more they will find it a "community" place.'

Ferme des Aigrettes

'Local involvement and participation was an integrated and official part of the process: for instance, a workshop with many local stakeholders to define the Rupel region DNA, information and participation sessions at different steps of the process, public activities and events.'

Excavation area- Boom, Rupel Region

'A community and schools consultation was undertaken. Feedback is a two way process and does not end. We are still listening to our partners and visitors for feedback to improve the project. This will be ongoing through the life of the project.'

Belfairs and Daws Health Living Landscape



b. Building Blocks/ Puzzle Pieces

A wide range of tools and formats are used to connect local people and ideas to the Green heritage zones i.e.:

1. (larger) events
2. on site information
3. (lots of) debates, discussions and participation workshops

They do not all target the same audiences - depending on the needs and aims, different target groups create different added values. Having a major festival can really put areas 'on the map' or can create a buzz around what you think is necessary. Local events can create firm knowledge and create a sort of oneness that can be important in later stages ...

'The main aim of the project was, besides the storage of water after heavy rainfall, create an attractive square to be used by the local community. Thanks to the involvement of the future users (the school, the church and the fitness centre) in the design of the square, this is achieved. On the square there are zones for activities such as sport, school theatre, skateboarding, relaxing and church activities.'

Water Square Benthemplein, Rotterdam

'A total of 17 events were undertaken across nine communities consulting on the vision and plans for the South Essex Marshes, whilst progress was being communicated through community newsletters. The aim was to engage a wide mix of people (including existing users and those who currently do not visit the marshes). Building upon this engagement local residents and organisations were invited to be involved in the development of a Thames Estuary Path mobile app.'

South Essex Marshes

'The worldwide known dance festival Tomorrowland is held in one of the clay pits of Boom. Local people have priority for buying tickets.'

Connecting your site to an important event with benefits for local inhabitants can be a major promotion for your site.'

Excavation area- Boom, Rupel Region

1. Spatial and physical connection:

Not only local involvement in the planning process, but also **spatial connections** and embedment with its **surroundings** proved major asset in the MaxiGreen plans. I.e. Spatial and environmental context, connectivity, pick upon surrounding initiatives, projects, strengths or opportunities.



'The Landscape Vision shows how local communities and visitors can access the marshes via numerous "gateways", these mainly being the 6 local train stations and clearly illustrates the key recreational sites, visitor attractions, local towns and villages connected via a Thames Estuary Path, unifying the South Essex Marshes.'

South Essex Marshes

'A new cycle path was made to connect the cycling path alongside the river Rupel to the clay excavation area. Yearly 300,000 cyclists make use of the riverside cycling path but due to the missing link, we couldn't attract them to the green area more inland. The new cycling path filled in this important gap.'

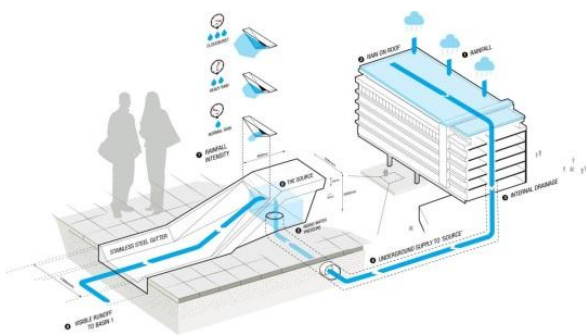
Excavation area- Boom, Rupel Region



- Not only **picking up on** the physical environment, but also on the mental image or ideas about the surrounding zones - projects or activities can be a great support for setting up the most effective programme for the zone concerned.

'We have given an image or 'brand' to the landscape to give a mental image of the area – we have focused on the rare Heath Fritillary Butterfly.'

Belfairs and Daws Heath Living Landscape



'The water square is part of the Rotterdam climate adaption 'identity'. It is included in some guided architectural tours, though most visitors, exempt the local users, are either water management professionals or architects.'

Water Square Benthemplein, Rotterdam

- Identity:** highlighting/finding/creating an attractive and coherent identity for the zone is part of further key action. But to determine this, it is necessary to find out the local susceptibilities, ideas or views about this. What local communities see as a possible future for the site or wider area, can help form the right identity to focus the future processes, priorities, actions and attractions or projects.

'A workgroup was composed to discuss the design of Site Vancoillie. Several groups were involved: representatives for the future residents of the site, the community of Lichtervelde, Agency of heritage of Flanders... All partners made suggestions and comments on the design. Thus the design is very much appreciated through all users and groups, and gives a single identity to this site.'

West Flemish Heart



c. (recommended) Result: a shared programme

A shared programme will help to organise a path to implementing the plans that have been made. Here, you can designate responsibilities, tasks, timings and even budgets.

Incorporating **existing dynamics**, networks or projects (whether or not brought up by the conducted analyses) can make the composition of the puzzle pieces above much easier and more fitting into a solid stepping stone.

'Seeing all the attractive assets of the region (nature, landscape, heritage, water, history and culture...) made it clear that all the stakeholders had to work on one programme, one big idea: promoting the Rupel region as an important green lung in the centre of the Flemish heart (centre of 4 main cities), attractive for inhabitants and visitors.'

Excavation area- Boom, Rupel Region

'The Landscape Vision for the whole of the South Essex Marshlands has been an ambition for local partners, such as the Greengrid Network, which include public, private and third sector organisations and incorporates current and future spatial project proposals.'

South Essex Marshes



4. Create coherence in versatility and stake your attractions

a. Focus of the Key Actions

- Creating a red thread to sew together different parts or aspects of the green heritages Zone can strengthen the identity and attractiveness of the site. Without levelling off your winners, prioritising your attractions according to the message you want to share will be necessary to bind together the site as a whole. Interconnectivity, consistent use of materials, blending stories and linking spaces are necessary to create the added value needed, without removing individual characters or strengths. Looking for innovative, unique combinations can stand out and catch the eye of possible visitors.
- Building a coherent space, instead of distinctive zones, through combining functions and binding together spaces, will still show its main attractions, as well as orientating principal assets, can perceive and create an identity for the whole area.



‘The landscape has been characterised as a ‘Living Landscape’ – this is the ‘Belfairs and Daws Heath Living Landscape’

Belfairs and Daws Health Living Landscape

b. Building Blocks/ Puzzle Pieces

1. Principal assets

The principal assets of the site (be it a castle, its unique nature or heritage, or even a recreational function) must have a prominent place on the sites’ highlighting the start of the narrative to be told. This provides a starting point for exploring the green heritage Zone. Make sure it can bridge the differences and put visitors on the right track. Principal assets should be acknowledged, clear and locally supported. These “approach paths’ are not necessarily the major tourist attraction, in terms of visitor numbers, but importantly it is their capacity to submerge people into the sites’ narrative.

'Four hundred years of clay excavation has made the region what it is now. It has moulded the landscape and the people. Thus the clay excavation is the starting point of all the stories, realisations, tourism products etc.'

Excavation area- Boom, Rupel Region



2. Attractions:

Presenting visitors with a unique and coherent offer will in many cases not be sufficient to meet your goals. Main attractions that are separately viable and able to attract a broad audience are needed to exceed and take in the draw of the sites as a whole.

'Attractions may not be distinctly unique but what makes it special here? Belfairs has ancient woodland seen around the UK but there are a large expanse here isolated in South-east Essex.'

Belfairs and Daws Heath Living Landscape

'A former watertower was transformed to a panoramic educational visitor centre. It became thus a prominent building in the region to provide access to the region and the regional narrative, especially for the theme landscape.'

Excavation area- Boom, Rupel Region

'The farm of Marck was surrounded by a small wood hosting a huge amount of Herons and Egret's nests. The nesting aigrettes are an important nature attraction which gives extra value to the rural place!.'

Ferme des aigrettes



3. Activities

By bringing life to the sites a large number of visitors can be lured into discovering the sites possibilities, uniqueness or secrets. It can highlight different aspect of the green heritage Zone, it can also make links clear and understandable or it can prove the sites functional opportunities and enlarge its scope or reach.



“25 family workshops have been developed per year and 4 themed conferences linked with the farm’s exhibitions. But we also aim to host events included in wider festivals or on dedicated weeks to benefit from broader communications and exposition.

Ferme des aigrettes

4. Functions

By layering, tying together or combining functions and activities, they can act as cement for different zones, attractions or sites. Creating a multifunctional site, where no parts are monopolised by one function but, on the contrary, shared by multiple uses will pave the way to a common perception and an integrated site.

‘The provincial domain of Raversijde covers unique world war heritage, buildings referring to the royal estate of King Leopold II, an archaeological site unveiling a 15th century fishermen village and a high valuable protected dune area. The combination of all these themes made it difficult to communicate and promote the site as a whole. The three main functions were combined in one identity which was made clear in the logo and the house style.’

Raversijde domain

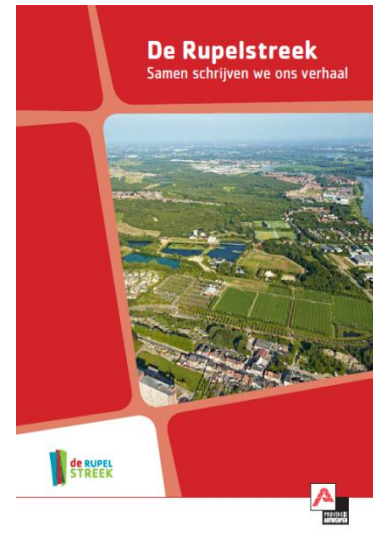


c. (recommended) Result: a shared identity

Visitors should know the reason why they should come and what they will be doing at the site (and hopefully, you can surprise them with lots of extras!); those involved must be able to identify themselves with the image or brand created.

'A regional narrative, a regional branding and a house style were created as the red thread to sew together the three main themes: clay, water and landscape, to highlight the unique identity of the region.

Excavation area- Boom, Rupel region



5. Provide clear and accessible access

a. Focus of the Key Actions

The revitalised zones need to be embedded in their surroundings. But also, visitors have to find access easy, both in a physical and in a mental way. Work Package 3 of MaxiGreen is dedicated to finding your way to, in and around the zones, but the provision of clear and accessible access is an important part of the visioning and planning process.

🗺️ The physical access needs to be well thought-out and localised.

First of all: to be able to manage the mobility around the site as best as possible is to establish partnerships with transport companies such as rail and/ or bus providers. Explore the possibilities for cycling access on (existing) cycle paths and for intermodal transport hubs, using them as an attraction on site ...

Secondly, access needs to be manageable. The layout of entrances and attractions for instance must fit into the spatial context of the sites. In short, space must be available to organise clear, smooth and easy access. This also means other spatial functions (like nature value, opportunities for recreation...) need to be taken into account.

‘A Gateway Plan was produced to highlight the main green heritage sites and their relationship to the local train line, the Thames Estuary Path and the other transport hubs. This plans sets out potential ideas to overcome some of the barriers to accessing the marshes.’

South Essex Marshes

🗺️ Mental access is just as important in making sites attractive and more promising: In the second MaxiGreen Work Package, partners discussed raising awareness and communication and branding strategies. MaxiGreen believes that it is important that the image given to the site is crucial: it therefore needs to be clear, simple but profound. It has to catch the complexity and range of attractions and/or strengths of the site in understandable, strong and coherent messages or images; for example:

- Creating a powerful message: that is coherent and using or linking in with a regional narrative. The logo is just as important to create a brand that conveys a message or identity, such as the logo of “huisstijl” Raversyde, streekverhaal Rupel and Thames Estuary Path.
- Getting the message through; Messages need to be understandable and must give incentive for further thought. It therefore needs to be conveyed in an accessible and user friendly way. Highlighting contrast on the one hand (i.e. “the woodlands are so many years older than the surrounding nature”) and/or coherence on the other (i.e. the coming about of the South Essex Marshes was due to a clear historical line, which is more or less comparable for the whole area, while Raversyde is an historical site, where three major stories need to be told and which have proven to be good tools).

b. Building Blocks/ Puzzle Pieces

1. Attractive Gateways

It does not always have to be an entrance with obtrusive reference, but a gateway to a site needs to externalise what is projected.



‘New directional signage with the distinctive Thames Estuary Path logo, such as wooden fingerposts (in keeping with the landscape), metal road signs and pavement stencilling in urban areas have been installed to signpost visitors to the footpath and local attractions.’

South Essex Marshes

2. Transport hub

Visitors will come to the site by different transport modes. Influencing their choice can be achieved through providing clear access strategies integrating all transport modes. These strategies needs to be clear for all transport modes how they will lead/connect to the site, taking into consideration the aim of visitors visit , resulting in implementing a mobility and accessibility plan. Providing transport hubs, so visitors are managed in a way that feels feasible, as well as implementing the

project's vision, such as green hubs, blue hubs, and picking up on existing infrastructures (i.e. Railway and bus stations, car parks ...).

Basically, the various sizes of the sites will lead to different strategies to welcome visitors.



'A Green Hub has been developed as a means to encourage sustainable access and to provide an externalized gateway to the landscape.'

Belfairs and Daws Heath Living Landscape

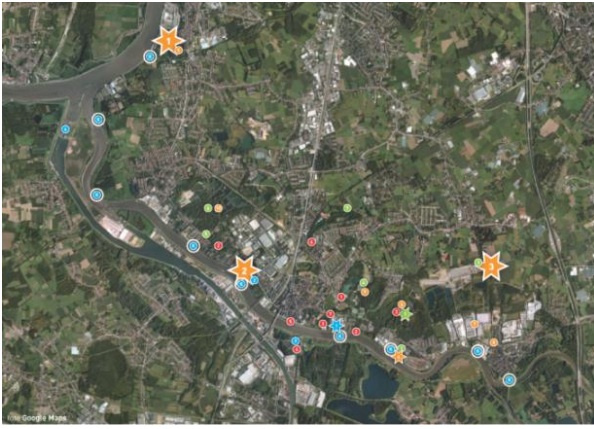
'As a follow up of the MaxiGreen project the province of Antwerp decided to create near the river Rupel at the nautical visitor centre the first Blue hub in the province: a transport hub to connect recreation near and on the water.'

Excavation area- Boom, Rupel region



3. Regional narrative

Within the MaxiGreen partnership, storytelling proved to be a good tool for drawing attention of different (age-) groups and for depicting history or a development. These can be very local, like the educational stories told about the Hadleigh castle, Coalhouse Fort in South Essex, but can also be regional, about the facts and influence of history on today's region, like in the Rupel-Region. These kinds of stories can bind together projects and help to simplify and prioritise attractions and information.



The Rupel region has chosen a regional narrative as a unifying medium. This Regional Narrative combined with the location plan made clear what the clusters of interest were to the public, where visitors centres could be located and where signalisation and signage would be recommended.'

Excavation area - Boom; Rupel region

4. Signage

Signage is necessary, not only for clear way finding, but also for directing visitors to places you want them to see or visit; or for managing flows of (different kind of) visitors. Therefore signage needs to be planned, coherent, recognisable and attractive for leading visitors.

Besides simplifying the (planning for the) visit to the site helps to create a positive, enjoyable and recognisable atmosphere for the visitors.

'Following on from the Landscape Vision and route survey of the Thames Estuary Path, a strategy for wayfinding and interpretation was produced which assessed the locations for directional signage and interpretation boards, as well as the core messages to communicate and market the 6 train stations and gateways to the path and the variety of visitor attractions available..'

South Essex Marshes



5. Message (See Work Package 2 Report)

Make sure that the message is clear, simple but attractive and “sticky”. Knowing what you want to attract visitors to before a visit is important, as well as making sure that after the visit, visitor can and be enticed to spread the message, enriched with their own experiences.



'A mobile App was created with local community involvement for the whole of the Thames Estuary Path, providing 5 short tours telling the history and the wildlife found in the South Essex Marshes, making it perfect for enjoyable days out. .'

South Essex Marshes

6. Interpretation: app's and modern technologies (See Work Package 2 Report)

Interpretation is more than storytelling; Interpreting will glue together stories, landscapes and other features. It is crucial that interpretation is clear, visible and coherent to get the message through. Understanding the message and regional stories will deepen the experience and encourage their reproduction by enthusiastic visitors.

'It has been important to keep the messages clear and clean – too many messages will confuse the issue. We have chosen an important topic: traditional woodland management and 4 key species that make the area special: Song Thrush, Heath Fritillary Butterfly, Wild Service Tree and Dormouse. These messages will come up time and again.'

Belfairs and Daws Heath Living Landscape



7. Logo (See Work Package 2 Report)

As a “cherry on top”, a logo can tell a simple story, just by its image. All MaxiGreen projects found a good and distinctive logo to be very helpful in branding the project and the project area. But the logo had to be clear, incentive in a blink of an eye (i.e. RaversYde). Explanations for logos that are too complicated and too farfetched will not do the trick.

If you are able to create a shared identity for the site as a whole, by linking the different aspects in a logical and easy to understand “unity”, it will be easier for visitors to see, feel or experience the attraction and value the site, making a lasting impact through lots of debates, discussions and participation workshops.

‘Georgette, our Aigrette is the farm’s logo - the spirit of a large bird migrating thousands of miles to come and nest at our site seemed to be an appropriate totem.’

Ferme des Aigrettes

‘A Rupel region logo was created based on the shape of chimneys in three colours of the three main themes: blue (water), red (clay) and green (landscape).

The Rupel region was chosen for a regional house style, based on the shape of a wooden brick maker mould. This style is used for orientation panels, address panels and information panels.’



‘A Thames Estuary Path logo was created and the colours (green and blue) capture the distinct landscape of the South Essex Marshes.’

South Essex Marshes



Raversyde - domain



c. (recommended) Result: a sense of unity

'All the stakeholders were convinced that they were part of a unique region but what this uniqueness was, was not yet defined. The creation of the Regional narrative, regional branding and house style, created this unity. A covenant was signed by the province of Antwerpen and all of the 5 involved communities agreed with the implementation of the Regional narrative, branding and house style.'

Excavation area– Boom, Rupel Region



6. Market Uniqueness!

Aigrettes nesting in large numbers are not something you see in many places. An Urban Square combining social with a water storage function; the past, present and future of a clay excavation zones in one glimpse of an eye, the under discovered ecological rich resource of marshlands due to past and present industrial activities, and the protection of ancient woodlands by enhancing awareness and functionality.

All these MaxiGreen examples have found their uniqueness by discussing, trailing, and laying out the puzzle pieces described above. It has helped them to define their position and identify their unique selling position, distinguishing themselves from (or rising above) the competition. By using, promoting and visualising that uniqueness the MaxiGreen projects are creating excellence and are elaborating a prosperous and sustainable future for their sites and projects.

Vast visitor numbers will not only insure long term viability, but a well-balanced, well rooted and high quality brand is also an excellent guarantee for the sustainable operation and a proven success for green heritages zones and their values.

So, as a last and final step in the revitalisation process, but absolutely necessary brand your Green Heritage zone as a product, and market that uniqueness you give it.

A positive identity, major environmental quality and excellence in (combining) these functions, will be a unique selling proposition. Use it! It will be extra ordinary.



Result; a unique selling position and strong brand



Raversyde – Gun Atlantic Wall

→Water Square Benthemplein, recreation, Rotterdam



←Excavation Area Boom, Clay pits



←Belfairs – Wooden Interpretation

→Ferme des Aigrettes



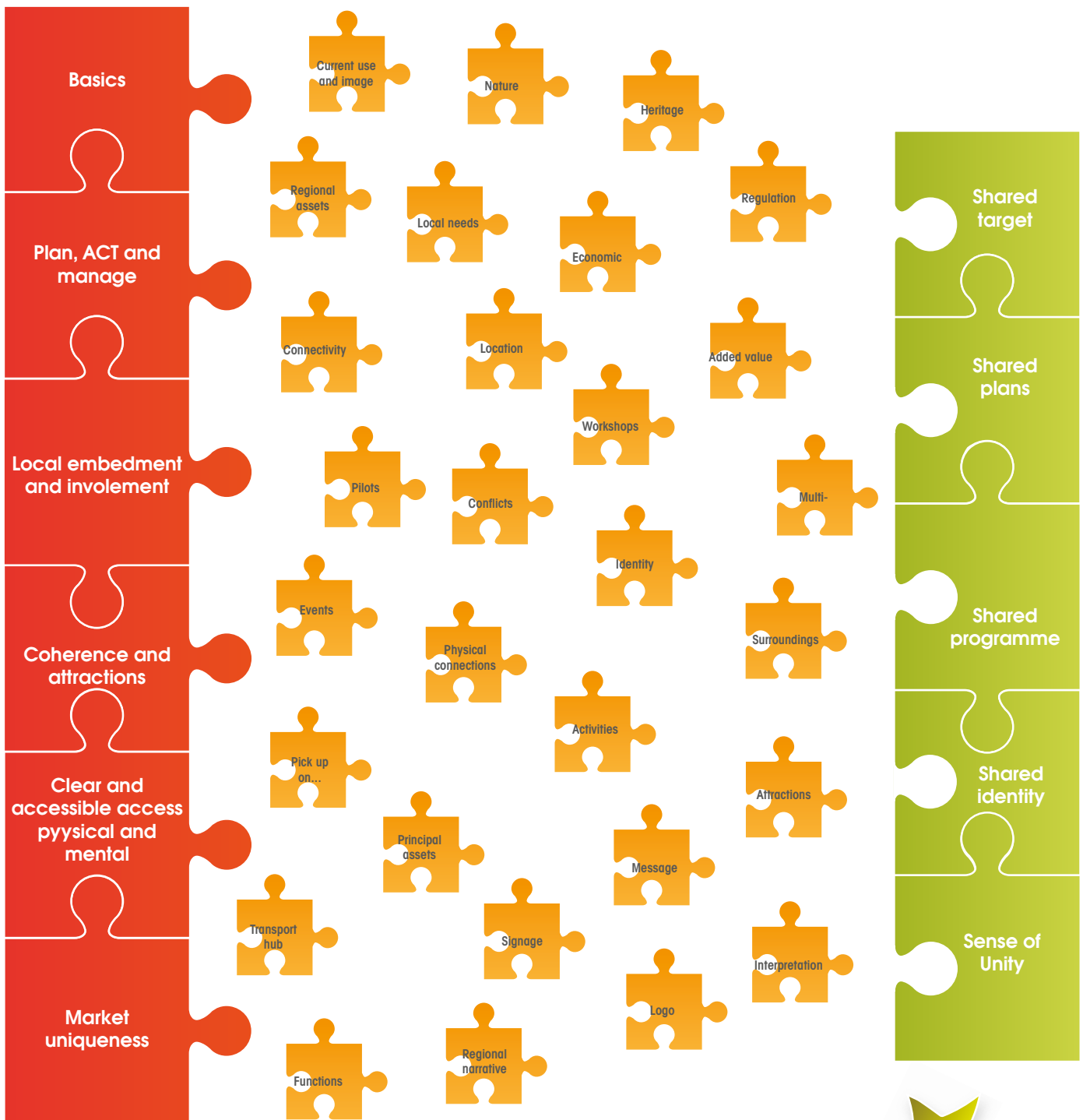
←South Essex Marshes



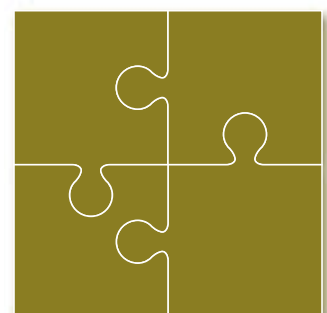
Key Actions

Building Blocks/Puzzle pieces

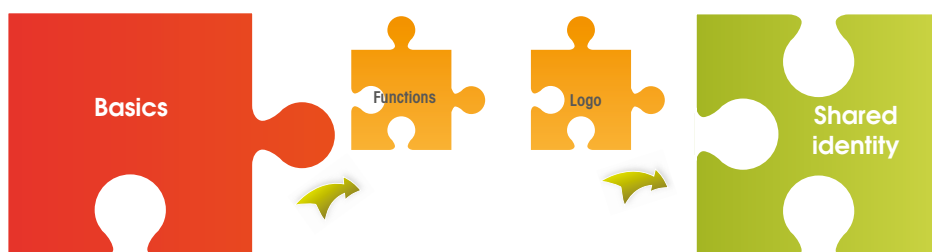
Results



**USP
Story telling**



Example



Complete all the red pieces

Pick as many orange pieces needed

Move to completing all green pieces to reach your USP



Work Package 1 toolkit is for the revitalisation of underused green heritage zones.

Key Actions

This toolkit provides 6 key actions that will aid planning and visioning for green heritage.

- Find your basics
- Plan, act and Manage
- Local embedment and involvement
- Create coherence and stake your attractions
- Provide clear and accessible access
- Market Uniqueness!

Building Blocks/ Puzzle Pieces



The project was funded through the EU Interreg IVA 2-Seas programme – www.interreg4a-2mers.eu

Results - Unique Selling Position