

STEP Workshops 11 May 2010

The members of the startconference were divided in four groups. At turn they were guided by three experts of the study-agency Soresma about a specific theme that is related to visitor-management in the FCA KBR. The following report needs to be read as a list of all the ideas and topics brought forth by the members of the groups.

1. Visitormanagement

Global vision

- Create a vision on the level of the whole Scheldt river, not only the Sigma-areas
- Search for a unique selling point
- In Kruibeke the valley of the Scheldt and the 'Waasland' meet
- Look towards the area and its surroundings as a whole and connect all the positive elements from the three villages to the FCA KBR. This way a broad public basis unfolds.

Recreational routes/connections

- Ameliorate the accessibility from Antwerp.
- Realise a walkway on the dike along the 'Kruibeekse Kreek' as a gateway towards a viewpoint with tower at the river.
- Hikers like walks of 3 to 5 km.
- Realise a connection with the Castle of Kruibeke an the pet-farm across the main road.
- Make a connection between the dikes and the tide-mill in Rupelmonde.
- Keep hikers and cyclist separated.
- Realise a boardwalk through the salt marshes and mud flats where the Oud-Veerstraat is located today.
- Link the FCA KBR to other nature-areas and parks in the wide environment.
- Keep the catering industry alive at the 'Kallebeek' ferry and keep it well accessible (with car) from Bazel.

Entrances to the FCA en recreational junctions

- Entrances with sober pictographical information on several points along the perimeter of the area.
- Give the main entrances an own identity with for example specific fences, gates, flags,...
- Areas to let dogs run free, but it must be obligated to keep them on line from a certain entrance point.
- Create 'green gates' from the three villages towards the main entrances.
- Extra piers for river tourism near the existing ferries.
- A cycle shed and rental point for electric bikes at the main entrance.
- Consider the existing ferry at Kallebeek as an important access-point for tourists.

- The Kallebeek-ferry has an important recreational role with its facilities for drinks and dinner.
- Put billboards along the main roads to attract potential visitor to visit the FCA.
- Give the 'gates' of the area a specific ethos. At some locations only limited 'design' is suitable: - where people park their car and start a walk. – where people arrive via the Scheldt.
- When branding the entrances and intersections the aim must be on several groups like bikers, hikers and visitors by car.

Visitor- /informationcenter

- One of the nearby castles could be transformed into such a centre.
- If the flow of visitors can be controlled and streamlined; Bazel is an ideal location to build a visitor centre.
- Build one main visitor centre at a central location, where many visitors come or pass today.
- In a visitor centre marketing and tourism are also very important beside the educational role.
- Focus on several target groups: - cultural visitors, - local people, - nature lovers,- families,

Visitormanagement at active flood control area:

- Flags could mark the entrances en closest exits.
- Limit the actions towards safety for visitors with the strict necessary facilities.
- Mark the potential danger in the area and use clear maps.
- Use the same safety-system as at the coast; flags with different colour.
- Use a watertight system that safeguards the organisation of any responsibility if visitors do not respect the signs.
- Keep safety instructions sober, this way the attention is not drawn to it.

Relation with the local community.

- 'Compensate' the local inhabitants.
- Try to amplify the community by finding out what is important for the people. Give the locals the opportunity to give their opinion, focus on younger people, talk to entrepreneurs and societies. For example: 'Midden-Delftland'
- Long term benefits should be visualized in an early stage of the process.
- Expand the activities beyond the borders of the FCA.
- Can there be dealt with the 'dangerous' main road.
- Art in the area is a surplus.
- The famous Mercator lived in Rupelmonde. Could there be a link in the area with cartography? Eg: a web of sundials in Kruikeke.
- Make the inhabitants proud on the nature area. Involve schools and societies. Make a plan for the transition-zone between the FCA and the populated area.
- 15.000 people live along the FCA. Give necessary attention to the local tourist.
- Use the existing trump cards like the historical village Bazel, the old dockyard where ships are renovated and the famous person Mercator.
- Make fishing with line possible at the existing creeks.

- Let the local community participate when thinking about the touristic-recreational development. This way they are aware of the benefits for the community and the economical surplus that the tourists embody.
- Strengthen the relations between the village and nature, for example by small bridges.

Transition area: possible actions.

- Recovery and management of small landmarks.
- Work with volunteers from the community.
- Stakeholders: 'regionale landschappen', natural associations, entrepreneurs, tourist agencies,...
- Create parks with facilities like public barbeques.

2. Recreational networks

Connection with the broad environment.

- the welcoming process and notification must begin at the most important points of entry. – The N16 / the bridge in Temse, - Exit Kruibeke on the E17, - The ferries.
- Visitor management must exist at both banks of the Scheldt.

Connectivity in the FCA

- Dikes are essential.
- East-west relation through the FCA between the Scheldt and the village centers. Relate it to the 'gates'.
- Mark the east-west connections in the FCA and allow them to continue outside the FCA.
- The ferries are an important component when talking about the link between the Scheldt and the centers.
- An important link in experiencing the landscape and nature is the line that lies on the borders of the wetland, the tidal nature and the Barbierbeek.
- The axle Bazel-Kallebeek-Hemiksem is important.

Hotel and catering industry

- Competition between the several ferries?
- Catering industry on the water?
- There are not many local products in the area

Parking lots

- Direct visitors towards large parking lots from where several programs are available for walking or cycling.
- Will many visitors come by car?
- Build parking lots on strategic locations.

- Tune between entrances and industry; combine always with other functions and attractions.
- Associate with bicycle rent.
- Use the existing parking space at the cemetery and make it larger.
- The many bikers passing the area embody an important potential visiting group.

Visitor transport over water:

- In the Netherlands exist 3 main routes over water, eg. Dordrecht-Rotterdam. It can be functional and succesfull at peak hour.
- Boating: talk with shipping companies between Antwerp and Dendermonde. This tourism exists already but there could be more cooperation and support in developing programs for excursions.
- Ameliorate the peers and make a link with the opening hours of the catering.