

Management Plan Audit

On 16 December a visit was paid to the Oogenlust domein in Eersel, Netherlands to audit the Management Plan of the proposed VCA-area.

a. Overview of the conservation area.

The management plan contains a concise description of the area and its conservation plan. A map is included with location, size and ecoregion. The owner Marcel van Dijk confirmed his right to manage the area. He is the owner of the 5.5 ha 'Oogenlust domein' and has a ground lease for 20 years over the remaining 2.5 ha from the municipality of Eersel. The name and contact details of the manager, Joris van de Ven, are provided.

a. Biodiversity baseline conditions.

The baseline conditions were assessed with the support of the Dutch butterfly association, among other. A concise description of the habitats with the principal species and invasive alien species is given. The Oogenlust domein is bordered by Mirandolles Heike reserve, a nature reserve owned by the NGO Natuurmonumenten and by a strip of forest owned by the municipality of Eersel.

b. Conservation impact assessment.

The stakeholders have been identified and consulted. A SWOT analysis is provided in the management plan, which gives a clear overview of the threats and opportunities of the 'inside-the-fence' area and is used as the base of the conservation assessment. The 'outside the fence' broader landscape opportunities are considerable and contribute to the conservation value of Oogenlust. The responsible management authorities of the neighbouring areas are the municipality of Eersel and the NGO Natuurmonumenten. They have been contacted for the joint management of the surrounding areas. Further discussions for future collaboration are foreseen.

c. Conservation actions & monitoring.

The management plan includes a set of conservation intentions. During the audit, the long term objective was discussed. This is: natural vegetation with a high biodiversity value on the Oogenlust domein, through the restoration of the natural forest with a removal of the invasive exotic species, and the development of shrubby edges and small flower-rich fields.

The actions are consistent with the IFC biodiversity mitigation strategy and the IUCN definition of conservation. The proposed activities in the management plan address the conservation priorities within the area, but also within the broader landscape. The procedures to monitor implementation are partly in place (butterfly monitoring, invasive species monitoring, indigenous plants, number of birds). The indicators will be elaborated in the coming period, and include butterfly-species, indigenous plants and birds (breeding or observed) as mentioned in the management plan.

IFC biodiversity mitigation strategy would qualify the area as a modified natural area where the original vegetation has been altered into a planted forest area with natural and exotic species. The aim of the management is directed towards the restoration of a natural area rich on biodiversity.

IUCN definition of conservation: the protection, care, management and maintenance of ecosystems, habitats, wildlife species and populations, within or outside of their natural environments, in order to safeguard the natural conditions for their long-term permanence.

d. Overall audit assessment.

The Oogenlust domein was visited on 16 December 2017. The manager Joris van de Ven, the owner Marcel van Dijk, and the ecological advisor Roel Winter were interviewed. The conservation area was also visited, together with the manager.

The audit considers the assessment of the baseline conditions and the potential impacts, as described in the management plan, to be sufficient for establishing an effective set of conservation actions. The planned actions are coherent, strategic and realistic. With the planned actions, the natural situation will be restored and this will have a positive impact on the biodiversity.

The management plan is compliant with the VCA Standard. During the coming year, the set of indicators for monitoring will be further elaborated.

Conclusion:

My conclusion is that the Oogenlust domein should be registered as a Verified Conservation Area (VCA).

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