

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. The top half shows a large, light-green field with distinct horizontal mowed stripes. To the left of this field is a smaller green area with several trees. Below the main field is a dense cornfield. The bottom half of the image is dominated by a thick, dark-green forest. A vertical bar on the right side of the image is composed of four colored segments: teal, blue, purple, and green.

# *Land Development*

5 instruments for a better open space



# Content



## 02 | Land Development p9

Offer every rural activity sufficient space and at the same time protect the rural nature.

## 03 | Land Development for Nature p13

Enable nature to restore and to create new nature areas.



Content p2

Introduction p3

Your demand ... p4

Land Development offers ... p5

## 01 | Comprehensive Land Consolidation p7

Reorganize parcels to enable a smoother agricultural activity.



## 04 | Agri Environmental agreements p17

In exchange for an annual fee farmers deploy certain efforts for nature.

## 05 | Local Landbank p19

Acquire land in order to re-allocate owners and users.

Contact p21



# Introduction

Ranging from a prestigious port extension over measures for nature in an industrial area to the rearrangement of an agricultural area. Projects in open space are –even if they are small– almost always complex. But they always offer possibilities and chances to improve the quality of open space. The division Land Development of the Flemish Land Agency (VLM) engages everything in order to take advantage of as much chances as possible. **For everyone** who asks for it and with an eye for all themes and interests.

Land Development disposes of **5 legal instruments**: Comprehensive Land Consolidation, Land development, Land development for Nature, Agri environmental agreements and Local Landbank. None of these instruments is sanctifying. Every project demands a separate approach. The art consists of combining the instruments and measures which are best suited for the project, the area and its users. Experience and know-how are indispensable for this purpose. The Flemish Land Agency owns all of these skills and is always prepared to co-operate with other (policy) bodies which take care of open space.

There is a lot at stake when **open space** is concerned. It isn't strange that the number of laws, decrees, directives, policy notes and strategic plans is that large. Also in this field the VLM division Land Development is a guide for its clients – communities, provinces, Flemish government, associations and common people. As an advisor, a project manager and an executor. And as a communications expert, because working at the open space is more than making studies, planning and developing. Projects in open space also have need for participation rounds, information meetings, brochures, websites, and personal contacts.

With an eye for quality, directed to the future and with an open view. That's the way how the Flemish Land Agency engages itself **for and together with you**. As your partner in open space.

# Your demand ...

A project in open space never arises by itself, it is always **on demand**. The division Land Development of the VLM develops projects as a result of concrete problems, raised by Flemish administrations, communities, provinces or other bodies.

You can not only appeal to the VLM to increase the quality of your open space (using comprehensive land consolidation, land development, land development for nature), **but also** to offer a counterweight when there is a loss of quality (i.e. nature compensations or land exchange as a result of port extension).

Apart from the instruments comprehensive land consolidation, land development, land development for nature, agri environmental agreements and local landbank, Land Development also offers its services on a contractual basis. What ever the phase of the open space project, it is **never too late** to involve the VLM. For advise, for a study, for the drawing of a plan or for the execution of a part of the proceedings.



# Land Development offers ...

## | **Balance**

The VLM division Land Development offers the countryside new impulses and maintains the mixture of agriculture, nature, recreation and culture in a balance. As a good architect. Because the development of a liveable countryside has a need for professionalism.

## | **Experience and know-how**

At every stage of a development project – study, planning and execution – the opinion of experts is indispensable. The Flemish Land Agency employs experienced engineers, land surveyors, topography experts, biologists, soil experts and computer scientists. They all play their role in every stage of the project.

## | **Administrative survey**

Every development project involves forming of committees, commissions, obtaining of legally obligatory permits, environmental studies and documents, contracts, deeds, ... On your demand the VLM steers everything in the right direction and at all times keeps track of the administrative workload. From the granting of the proceedings to the closing of an account.

## | **Communication advise**

The owners and the users of the lands are privileged partners in a development project. But also local inhabitants, agricultural boards, environmental associations, local authorities, provinces and the Flemish government belong to the parties involved. Projects with such a large number of parties involved stand or fall with the quality of the communication. The communications experts of the VLM inform at the measure of everyone, with information moments and open information evenings, leaflets and papers, brochures, websites and press statements.

## | **Solutions**

Every party involved in a development project has its own interests. And more than once they are contradictory. Farmers and nature conservationists very often have a different look at 'their' countryside. The VLM can help looking for and reaching compromises. And in most cases this also succeeds.

## | **Reliability**

Most of all the VLM wants to be a very reliable partner. In all possible stages of a project. This proves her involvement in a lot of projects. So, the VLM performed agricultural studies in the development scheme of the Scheldt estuary. She supports the division Forest and Green of the Flemish environmental administration AMINAL in drawing the development plan for the Vicogne forest in Westende. In the Master plan Antwerp the VLM develops the environment accompanying measures in the realization of the Oosterweel connection.







# 01 | Comprehensive Land Consolidation

Reorganize parcels to enable a smoother agricultural activity.

Reorganize parcels to enable a smoother agricultural activity. Since years the reorganization of parcels to enable a smoother agricultural activity is the core of comprehensive land consolidation. Who nowadays engages in such a comprehensive land consolidation project, can get more out of it than just more efficient labouring fields and better accessible pastures. The regroupment of parcels also offers chances for nature, recreation and archaeology to stand out well.

## ***Re-allocate is not only ....***

- the creation of bigger and more regular parcels for farmers
- the improvement of the roads giving access to the fields and pastures
- the filling in of the parcel moats and the digging of new ditches

## ***but also ....***

- the prevention of secret traffic on rural roads
- the transformation of old railway tracks into cycling paths
- the abolishment of dangerous railway crossings
- the prevention of flood danger
- the construction of water treating reed lands
- the planting of the farmer's farm yard
- the reconstruction of a windmill
- the signposting of walking paths
- the protection or the enlargement of nature areas.



“Who nowadays engages in such a comprehensive land consolidation project, can get more out of it than just more efficient labouring fields and better accessible pastures.”



## Meanwhile in ... Stuivekenskerke

The West Flemish **Stuivekenskerke** is historically known as a frontline of the Belgian Army in the 1st World War, situated at the border of the then still flooded IJser plain. A comprehensive land consolidation project (2,073 ha), at the end of the nineties, besides the levelled and better draining agricultural parcels, offered the village the following:

- 19 kms of reconstructed **roads**
- 7.5 kms of new roads
- an enlargement of the **nature reserve** “The Viconia clay pits” from 8 ha to 20 ha
- **pasture strips** for sheep on the old railway track Nieuwpoort – Diksmuide
- a **cycling connection** between Oud Stuivekenskerke and the Dodengang
- **walking paths along** the Grote Beverdijk
- **nature friendly banks** along the polder watercourses

### From a reliable source

*‘Thanks to the comprehensive land consolidation we now have an enterprise with a nice joined block of 18.5 ha pastures and fields around our farm. Before this it were 16 ha scattered in many pieces. The parcels now being closer to one another, we use lesser fuel and we can try out more efficient and nature friendly systems of pasturing.’*

**(Danny De Cleene,  
dairy farmer in Eksaarde)**

*‘Earlier on there were already nice nature spots, but thanks to comprehensive land consolidation they formed one entity. Afterwards Natuurpunt bought the land, because yet the land was less valuable for agriculture. Nowadays we live in the up most understanding with the farmers. We engage them in the management of the reserve. The time that Hoegaarden was only famous for its beer, its churches and its fields, is history now. From now on everyone can enjoy the nature here.’*

**(Hugo Abts van Natuurpunt Velpe-Mene)**





## 02 | Land Development

Offer every rural activity sufficient space and at the same time protect the rural nature.

Living, working, transport, recreation, agriculture, nature development ... are activities comprised together in land development. In order to offer every rural activity sufficient space and at the same time protect the rural quality, a global development plan is no superfluous luxury. The instrument land development starts with the spatial structure- and zoning plans and enables a project specific for every area by creating cooperation between the parties involved.

### Land Development offers a lot of chances for:



#### | *Water management*

Within a land development project interventions on ditches, streams and rivers are often necessary. By taking into account the many functions of the water system land development can contribute to a better integrated water management. This ranges from the construction of buffer strips along the waterways to the construction of small water treating facilities.

#### | *Nature, forest and green*

To construct pools for pasture birds, to dig off land and enable the original heath vegetation to develop, to create connecting roads for animals, ... Land development helps nature to go forward.

#### | *Quiet recreation*

The adaptation of roads, paths and bridges can make an area more attractive for walkers and cyclists. The possibilities are i.e.: the construction of cycling paths and walking routes, the placing of information panels, the modification of dangerous crossroads.

#### | *Landscape and inheritance*

Land development has also an eye for "rural architecture": chapels, farms, bunkers, fortresses, windmills, ...

#### | *Agriculture*

With the construction of Individual Treatment plants for Waste Water (in short IBA's), land development invests in agriculture.



### Land Development in figures:

- Land development is applied since **1988**.
- The provinces and the communities receive **68%** of the subsidies allowed by the Flemish government for land development. The Flemish Community gets **19%** and **12%** is granted to private law persona and natural persons. Public persona, polders and wateringens and land consolidation committees get **1%**.
- In every land development project several partners are involved which are each responsible for a part of the execution of the project. E.g. in the development projects Polder Waterlopen part II, Beverdijkvaart and surroundings (West Flanders) these are: **1** Flemish administration, **1** province, **2** communities, **1** association (Polders and Wateringen) and several private persons.
- Already **57** development plans have been approved in **4** land development projects. All together this means an investment of **77,186,571** EUR. About **19%** is at charge of the Flemish partners.
- **6** new land development projects have been started in **2005**: Gentse kanaalzone – buffer areas part 1, excavation areas East Flanders, rural recreation Sigma plan, the forest area de Merode and surroundings, Brugse Veldzone and the Moortsel Plateau.





## Meanwhile in ... Kinrooi

Kinrooi in Limburg is the most north eastern community in Flanders and is popular with cyclists, walkers and water sports practitioners. The nature is extremely rich there. Nevertheless the 1,200 ha nature in this region lost a lot of its quality during the years. A large pallet of land development measures returned Kinrooi its natural character.

- **De Zig**, a pond complex which was dried for the cultivation of poplars, has been restored in its original condition. Poplars and exotic trees have been cleared. The in stream and out stream of the water have been regulated. Permanent water areas alternate with swamps and spontaneous sprouting swamp forest.
- In the **community forest De Goort** the dominating poplars are gradually replaced by a more diversified forest.
- Kinrooi got **4 walking loops**. Paths, small bridges, signposts and information signs lead the wanderers through the area. The accessibility for wheelchair users was one of the main project issues.
- Local species of **trees** were **planted** along a lot of public roads.





# 03 | Land Development for Nature

Enable nature to restore and to create new nature areas.

In spite of all efforts, nature remains under the pressure of human activities. To restore nature and to create new nature areas, this is the goal. Land Development for Nature already proved its value in a lot of places in Flanders. The objective of this instrument: to develop an area as good as possible in respect to the conservation, the restoration or the development of nature.

## Ranging from the clearing of poplars to making the riverbanks roe friendly:

Nature developers can keep many options open. Everything depends of the area where they are at work. A small selection of their arsenal of nature friendly interventions:

- to cut poplars and replace them by local species of trees
- to keep the water level high enough in such a way that marsh-marigolds keep growing
- to turn ancient ice cellars into hibernation sites for bats
- to clear height differences in rivers and thus make way for fish to migrate
- to construct small dams to protect wetlands
- to dig off topsoil to give heath a chance
- to keep traffic out of the neighbourhood of breeding grounds
- to restore the meandering of streams
- to construct hiking and cycling paths
- to promote nature education with information panels, outlook huts, educational walking paths, visitor's centre
- to exchange parcels so that a sports field can relocate and disappear from the nature area
- to have cattle graze for a more diversified landscape
- to interrupt steep canal banks so that roe can cross the canals by swimming

## Together strong

A land development for nature project also needs a lot of practical organisation: plans and reports are to be drawn, committees, commissions are formed and play their role in the process. In these projects the Flemish Land Agency supports the division Nature of AMINAL (the Flemish administration for Environment -, Nature -, Land – and Water Management), which prepares and steers the project. The VLM takes care of the secretary of the advisory organs, helps to draw up the project plans, executes the development measures, communicates with the inhabitants of the communities involved, collects the remarks of the public inquiry.



## Land Development for Nature in figures:

- the first land development for nature deed was signed **21st October 2004**. And this was for the project Uitkerkse Polder in West Flanders.
- **7%** of the land development for nature budget goes to recreational measures.
- Land development for nature projects are especially applied in nature areas (**52%**), and nature reserves or nature areas with a scientific value (**14%**). Agricultural areas are also taken into account, when they have a scenic value or are of ecological interest.

### From a reliable source

*'Is it really necessary to work on nature that way? Doesn't nature grow independently? People sometimes wonder! What the project Bospolder – Ekers Moeras is concerned, the answer on the second question is 'No'. This land development for nature project cost about 868,000 EUR. Taking all proportions into account this is not such a big amount compared to other investments in the port of Antwerp. However, one can never express with money in what way these nature areas increase the quality of life and the health of the people.'*

*(Stefan Versweyveld,  
Natuurpunt Antwerpen-Noord)*

*“However, one can never express with money in what way these nature areas increase the quality of life and the health of the people.”*



## Meanwhile on ... the coast

Uitkerkse Polder , which is situated on the territory of the West Flemish communities Blankenberge, De Haan and Zuienkerke, is a fabulous green area of 402 ha (361 ha nature and 41 ha of scenic valuable agrarian area in the zoning plans). This is also thanks to a land development for nature project. Every thinkable nature intervention has been used, ranging from bank plantings along the Blankenbergse Vaart over the restoration of historic lanes to the positioning of a pedestrian bridge and picnic tables.

A part of the project area (30 ha) has been converted to wetland to offer birds and plants more chances. In order to be able to realize that, a compensation system on the basis of value zones was used. The land most suited for agriculture valued a 1,000 points, the less suited 550 points. Every point had a value of 14.87 EUR. When the intervention did have consequences for someone's property or user situation – loss of income because of a change in the water level i.e. – a financial arrangement was taken with the owner or the user.







## 04 | Agri Environmental agreements

In exchange for an annual fee farmers deploy certain efforts for nature.

An agri environmental agreement is a contract between the VLM and the farmer in which the farmer promises to do certain efforts for the nature in exchange for an annual fee. This ranges from mowing with respect for the pasture birds over the adaptation of the cattle density to the avoidance of herbicides in certain places. Or how farmers can also become nature protectors and nature managers.



### 30 possibilities

Not every farmer can co-operate in the same way for a nicer nature and a more valuable landscape. Experts from the VLM visit the farmer and together they investigate which contracts are best fitted for him, his firm and parcels. The VLM offers management packages divided over 7 groups.

#### | *In the honour of the black-tailed godwit and the curlew*

For who wants to help protect the breeding shoveler, the black-tailed godwit, the lapwing, the redshank or the garganey, there are 5 packages for pasture birds management. The placing of nest protectors is just one of the possibilities.

#### | *Efforts at the edge*

With some effort, field edges, pastures and meadowlands can be perfect buffer strokes. In the packages for the parcel edge management herbicides and fertilization are out of the question.

#### | *Hedges, wood edges and pools*

Hedges, wood edges, wooded banks and pools are useful for nature. Three management packages for the small landscape elements provide in a fee for the planting and the maintenance of local trees and bushes.

### | Valuable grasses and herbs

Farmers who want to give a chance to valuable herbs and grasses on their fields and pastures, can make a choice out of 6 packages botanic management. Agreements on the use of fertilization, cattle density and point in time of mowing take a key position.

### | Stop to erosion

Approximately 13% of the fields every year lose 5 to 10 tonnes of fertile agricultural land per ha. I.e. through the creation of grass buffer strokes, farmers can prevent the soil erosion. With an agri environmental agreement erosion control; they can get a fee for this.

### | Water containing less nitrates

When using an agri environmental agreement water a farmer will take care of the fact that in vulnerable water areas, less nitrates end up in the ground and surface water.

### | In the interest of nature

Maintaining and reinforce long range grassland is possible when using the management package nature. Such an agreement is only possible for parcels with nature value and a fertilization ban. One of the conditions is the ban to tear and mill the grassland.

## Agri Environmental agreements in figures:

- In order to be able to make use of an agri environmental agreement, it is necessary that you exploit a farm and that you are required to submit a declaration with the division Manure Bank. The latter means: a production of at least **300** kilos phosphate and exploit at least **2** ha of arable land.
- An agri environmental agreement is a contract for **5** years.
- The maximum compensations are the same in the whole of the European Union: **450** EUR/ha for grassland, **600** EUR/ha for fields (one year crops) and **900** EUR/ha for specialized permanent crops.
- All together already some **4,000** farmers concluded one or more agri environmental agreements with the Flemish Land Agency.

## From a reliable source

*'After I received the brochure on agri environmental agreements, employees of the VLM visited me to investigate how these agreements could be introduced in my farm. Amongst others I signed a contract for the maintenance of three wood edges and for parcel edge management along water courses (fields). The fee which I get for respecting the agreement, is part of my farming income. The money covers the extra costs. The parcel edge of course means more work, but by moments it also means a greater financial return than a crop like wheat or maize. An extra stimulant is the supplement of 20% that the community of Wingene pays on top of some of the VLM packages.'*

*(Marc Mannes,  
dairy farmer in Wingene)*

## E-counter for farmers

Besides the VLM also a lot of other administrations offer farmers agri environmental agreements. For a survey and all potential forms and information, one address: **[www.ehorizon.be](http://www.ehorizon.be)**.



# 05 | Local Landbank

Acquire land in order to re-allocate owners and users.

To buy, to exchange, to transfer, to manage land. This is what it is all about in the local landbank. The objective? Re-allocate owners instead of expropriate, but also compensate loss of nature, create room for infrastructure and protect valuable areas.



## In the interest of ...

The VLM division Land Development does not buy land at random. It is done in the interest of a comprehensive land consolidation project or for a land development plan. In such a case the landbank supports another development instrument.

The VLM also buys at the request of the Minister or a Flemish administration. In this case the landbank more than once serves media sensitive projects: i.e. the construction of the Deurganck dockyard in Doel, the expansion of the port of Zeebrugge, the realization of the Park forest in Ghent or the opening of the de Merode domain in the Antwerp and Limburg Kempen.

## Fast and efficient

The buying of land is a question of fast decisions and know-how. Thanks to the two-weekly Board of Directors the VLM can react very fast. This makes her an efficient partner in land matters. A team of estimators, negotiators and project managers gives the necessary know-how.



### From a reliable source

*'Expropriations are never pleasant. When you have to visit people in such a matter it is not illogical that they shoot the pianist. But nevertheless our relationship with the farmers is not that bad at all. In an article in the weekly Boer & Tuinder I recently read that the Flemish Land Agency helped the agricultural sector a lot in the matter of the updated Sigma plan, the plan with measures against the floods of the Scheldt. Together with several partners we also co-operated in the mitigating policy and did proposals for the social economic counselling of the farmers. We do everything we can to find a fair solution and this includes several visits of the farmers involved.'*

**(Cecile Bauwens, head department landbank VLM East Flanders)**

### E-counter Pre-emption right

As an extra service for the notaries and the civilians the VLM has an e-counter Pre-emption right, which can be visited on the following address: **[www.rechtvanvoorkoop.be](http://www.rechtvanvoorkoop.be)**. On the basis of the address, cadastral or geographical data you can find out whether for a certain piece of land the Flemish government or another organization has the pre-emption right.

### Meanwhile in ... Doel

The oldest landbanking project is that of the Scheldt Left bank which operates already since 2002. The cause was the expansion of the Antwerp port, with the construction of the Deurganck dockyard. But this landbank is not only for the farmers who got expropriated because of the port expansion. With the construction of the Deurganck dockyard a lot of valuable tidal marshes and birds areas were given up. These areas were reconstructed elsewhere, and therefore it was again necessary to expropriate agricultural land and farms. For these expropriations the farmers had the choice between money or land as a compensation for the loss of their farmlands. In this case 18 farmers preferred the land. About 55 ha farmland has already been assigned as a compensation. For one farmer a new farm was sought and found.



# Contact

Do you have plans in open space or do you want to know if the VLM can be of any help for you? Do not hesitate to contact one of the experts of the division Land Development.

**Flemish Land Agency**

Gulden-Vlieslaan 72  
BE-1060 Brussels  
tel 02 543 72 00  
fax 02 543 73 99  
e-mail [info@vlm.be](mailto:info@vlm.be)  
web [www.vlm.be](http://www.vlm.be)

**VLM - Antwerp**

Cardijnlaan 1  
2200 Herentals  
tel 014 25 83 00  
fax 014 25 83 99

**VLM - Limburg**

Koningin Astridlaan 10  
3500 Hasselt  
tel 011 29 87 00  
fax 011 29 87 99

**VLM - East-Flanders**

Ganzendries 149  
9000 Ghent  
tel 09 244 85 00  
fax 09 244 85 99

**VLM - Flemish Brabant**

Diestsevest 25  
3000 Leuven  
tel 016 31 17 00  
fax 016 31 17 99

**VLM - West-Flanders**

Velodroomstraat 28  
8200 Bruges  
tel 050 45 81 00  
fax 050 45 81 99

| ***colophon***

Layout: Lemento nv

Photography: VLM Photo archive

Print: Lithos Printing bvba

Responsible editor: ir. Roland de Paepe, Gulden-Vlieslaan 72, BE-1060 Brussels





VLAAMSE LANDEMAATSCHAPPIJ  
DE KAKTEWEN DE DE OPEN RUIMTE

