

## **Rivierenhof**

## **Managementplan 2018**



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## 1. Introduction

On 7 May 1923 the Rivierenhof was inaugurated as the first 'provincial park' of Flanders. Two years earlier, the deputation of the province of Antwerp had bought the former court of plaisance. The visionary decision to protect green space from being parceled out and to open it up to the general public, has enabled us to enjoy provincial greenery for 95 years.



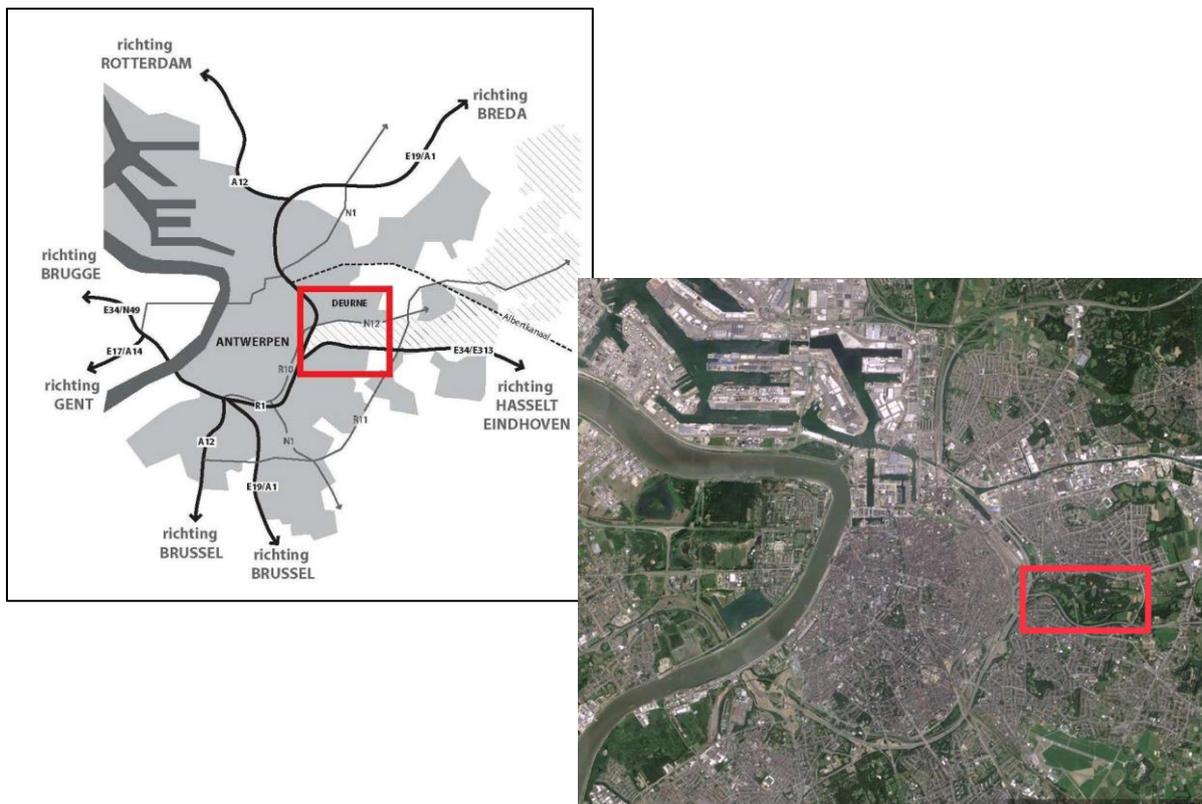
With its 135 hectares, this provincial green domain is one of the biggest reliefs of the Antwerp metropolis. The sports clubs, castles, the fairytale house, the children's farm, the art gallery, the playgrounds, the open-air theater, the decking path, the labyrinth, the multi-purpose sports field and the clearly marked 10 kilometer long running course make the park attractive for a wide variety of visitors. The extensive botanical collection of the Rivierenhof is known far beyond the national borders. The collections can be admired in the arboretum, the azalea garden and the rose garden. The Rivierenhof is a lively park with an extensive educational focus on nature and the environment with numerous activities and events for young and old. There is something for everyone at the Rivierenhof. You would almost forget that you can just come and stroll or have a drink.

Building on the rich history of the Rivierenhof, the Province of Antwerp is investing hard to satisfy the changing needs of park visitors. In the Rivierenhof there is a new playground and a new sports zone in the making. The Rivierenhof is also an active member of World Urban Parks and is the founding place of the Royal Flemish Dendrology Society (1937).

### **1.1. Location**

The Rivierenhof is located largely on the outskirts of the city of Antwerp in the Antwerp city district Deurne and is owned and managed by the Province of Antwerp. It covers an area of 135 hectares and is therefore the largest park within the territory of the city of Antwerp. The domain is bordered by a number of major roads; in the south the E34 / A21 and the E313 / A13, in the west the ring around Antwerp and in the north the Turnhoutsebaan.

The Rivierenhof is part of the valley area of the river "Groot Schijn" that stretches from Westmalle to Deurne. The valley area is typified by a succession of recreational facilities and green areas that play an important role in open space within the relevant municipalities. Of all these recreational facilities and green areas, the Rivierenhof is closest to the city of Antwerp.





## 1.2. Brief history of the park

Historically, the Rivierenhof lies in the valley of the Groot Schijn, where the castles Sterckshof and Rivierenhof have an important cultural-historical significance.

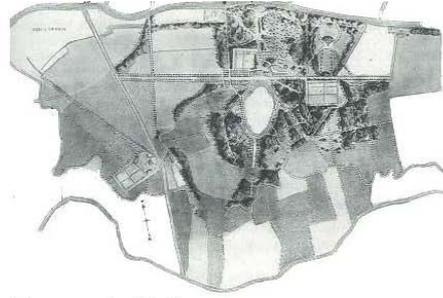
The dominant influence of the Sterckshof on the environment has largely been blurred by the destruction during the invasion of the Spaniards. Considering the Rivierenhof was spared, this castle has become very dominant partly due to the construction of the park that has increased in surface over the years. The extension and re-profiling of the Hooftvunderlei-Sterckshoflei was a very radical change in the spatial relationship between the Sterckshof and the Rivierenhof, as well as in the total park.

When the Rivierenhof was purchased in 1921 by the Province of Antwerp, the domain, which was opened to the public in 1923, evolved into a public park and large infrastructures such as the agricultural school (now avAnt) and a football stadium (now demolished) were built. These infrastructures were then still on the edge of the park. Later, the park has increased in area and is spatially delimited by the construction of the motorway and the Ruggeveldlaan.

The Park road has evolved systematically into a long straight axis that now completely traverses the park in the horizontal direction.

A section of the Herentalsevaart with the surrounding area, in which the Schranshoeve is located, is now part of the park, even though it has its own character.

The current design of the park as well as the presence of various functions and buildings are the result of different time periods that each have left an impression in the park.



*Toestand 1923*



Bron: Petra Rebmann, Het Rivierenhof, vijf eeuwen parkgeschiedenis

### **1.3. Ownership and management**

The Rivierenhof is one of the 16 domains of the province of Antwerp and is managed by the Department of Leisure. The day-to-day management falls under the authority of the "Provincial Green Domains Region Antwerp" which, in addition to the Rivierenhof, manages 3 other parks in the province (Vrieselhof, Kesselse Heide and Hof Van Leysen).

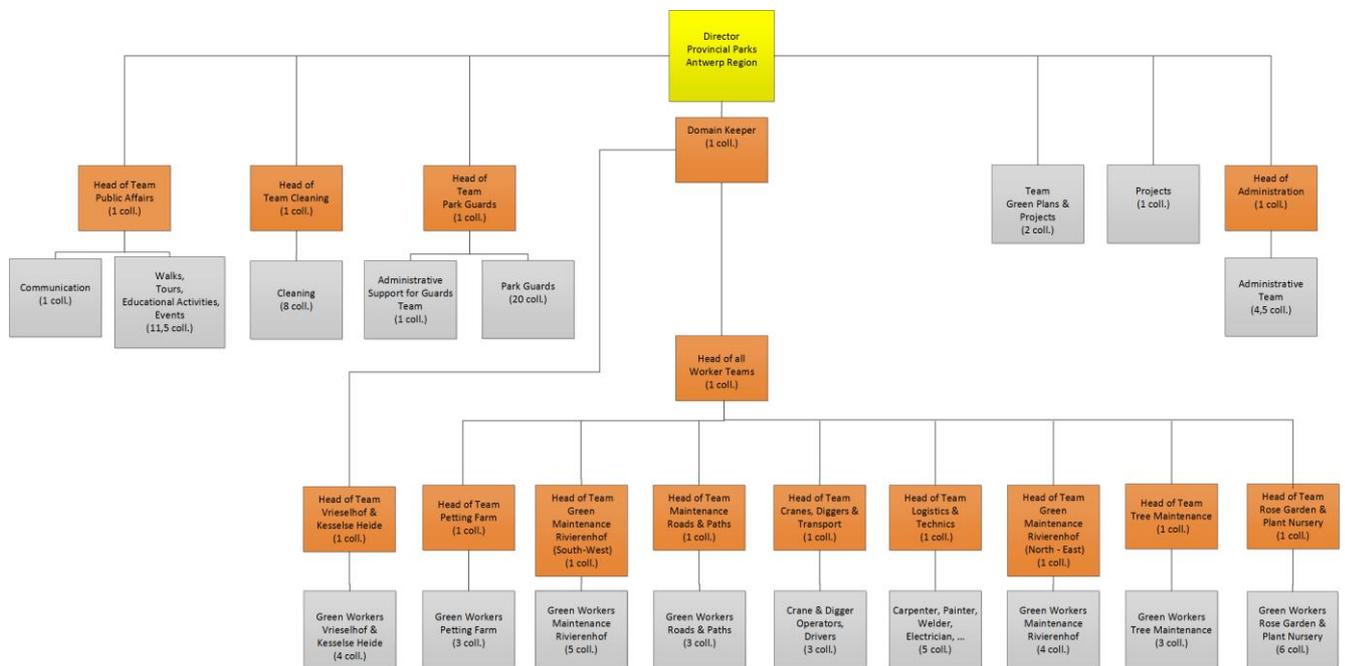
In total, the team of Provincial Green Domains Region Antwerp has 107 employees. Most employees have the Rivierenhof as effective workplace. The other parks are managed and supported by the team of the Rivierenhof.

At the Provincial Green Domains Region Antwerp a team of 101 employees work with an equivalent of 72 FTE. This team consists of:

- Management
- Administration
- Communication worker

- Educational team
- Landscape architects
- Coordinator volunteers
- Park rangers
- Technical service (green maintenance and repair workshops)
- Maintenance personnel

In the schedule below you can see the organogram of Provincial Green Domains Region Antwerp, the majority of which work in the Rivierenhof. You can also find this organogram in appendix.



In addition, some 50 volunteers are active on a regular basis at the Rivierenhof:

- at the children's farm
- as guides
- to clear litter
- in green maintenance and nature conservation
- in collection management

#### 1.4. The Green Flag

One of the objectives of this management plan is the systematic mapping and follow-up of a number of data, working methods, ... with the aim of clearly communicating this to staff, policy makers and other interested parties.

We developed this management plan according to the guidelines of the Green Flag Award, a method developed in the United Kingdom to sustainably manage public green spaces.

Topics that are covered are:

- 1) a welcoming place
- 2) healthy, safe and secure
- 3) well-maintained and clean
- 4) environmental management
- 5) biodiversity, landscape and heritage
- 6) community involvement
- 7) marketing and communication
- 8) management

This management plan is therefore the file that will be submitted as an application for a Green Flag Award. The next years we will adjust the plan to continuously improve the park and to keep up with changing ideas and to adapt to new realities. The document should therefore be seen as a working document that evolves with new insights and with the changing spirit of the times.

## 2. A welcoming place

### 2.1. Welcome

With a surface area of 135 hectares, the Rivierenhof is one of the largest green lungs in the city of Antwerp. The park is very easily reachable by public transport, bicycle and car.



The entrance gates of the park with wide avenues behind invite you to enter the park. The logo of the Province of Antwerp and the name of the Rivierenhof are clearly visible at the large entrances. Information boards, with a map, are in place. By the end of 2018 all these info signs will be replaced by a new design (which you can see on page 4). The borders are filled with colorful flowers, colorful permanent shrubs (such as azaleas, rhododendrons, camellias, cornuses) and trees (including a large collection of magnolias). The rose garden is also a pleasant quiet place to sit, relax or study. Throughout the park there are a number of artworks that give an extra dimension to a visit to the Rivierenhof.



In the park itself, there are often workers or park rangers who can easily be recognized by their uniforms. Everyone has their own specific knowledge and every staff member is open to all kinds of questions related to their job. This is highly appreciated by the park visitors.

## **2.2. Good and safe access**

The Rivierenhof is centrally located and easily reachable by various tram and bus lines, which run frequently. From the large nearby streets there is also clear signposting to the Rivierenhof.

The Rivierenhof is easily accessible by bicycle, the surrounding streets often have good cycle paths, there are various cycle routes through the park, it connects to the ring cycle path and the busiest bicycle hub in Flanders lies in the Rivierenhof. The signposted routes 'Brialmontroute' and 'Flanders cycle route' run through the domain.

The Rivierenhof has a total of 19 entrances. The very limited access for vehicles renders the park very pleasant and accessible for cyclists and pedestrians. At 4 large entrances free parking is provided, including a number of reserved places for people with disabilities: parking East, parking South, parking West and parking Sterckxhoflei.

On the northern side there is currently no entrance with a large parking lot, but there is ample free parking space along the Turnhoutsebaan.

The most historic entrance for cyclists and pedestrians dates back to 1741: the Jesuit gate on the Turnhoutsebaan. This was renovated in 2015 together with the Jesuit Lane behind it.

The main entrance for visitors is located at Turnhoutsebaan 246. Here you will find the reception building, where the public can go every day from 6:30 am to 10:30 pm to park rangers for maps, information, reservations of educational self-do packages and guided walks. Outside these hours, the park can also be reached by telephone for urgent matters.

The domain is freely accessible every day from 6:30 am to 10:30 pm.

There are many paths and lanes through the park. The Park road is laid out in vowels, the lateral in cut-through cobblestones, paths in other stain asphalt, dolomite or sand. Three quarters of the paths are accessible for wheelchairs. The main entrances and axles are equipped with street lighting that is controlled by easily operable clocks and light sensors. At the entrances where park visitors have to cross public roads, safe crossings are created in cooperation with the authorities by means of traffic brakes or traffic lights.

The registration of every motor vehicle at the reception is mandatory before permission can be granted to enter the park. After registration and after obtaining an authorization, the driver receives a document containing the most important safety and environmental rules and contact details.

Via random checks, the contractors are checked by park rangers for compliance with safety rules and park regulations.

### 2.3. Signage

Signage and information boards are always functionally provided at the most suitable location. The orientation is such that the board is rotated at an angle of 45 ° to 60 ° on the main traffic axis. The house style has a natural look and works with wood and sustainable materials. The graphic designs are of very good quality, intensive use is made of generic and easily interpretable pictograms. The park furniture is well maintained and replaced if there are problems due to vandalism.

- Access board

These signs are provided by the facility department of our organization on the street side at the main entrances of the green domain. The design is standard, based on the house style of the Province of Antwerp, and consists of the name of the green domain and the logo.



- Information board with floor plan



The large information boards in the park are a bit further away from the street, near important entrances. They provide an overview map with hiking trails. Furthermore, the opening hours, the telephone number of the park rangers and the park regulations are also mentioned. In addition to the central plan, the information board also contains one or more side panels. These are used to greet the visitor with a friendly and welcoming message and to distribute ad valvas messages regarding current information about the park or messages from external stakeholders (sports clubs, events, etc.).



- Signpost

The signposts in the park lead visitors to certain attractions, garden rooms, sanitary facilities or just the exit. They are made according to a uniform house style with a strong natural look. When choosing the poles a local, sustainable solution was chosen based on barked robinia poles in which cutouts are provided for icons at the top. These pictograms are explained in the walking brochure and will also be provided on the maps in 2018.



#### 2.4. Equal acces for all

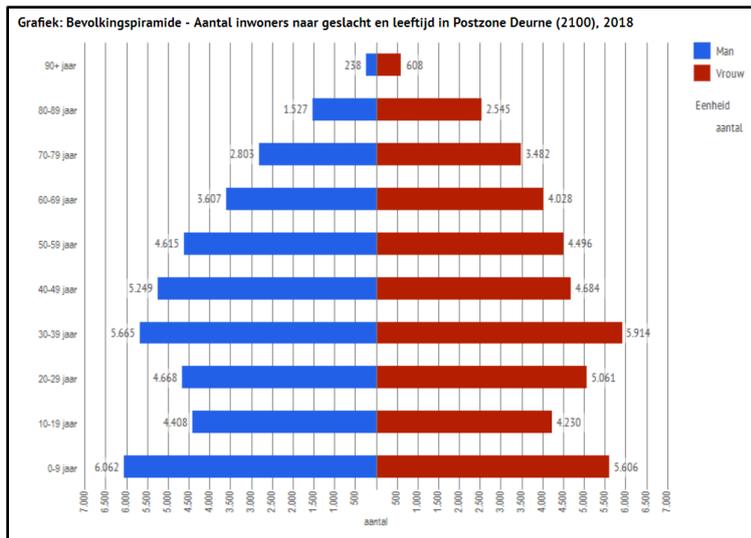
The Rivierenhof wants to be as fully accessible as possible. For this reason, a number of important aspects are very consciously taken into account;

- Language / communication to the visitors;
- Entrance fee to participate in activities;
- Physical accessibility and
- Attention for specific target groups

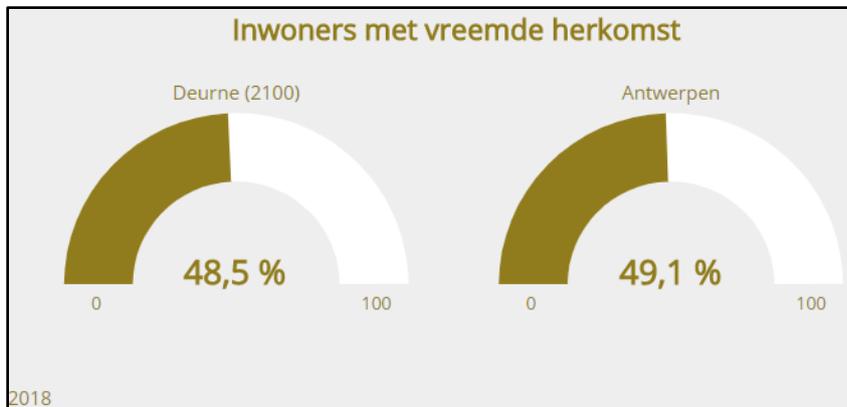
## Demographic data

The Rivierenhof is located in the city district of Deurne, so a large number of visitors to the park come from this district. Currently there are 79.496 inhabitants in Deurne (source: <https://stadincijfers.antwerpen.be/dashboard/Dashboard/Demografie>).

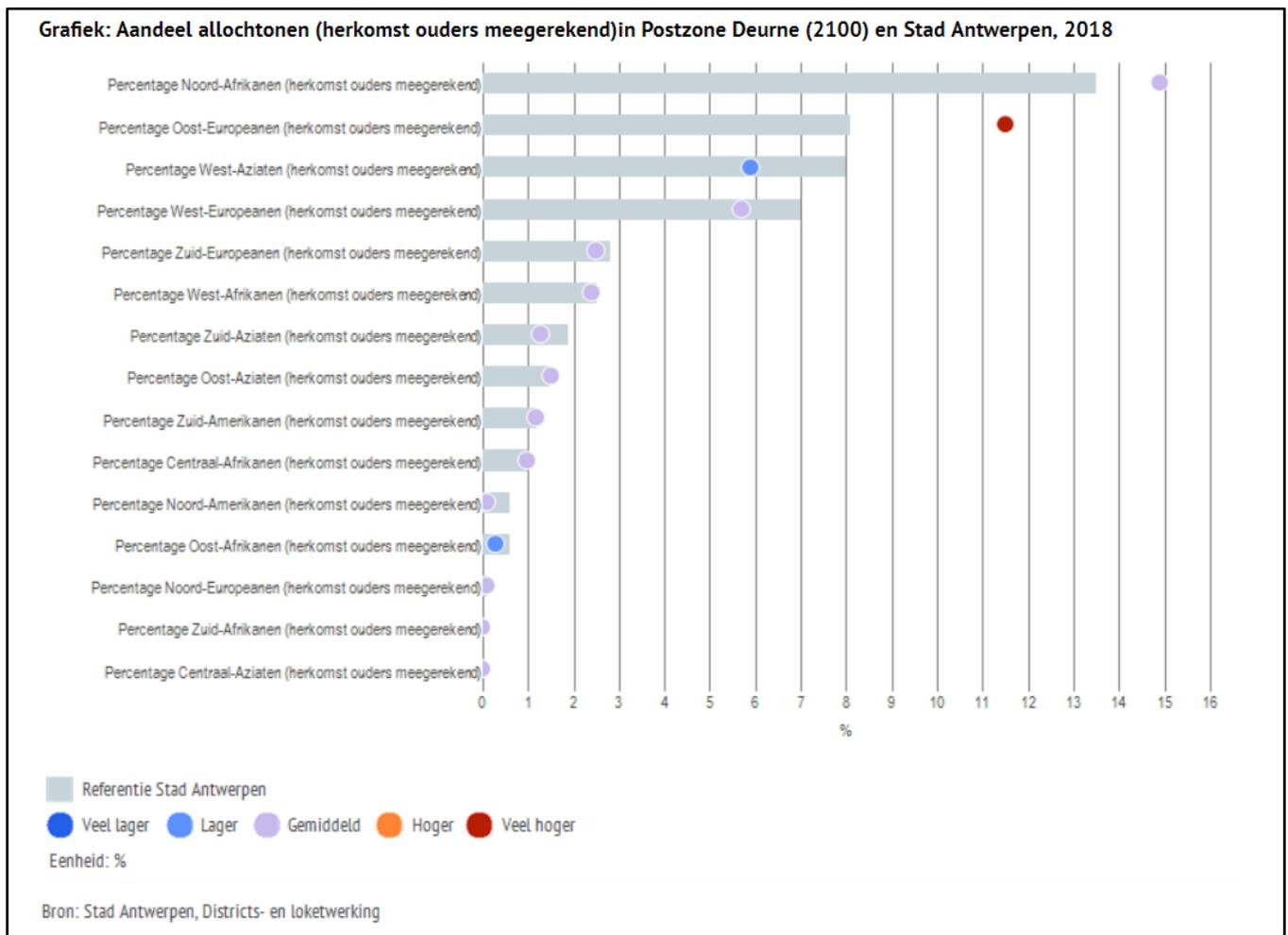
The graph below shows the number of inhabitants in Deurne by gender and age.



In Deurne 48.5% of the population is of foreign origin.



In the table below you can see which regions are most represented in the city district of Deurne.



### Language / communication to visitors

One of the aspects that we take into account in the day-to-day management of the park is accessibility for people with a different nationality. For example, in our communication to visitors in the park we try to communicate as much as possible by means of pictograms and basic Dutch language.

Out of respect for everyone's faith we also try to be as neutral a domain as possible so that everyone feels at home and welcome, no matter what religious belief they have.

### Participation price activities

The park management wants the Rivierenhof to be a park where everyone feels at home and welcome, financial capacity should certainly not be a barrier to participation in

activities. That is why the majority of organized activities and events are free. For a number of activities a (low) participation fee is requested, this is then for activities where a reasonable amount of costs have been incurred and where there is room for a limited number of participants.

There is, however, consciously maintained a different threshold regarding registration. Registration is only possible online and only from about three weeks before the start of the activity. This is done deliberately to prevent people from registering at the beginning of the year, when the brochure with activities for the whole year is released, for all activities, but do not show up later in the year.

### **Physical accessibility**

Smooth and easily accessible roads and paths make the park accessible to many target groups; people with physical disabilities, parents with prams, seniors with diminished mobility, ...

A great deal of attention is therefore being paid to this theme in the Rivierenhof. Half of the paths are paved. In addition, the following facilities have been made explicitly accessible to persons with wheelchairs: parking, the reception building, public toilet facilities, the playground, the mini-golf and the plank path.

All new buildings are designed so that they are fully accessible. Special attention is also paid to the availability of fully accessible sanitary facilities (e.g. the construction of the new sports clubs including fully accessible and equipped changing rooms and showers). In the Rivierenhof, the benches are also extensively distributed so that sufficient resting places are created for everyone who needs them.

The Buildings & Infrastructure design team of the provincial government has an employee who specifically screens all designs on the theme of accessibility.

### **Attention for specific target groups**

In the Rivierenhof explicit attention is paid to reaching people with a mental disability. For example, the children's farm works with volunteers with a mental disability. Sometimes groups of autistic youngsters also work in green maintenance.

In 2017 many employees of the park took part in the course "dealing with persons with intellectual disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), non-congenital brain injury, ..." to get acquainted with this topic..

### **3. Healthy, Safe and secure**

#### **3.1. Appropriate provision of quality facilities and activities**

In the Rivierenhof there are many facilities that meet the needs and wishes of different visitors to the park. More information about these facilities can be found in appendix.

##### **Family facilities**

- children's farm
- fairytale house
- miniature golf
- playgrounds
- traffic garden
- maze

##### **Facilities for athletes**

- 10 km running track that can be shortened to 5, 4 or 3 kilometers
- The park houses:
  - o 3 korfbal clubs
  - o 3 football clubs
  - o 1 tennis club
- Multi-sport cage
- Callisthenics devices

##### **Facilities for adults (30+)**

- walking route
- botanic gardens
- open-air theater
- petanque fields
- The park houses a number of hobby clubs:
  - o 1 fisherman's club
  - o 1 model steam train club
  - o 1 ship model building club

In the park there are a number of facilities that benefit the general public and that everyone can use:

- large lawns
- sunbathing areas
- brasserie
- public toilets

A lot of activities are organized in the Rivierenhof. A large part of these activities are free, for some the participation free is deliberately kept very low so that everyone who wants to can participate.

<b>Overview of activities under own management in 2017</b>		
	<b>number of participants</b>	<b>entrance fee</b>
NME/EDO activiteiten scholen	18484	€ 0 - 0,5 p.p.
Start to moestuin	48	€ 0
Help de boer een handje	25	€ 0
Paddenstoelen in park	75	€ 0
Sfeerwandeling	500	€ 0
Sprookjes Nostalgie	50	€ 5
Sprookjes op zondag	786	€ 5 p.p.
Valentijnrun	1000	€ 0
uitlenen wetenschappelijke veldkoffers	1034	€ 0
Vleermuizenavond	88	€ 0
Vogels in winter	72	€ 0
Wandelingen op aanvraag	120	€ 50 per groep
Blotenvoetenpad (Week van provinciedomeinen)	420	€ 0
WS 'rozen snoeien'	23	€ 0
WS 'stekken van rozen'	24	€ 0
Zelfdoepakketten	420	€ 0
Fotozoektocht - Natuurspeurtocht	1800	€ 5 per boekje
WS natuurfotografie	25	€ 0
WS Wilgentenen vlechten	32	€ 0
Jong leven in het Rivierenhof	72	€ 0
Keltische Bomenwandeling	72	€ 0
Dag van het Park: Keltische bomenhoroscoop + picknick en wandeling	125	€ 0
Natte voetenwandeling	48	€ 0
Konijnenwandeling	48	€ 0

<b>Overview of activities organized by external parties in 2017</b>		
	<b>number of participants</b>	<b>entrance fee</b>
Danskant	400	€ 0
Zomer van Antwerpen (oa Yoyogi)	1200	€ 0

### Events

Events are regularly organized in the park. In addition to a few smaller events, the Rivierenhof organizes 2 large-scale events per year: the Rose Festival (celebrating it's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2018) and Ecodroom (started in 2001). The Rose Festival is a plant and arts market around the theme of the Rose Garden. Ecodroom is an event to introduce the general public to feasible, sustainable, local and delicious alternatives for a healthy life with a smaller ecological footprint. There is also a flea market and a repair café to stimulate reuse and sustainability.

Every two years a 'story festival' is organized: during this festival several stories are told in different tents and structures of the park.

Furthermore, a number of large-scale events are organized by external partners: the Valentine's Run in February, the Knights Spectacle "the Quaeye Werelt", ...

<b>Overview of self-managed events in 2017</b>		
	<b>number of participants</b>	<b>entrance fee</b>
Ecodroom	10000	€ 0
Rozenfeest	5000	€ 0
Sfeerwandeling	500	€ 0
Valentijnrun	800	€ 0
Vertelfeest	1500	€ 0

<b>Overzicht evenementen door externen georganiseerd in 2017</b>		
	<b>number of participants</b>	<b>entrance fee</b>
Bevrijdingsfeesten (vuurwerk, reuzen, treintjes)	5000	€ 0
De Quaeye Werelt	10000	€ 0
Deurnse orientatieloopweek	1000	€ 0
Marathon (doorloop)	2500	€ 60 p.p.
Nightrun	3178	€ 25 p.p.
OLT	78000	€ 0 - 50 p.p.
Rivierenhofloop	1200	€ 0
Tentoonstelling Fomu	100	€ 0
Valentijnrun	800	€ 0

### **Nature and environmental education for schools**

In the Rivierenhof there is a specific educational offer for schools about nature and environmental education. This can cover various topics:

#### **Children's farm:**

- Visiting the children's farm: toddlers and 1st degree PS
- Farmer for one day: 2nd and 3rd degree PS
- Make your own bread: 2nd degree PS
- Make your own cheese: 3rd degree PS
- Farmers life: 2nd degree PS
- Know what you eat: 3rd degree PS
- In the middle of the kitchen garden: 2nd degree PS
- Do-farm: toddlers and 1st degree PS
- Feeling bins (generic activity)

#### **Rivierenhof:**

- Kindergarten kit: toddlers
- Autumn walk: 3rd degree PS
- Spring walk: 1st degree PS
- Natural treasures: 3rd degree PS
- To tell and invent stories: 2nd degree PS
- Narration: toddlers and 1st degree PS

Every year about 170 schools from the province of Antwerp register for one of these activities. Approximately 18 500 pupils are reached with this educational offer.

### **3.2. Safe equipment and facilities**

#### **Controls**

To enable a safe environment and quality facilities, checks are carried out on a regular basis of the existing infrastructure that belong to the fixed range of tasks of different teams / managers / contact points.

For the management of this data and the planning of maintenance and inspections, different management systems or software applications are used.

In the table below you have an overview of the equipment that is checked on a regular basis and on which regime this is done.

Item	Type	Frequency
Verwarmingsetel gas > 100 kW	Verwarmingssaudiet	Om de 4 jaar
Energie prestatie certificaat gebouw	Onderzoek	Om de 10 jaar
Bovengrondse tank stookolie 3000 liter	Controle	Om de 3 jaar
Ondergrondse tank diesel/benzine	Controle	Om de 2 jaar
Ondergrondse tank diesel/benzine	Onderzoek	Om de 15 jaar
KWS afscheider	Controle	jaarlijks
Bodemonderzoek brandstof verdeelstation	Onderzoek	Om de 10 jaar
Verdeelstation	Controle	3-maandelijks
Legionella publiek warmwater sanitair	Risicoanalyse	1-malig (installatie/aanpassingen)
Legionella publiek warmwater sanitair	controle	jaarlijks
Aardgas	Keuring	1-malig (installatie/aanpassingen)
Elektriciteit HS	Keuring	jaarlijks
Elektriciteit LS	Keuring	Om de 5 jaar
Elektriciteit LS	Risicoanalyse	1-malig (installatie/aanpassingen)
Branddetectie	Controle	jaarlijks
Brandhaspels	Keuring	Om de 5 jaar
Brandhaspels	Controle	jaarlijks
Brandblussers	Keuring	jaarlijks
Noodverlichting	Controle	jaarlijks
Nooduitgangen	Controle	jaarlijks
Persluchtvat > 300 liter	Controle	Om de 5 jaar
Asbestinventaris	Controle	jaarlijks
Speeltuinen	Risicoanalyse	1-malig (installatie/aanpassingen)
Speeltuigen	Controle	jaarlijks
Speeltuigen	Controle	wekelijks
Hef- en hijswerktuigen	Controle	3-maandelijks
PBMs - valbescherming	Controle	3-maandelijks
Ladders	Controle	3-maandelijks
Stellingen en steigers	Controle	wekelijks (continu gebruik)
EHBO materiaal	Controle	3-maandelijks
Veiligheidsinrichtingen op machines	Controle	3-maandelijks
Elektrische lasposten	Controle	maandelijks
Septische putten	Controle	jaarlijks
Gevaarlijke producten	Controle	3-maandelijks
Debietmeter grondwaterpomp vijver	Controle	Om de 15 jaar
Gebouwen algemeen	Controle	jaarlijks
Werkplek	Controle	jaarlijks

In addition, permanent supervision is provided by our park rangers.

In the context of the drafting of management plans, spatial implementation plans or renovation and expansion of infrastructure, various issues are mapped out such as accessibility, safety, parking, public toilets, environmental aspects.

These matters are also mapped when organizing our events in order to be able to request the necessary permits. Various conditions are set for safety and environmental aspects that are followed up on the basis of a scenario and checklists.

As far as handling (hazardous) waste is concerned, the procedures and work instructions (managed in the document management system Sindala) are regularly practiced on the basis of exercises (4 emergency exercises annually) and information sessions (eg ISO reception).

Instructions / procedures are available via the intranet for:

- Sorting out garbage
- Handling dangerous products / gases
- Environmental safety measures for contractors in Rivierenhof
- What to do in case of fire / explosion?
- Burglary and vandalism
- First aid
- Fill a battery safely
- Fueling without spills

### **Safety training**

Regular training is provided for the staff of the Rivierenhof.

The table below shows which courses the staff must follow according to the job. In addition to these courses, staff can also take other courses on a voluntary basis. This can involve a wide variety of subjects such as: lifting, tree budding, dealing with aggression, mobile GIS, stress and burnout, working with disabled people, ...

<b>Training</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
EHBO-basis	minimum 1 per ploeg	1-malig
EHBO-opfrissing	minimum 1 per ploeg	jaarlijks
Elektriciteit BA4	personeel ploeg logistiek	1-malig
Elektriciteit BA5	personeel ploeg logistiek	5-jaarlijks
Heftruck	personeel ploeg vervoer	5-jaarlijks
Hoogwerker	personeel ploeg boomverzorging	5-jaarlijks
Kettingzaag	personeel ploeg Groenonderhoud	5-jaarlijks
Keuring speeltuinen	personeel ploeg logistiek	1-malig
Kleine blusmiddelen	ieder personeelslid	1-malig

Klimtechnieken	boomverzorgers	5-jaarlijks
Milieu auditor	milieuaanspreekpunt	1-malig
Politieopleiding-basis	domeinwachters	1-malig
Politieopleiding-opfrissing	domeinwachters	1-malig
Rijbewijs C/D-opfrissing	personeel ploeg vervoer	5-jaarlijks
Sproeistoffen	personeel ploeg Serre	5-jaarlijks
Veiligheid	preventiemedewerker	1-malig
Veiligheid wegenwerken	personeel ploeg groenonderhoud + vervoer	5-jaarlijks

Exercises for emergency situations are also organized on a regular basis.

### **Exercise dangerous products**

Once a year an exercise about the handling of hazardous products and gases is organized in the park. A new scenario is developed each time, afterwards a report is made by the environmental contact point, with attendance list of all participants, possible non-conformities, improvement proposals or immediately soluble points for attention. The non-conformities and improvement proposals are incorporated in a task follow-up system.

### **Fire drill**

In the park, an emergency evacuation fire is organized 4 times a year. These can be announced or unannounced exercises. There are detailed procedures that are deemed to be known by the personnel. The latest version can always be consulted on the intranet. We are always working with a new fire scenario. A report is made by the environmental contact point, with attendance list of all participants. Any non-conformities, improvement proposals or immediately soluble points for attention are included in the report and are incorporated in a task follow-up system.

### **3.3. Personal security**

The management of the Rivierenhof wants to give the daily visitors a safe feeling. Three different services work together in the park to ensure the safety of the visitors as well as possible:

- The park rangers patrol the park throughout the day. They wear uniforms and are therefore very recognizable as staff of the Rivierenhof that can be addressed for all sorts of things. The park rangers also have police authority, they have the status of the officer of judicial police with limited authority. In practice, this means

that they are authorized to prepare an official report for violations of the park regulations.

- Collaboration with the local police force: The collaboration involves the joint execution of traffic violations and inspections, the making available of information for each other that may be relevant for monitoring and supervision to organize regular supervision in the domain. This supervision is both visible (with police vehicles and in uniform) and in civilian clothes. The police can also be summoned by the park rangers and, if necessary, on the spot on the territory of the Rivierenhof.
- Collaboration with City Antwerp personnel who have a MAP (Municipal Administrative Penalties) authority. These persons have the authority to draw up a simplified official report that immediately results in a financial penalty for the offender involved. This then concerns lighter violations such as stray dogs, not clearing dog poop or illegal dumping.

The Rivierenhof has taken all kinds of visible and invisible measures to protect the visitors and to guarantee the maximum safety feeling.

### **Break piles**

Break piles have been placed on various access roads to prevent cars from entering the park without registration. Invisible in this case means that, in case of emergency, the emergency services are capable of overthrowing these piles, so that they break down and do little to no damage to the emergency vehicles. In this way, the location concerned can be reached quickly in an emergency.

### **Clear signposting to aid location**

For signposting, it was decided to increase readability for visitors by contrast (black pictograms on white background). The signage is supported by floor plans to clarify the position of the visitor in the park. By using internationally recognized symbols as the  symbol that is present on every signage, the fastest possible route to the aid locations can be reached.

### **Snow and sleet**

In snow or sleet, a team of 2 to 3 people clears snow at 6 o'clock in the morning; if necessary, salt is scattered on places where many pedestrians or cyclists come. The roads that are not paved eg. forest roads are not cleared. If snow or sleet is expected in

the weekend or on a public holiday, sufficient staff will always be put on standby. These employees can then be called up if necessary.

### **Storm procedure**

To guarantee the safety of our visitors and our employees, a storm procedure has been established. Depending on the weather forecast, this procedure ensures that the Rivierenhof is closed if necessary. It is also an instrument for all employees to use as a step-by-step plan during a closure of the park. If the park is closed due to storms or acute fire hazards, visitors are notified via billboards at entrances, facebook, twitter, press and a 'news item' on the website. Staff members, concessionaires and sports clubs who have direct contact with visitors are also contacted so that they can adjust their activities: reschedule school visits, close gates, secure everything safely during work, ...

### **Lighting**

By placing lighting in well-chosen locations, a better flow of visitors is ensured and they are given a safe feeling. The main entrances to the main Park road and the Park road itself are illuminated throughout. The road to the open-air theater is only illuminated during events. The smaller, natural paths of the Rivierenhof are not further illuminated, in order to minimize the impact on the natural environment.

### **Cameras**

The placement of visible camera surveillance has a dissuasive effect in case of potential violations and can be used as a means to record violations and to identify offenders. At the newly constructed parking lot, Parking West, clearly visible camera surveillance has already been provided over the entire car park. On new car parks that will be constructed this will also be provided. In the future, a mobile camera system, which is also clearly visible to visitors, will be installed on the current car parks.

### **Escape routes**

Escape routes are not specifically indicated as there are no dead ends in the Rivierenhof. Evacuation of a certain zone is always possible. The Park road has an important orientation effect in the park. That is why this central axis is heavily signposted and directs visitors from there to the various sights and exits.

### **Plantation**

When choosing a plantation, the visual effect on the environment is always taken into account. For example, there are few to no intersections in the park where the adjacent roads are poorly visible. This is done by placing a low planting or placing the planting sufficiently open so that the visibility is always maximized and the natural visual effect is maintained.

### **Complaints system**

The central provincial government has an online complaints system. Anyone who wants to can file a complaint online. In accordance with the guidelines of the Province of Antwerp, all complaints are followed up within 8 working days and registered in an online registration system (Sharepoint).

### **Safety clothing: personal protective equipment**

Depending on the type of work that a staff member does, specific safety clothing is provided: safety shoes, gloves, hearing protection, face protection, safety glasses, leg protection, arm protection, mask, welding mask, cap, ...

Wearing this clothing during certain work is legally required. An overview of which clothing is mandatory for which activity can be found in appendix. In the first instance it is the direct supervisor who ensures that everyone wears the right safety clothing. Within the provincial government it is the prevention officer who regularly conducts tours and gives explanations and information about this. If an occupational accident occurs, it is always checked whether the person involved has complied with the guidelines.

### **3.4. Control of dogs / dog fouling**

The park regulations state that owners of dogs must always keep their dogs on a leash. Dog poo must always be removed by the owner. In the park, waste bins have been placed at regular locations to facilitate this.

At each entrance of the park a short park regulation is visible that states that dogs must be leashed. Icons used are not seen as a ban, but as a positive report.



All visitors with dogs are regularly approached by the park rangers. This is done to check if the dog owner has enough containers to remove the dog excrement. If it is determined that the dog owner does not have recipients or if the dog's excrement is not removed correctly, the owner will be sensitized or made an official report. If one finds that dogs are not on a leash, the same is applied.

The arboretum and the rose garden are dog-free zones; this in order not to disturb the fauna and flora present.

The park itself does not have dog-walking areas, but the district Deurne has a very large number of dog-walking areas.

## **4. Well maintained and clean**

### **4.1. Litter and waste management**

In order to prevent littering, a good spread of the rubbish bins in the park was ensured: this in consultation with waste collectors and park rangers and on the basis of a plan that includes all the park furniture.

For the rubbish bins, a transition was made to maintain the same model throughout the park.

The waste in the park is collected at regular intervals. In the summer months and during good weather periods, collections are also ensured during the weekends. Every staff member has the task to pick up dirt. Every day litter is poked; this both by employees and by a number of volunteers.

Illegal garbage dumping occurs regularly in the park. In order to avoid this, very strict action is taken here. The park rangers keepers take the necessary photos as evidence and an attempt is made to trace the identity by the illegal dumping agent. As soon as this is known, an official report is drawn up by the Illegal Dumping Team of the city of Antwerp. The waste itself is removed as quickly as possible by our own services.

At events, the necessary waste islands (with sorted bins) are located at strategic locations where the visitor can dispose his waste. During events, the environmental impact is reduced by working with environmentally friendly products and using exchange cups instead of disposable cups.

The waste from our own staff is picked up on a weekly basis at the various locations and then follows the correct waste route. Some actions have already been taken to reduce waste. For example, the fruit waste in the refineries is collected for the own compost heap at the petting zoo. To reduce plastic bottles and aluminum foil to the staff, everyone got a thermos or lunch box for free.

Waste processing mainly takes place via the contract of the provincial government with waste disposal company Suez. This contractor was selected, partly on the basis of sustainability criteria (eg ISO14001 certification, environmentally friendly vehicle fleet, quantity of secondary raw materials produced, own processing installations, ...). A number of fractions are processed in the park itself (eg leaf waste, logging, manure, ...)

or are processed by a number of specialized companies. More info on this can be found in appendix.

## 4.2. Horticultural Maintenance

### Plantation

Good maintenance of greenery starts with the well thought-out placement of plantations. In the Rivierenhof there are 2 staff members who are mainly engaged in the planning of plantings in the park.

The Rivierenhof is both a park and a botanical garden, is a member of the VBTA (Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta) and is the founding place of the KVDV (Royal Flemish Dendrology Association). That is why the botanical aspect is ubiquitous in the park.

The plant collections of Rivierenhof contain mainly hardy plant species. The plantation of the park focuses on flower bulbs, perennials, shrubs and trees. Annual plants are rarely used. Because the park is a botanical garden, this aspect gets a lot of attention in many parts of the park. For each plant we try to find suitable habitat conditions (wet-dry, light shade, acid soil, etc.). The aim is to show the public the wide variety of plant species that can live in our region.

### Management

A management plan has been issued for the management of our parks (see appendix), based on o.a.

- the vision texts of the Agency for Nature and Forest, such as the technical vademecums 'Harmonic Park and Green Management' on the themes 'Shrubs', 'Trees', 'Grassland', 'Water', 'Herbids', 'Recreational Infrastructure', 'Invasive Exotic Plants'
- or publications by Velt such as 'Handbook Ecological Gardening'.

For the control of invasive, nuisance or harmful plants and animals, we basically do not use pesticides, but we opt for less harmful alternatives:

- biological control,
- weed burners,
- brushing,
- mowing machine etc.

and we follow the guidelines, procedures and work instructions that are imposed on us through the ISO14001 certified environmental management system of the province of

Antwerp and the guidelines of the Flemish (ANB, VMM, ...) and federal government (FPS Health, Safety of the Food Chain and Environment ).

In the rose garden the use of spraying substances was reduced to a minimum. The roses that are susceptible to diseases have been phased out and strong, disease-resistant roses are chosen.

In the children's farm there is a vegetable garden where people also bring the forgotten vegetables back to the attention. There are also various collections of berries, raspberries and gooseberries. Volunteers are also called in for the maintenance of the vegetable garden.

### **Staff**

Various technical teams are active in the Rivierenhof;

- 2 teams in "general green maintenance": one team has 6 people and the other 5 people. They take care of all tasks concerning planting trees, shrubs, bulbs and perennial flowers. They also do all the pruning, lawn mowing and general cleaning of their sector.
- 1 team "field service" of 4 people: they maintain the roads in the Rivierenhof and work in the other green domains.
- 1 team "greenhouse and rose garden" of 7 people: they are especially responsible for sowing, cutting, tearing and growing plants. They also organize the harvesting and drying of all sorts of seeds that are sent to botanical gardens all over the world (from which they also receive a lot of seeds). They are also responsible for the maintenance of the rose garden.
- 1 team "tree maintenance" of 4 people: they are responsible for the inspection, maintenance and cutting of the trees.
- 1 team "children's farm" of 5 people: they take care of the animals and maintain the vegetable garden of the children's farm.
- 1 "logistics team" of 6 people: 2 carpenters, 3 mechanics and 1 painter are responsible for the general maintenance of the playgrounds, small work on buildings and infrastructure, general maintenance of the machines and logistic support for the educational team.
- 1 team "transport and garbage collection" of 4 people: they are responsible for all transport and for emptying the waste bins.

Coordination of the day and week planning takes place by means of daily briefings between the work leader and team managers with an important input from the findings

of the park rangers (eg reporting of illegal dumping, vandalism, burglary, ...). For the coordination of the monthly and annual planning, there is a weekly work consultation between the work leader and the team responsible areas, with an important input from the daily operations (see above) and the weekly staff meetings (consultation with management, head of administration, park rangers team leader and communication consultant). For the coordination of larger projects there are separate consultation moments between the team leaders of all teams involved. For larger projects for which coordination is handled by the Facility/Logistics department of the Province of Antwerp, separate (usually weekly) site meetings are organized.

### **Training**

For volunteers (accompanied by staff members), regular training activities are organized. Topics for the training vary: willow branches braiding into playful elements, harvesting seeds, planting flower bulbs, meadows, fighting exotics, protecting trees, making animal houses.

In order to make the staff more aware of the botanical wealth of the Rivierenhof, a plant is put in the spotlight every month through a poster. This is about a plant that blooms somewhere in the park at that moment. This poster is internally displayed ad valvas, mailed and published on the intranet.

A lunch causerie is organized for all employees 4 times a year. During a joint meal a guest speaker will talk about a specific theme; garden maintenance, landscape knowledge and related issues are regularly discussed.

The employees of the teams also regularly follow a training course in which various topics can be discussed; use of pesticides, use of agricultural implements, plant determination, ecological gardening, ...

## **4.3. Arboricultural Maintenance**

### **Plantation**

For solitary trees an attempt is made to provide an area with soil-covering plants under the tree mirror. Plants used for this can be Hedera, Epimedium, .... This system is used to protect the roots against intruders and to keep the soil more permeable to water.

The beech forest area is gradually changed into a mixed oak / beech forest.

Opportunities are offered to expand old populations of forest plants. This part of the

forest also contains a collection of Camellias, Rhododendrons, forest flower bulbs and perennials.

Because of the exchange program with other botanical gardens many plants are grown from seed. In several cases rare botanical specimens are bought from collectors. These trees are grown at the nursery until they are big enough to be planted in the park. When half of the avenue trees of a lane are sick or dead, the trees in that lane are renewed. We check for the presence of bats before trees are felled and special attention is paid to the breeding season of birds. The choice of species for the avenue trees to be planted takes into account historical aspects. If there are no historical aspects that need to be taken into account, different species of tree are used per lane, because this prevents many avenue trees from dying together due to species-specific diseases. The trees for the planting along the lanes are selected by our own trees team. If possible, larger sizes of trees are planted.

Some trees in the park have a very high value because of their age, rarity or appearance (veteran trees). These trees can receive special protection and in some cases paths can be closed to preserve these trees and prevent park visitors from being hit by falling branches.

### **Staff**

For the care of the trees and the maintenance of the forests, we have a specialized team of tree caretakers. In addition to the shaping and pruning of trees, they are also responsible for the removal of overhanging branches or dead wood from trees near paths, lanes and tracks or other (recreational) infrastructure such as playgrounds, buildings, etc.

For the follow-up on the site and for the inventory of the trees, the tree team is assisted by the park rangers. The park rangers are also called in to fight exotics. They map out the exotics and help them fight with the workmen of the teams who are responsible for general maintenance. In connection with the management of trees, forests and the control of exotics, regular consultations take place.

### **Management**

It is the intention that in the long term the maintenance of the avenue trees will be followed up via a management system based on a tree plan (inventory and status of avenue trees) in a GIS application. In this way management work can be better planned or the state / health of (potentially dangerous) trees is monitored. As a result, the renovation of lanes can then be provided in time. Due to a lack of tree management in

the past decades, a catch-up movement has now been made, which has led to systematic renewal over the past ten years.

For the management of trees in forest context, we base ourselves on the guidelines of the management plan. A plan was drawn up for periodic sheeting, exotics, periodic thinning according to 'future-tree principle', management of forest edges and verges, ...

#### **4.4. Building and infrastructure maintenance**

##### **Succession**

The maintenance of the buildings is primarily monitored by the Head of General Maintenance and the building contact points per location. They are not only the point of contact for problems and suggestions for improvement by the users, but also follow up small maintenance works and are the contact person for contractors.

At the beginning of each year a tour is made with the contact points for the buildings to discuss maintenance and progress. Also in the context of company visits with the internal provincial service prevention and protection and the environmental rounds with the environmental coordinator, a number of company visits are scheduled each year, whereby at the same time an inspection of the infrastructure takes place and the statutory inspections are also followed up. For the buildings and infrastructure that are rented out or given in concession inspections are made annually.

The regular management of other infrastructure elements such as park furniture (trash cans, benches, bicycle parking ...), playgrounds, water features (canals, ponds, ...), paths and roads is done by the Rivierenhof staff. In order to structure the follow-up and planning of the maintenance works and statutory inspections that we carry out in-house (eg asbestos inventory, emergency lighting, risk analysis playgrounds, ...), a number of digital tools will be implemented in the future.

##### **Maintenance**

If the technical team of the Rivierenhof can't resolve a problem themselves, contractors are called in through the provincial service "Team Building Management". They must then carry out the work according to specific standards with regard to quality, safety, environment and timing (service level agreement). These works are reported and monitored via the Ultimo software and the platforms that are made available by the contractors (B & R Facility Management; AQ Manager of Spie).

Periodic maintenance (eg central heating, fire extinguishers, ...) and statutory inspections (eg electricity, gas, etc.) are carried out by these contractors without any notification being required. All statutory inspections (performed by owner or user) are

followed up in a maintenance calendar that is available together with all certificates in Sharepoint.

For larger maintenance work, renovations, new construction, contracts and real estate purchases, the management of the park is supported by the Team Design Buildings, the Team Projects Buildings and the Team Real Estate. Four times a year there is consultation with all support teams from the Logistics department and the ICT department where the projects and long-term planning are followed up.

For buildings that have a heritage value, we are supervised by the Heritage Service, which includes the Monumentswatch Antwerp.

### **Risk analysis**

When commissioning or making changes to buildings, (often mandatory) risk analyzes are performed of various infrastructure elements such as electrical installations, work stations, play or sports grounds (see examples enclosed), work equipment (machines, equipment, ...), traffic situations, events, tasks. etc. If certain elements can't be used with an acceptable risk, these items are put out of use temporarily or permanently or a specific work instruction is drawn up for this. These documents are not accessible to the public.

### **Digital monitoring systems**

To maintain a high level of maintenance, the park will switch to digital workflows and systems in the future. These will ensure better planning, faster implementation and more accurate reporting.

A customized application has been developed for the playgrounds by an external developer. With the application inspectors will be able to do rounds in the playgrounds and register defects (small, large or possibly dangerous). The maintenance team can consult all reported defects and then start their rounds to repair items. For management purposes, all inspection and repair times are recorded, statistics on defects are collected and reports are presented to policymakers.

For general maintenance of buildings and infrastructure, the park uses a software package for facility management. This package makes it possible to plan regular maintenance tasks in advance, provides better allocation of people and equipment, can handle emergency interventions, traces backlogs and offers reporting possibilities.

For machines and vehicles, the same package will be used for planning and following up safety inspections, periodic maintenance or technical checks and "safe to use" reports.

#### 4.5. Equipment maintenance

The maintenance of machines, equipment and vehicles is monitored in various ways.

The smaller green maintenance machines (small lawn mowers, brush cutters, hedge cutters, chain saws, ...) are daily logged in and out in the warehouse where defects are reported in the logbook and maintenance and repairs are usually carried out entirely in-house. In recent years more and more has been invested in electrical tools for small maintenance such as electric hedge trimmers, brush cutters, leaf blowers and chain saws. These are not only more environmentally friendly but also require less maintenance and are generally more ergonomic (lighter) in use. For small machines, more and more is chosen for the use of (more expensive) benzene-poor fuels.

Larger agricultural and horticultural machines or equipment (eg excavators, haymaking machines, wood forage harvesters, sweepers, ride-on mowers, flail mowers, ...) and vehicles (passenger cars, lorries and vans, tractors, ride-on mowers, electric vehicles, ...) are monitored by the head of Team Transport, supported by the fleet management team (facility department of the province) with regard to statutory checks and insurance of vehicles and trailers. The maintenance of larger machines and equipment in the joinery and the metal workshop are handled by the Team Logistics. Small repairs and daily maintenance of these machines are carried out as much as possible in-house, but larger maintenance works and repairs usually take place by specialized firms.

A number of machines or devices are subject to compulsory periodic inspections such as safety functions of machines and wood and metal workshop, hoisting machines (eg excavators, forklift trucks, ...), ladders, shelving, etc. (see 3.2 safe equipment and facilities).

The table below shows how the equipment is being monitored.

Type	Regular maintenance	Major maintenance
Gemotoriseerde handmachines voor groenonderhoud (kettingzagen, bosmaaiers, bladblazers, haagscharen, grasmaaiers, onkruidbranders, zodensnijders, kantensnijders, hogedrukreinigers, trilwals...)	Dagelijks in- en uitschrijven voor gebruik. Defecten worden gemeld in het logboek, onderhoud is meestal volledig in eigen beheer in het lasatelier.	In winterperiode of bij defect. Gebeurt meestal in eigen beheer.
Land- en tuinbouwmachines (maaibalken, klepel- en	Minimaal onderhoud door gebruikers en lasatelier.	In winterperiode of bij defect. Gebeurt

schijvenmaaiers, hooikeerder, hooipersen, ploeg, verhakselaars, eggen, borstelmachine, bladzuigunit, bladblazers, zitmaaiers, meststofstrooier, doorzaaimachine, trilwals, sorteergrijper, kantelbak, container haakarmsysteem, mobiele hogedrukreiniger, beregeningsinstallatie,...)		meestal in eigen beheer.
Graaf- en laadmachines (bandengraafmachine, mini-graafmachine, heftruck, verreiker, laadkraan,...)	Minimaal onderhoud door gebruikers en 3-maandelijkse inspectie door gespecialiseerde firma	Jaarlijks of bij defect. Gebeurt door gespecialiseerde firma.
Gemotoriseerde handmachines voor hout- en metaal-atelier (boor-, vijs-, slijp-, zaag-, schaaf-, schuurmachines,...)	Minimaal onderhoud door gebruikers	Bij defect. Kleine toestellen worden meestal vervangen.
Grote machines voor hout- en metaalatelier (paneel- en lintzagen, vandikte-, vlak- en pennenbank, afkort- en verstekzagen, frezen, draaibanken, kolomboren, plooi- en heftafel, lasapparatuur, plasmasnijder, slijpmolens,...)	Minimaal onderhoud door gebruikers en 3-maandelijkse inspectie in eigen beheer	Bij defect. Gebeurt meestal door een gespecialiseerde firma.
Schoonmaakmachines (schuurmachines, schrobzuig- machines, stofzuiger, hogedrukreiniger,..)	Minimaal onderhoud door gebruikers	Bij defect. Onderhoud wordt gedaan in lasatelier of door gespecialiseerde firma.
Landbouwtrekkers (traktoren en motocultivators)	Minimaal onderhoud in metaalatelier	Jaarlijks of bij defect. Onderhoud door gespecialiseerde firma.
Personen-, bestel- en vracht- en aanhangwagens	Minimaal onderhoud in metaalatelier	Jaarlijkse keuring en onderhoud door gespecialiseerde firma
Elektrische voertuigen	Minimaal onderhoud in metaalatelier	Jaarlijks of bij defect. Onderhoud door gespecialiseerde firma.

An example of what an internal control looks like can be found in appendix.

## 5. Environmental management

### 5.1. Managing Environmental Impact

#### ISO 14001

Since September 2011, the Provincial Domains of the Antwerp region (PGRA) have been officially ISO 14001 certified. As a result, the park management is obliged to:

- comply with environmental legislation and other environmental requirements
- handle scarce resources (water, energy and raw materials) economically
- deal with waste materials correctly
- limit air and water pollution
- avoid environmental incidents and emergencies
- implement an ecological and social purchasing policy
- act in an environmentally conscious manner
- communicate about environmental information

Those who purchase a product must consult the Sustainable Purchasing Guides. These purchase guides contain sustainability criteria for currently 28 categories of products. The province wants to purchase 100% sustainably by 2020. This objective is followed up within the ISO14001 system.

Every year, the environmental contact point, together with the management and some other employees of the Rivierenhof, assesses the state of affairs and the achievements of the past year in the context of ISO 14001 and looks ahead to the coming year. This assessment is also published on the intranet.

Immediately at the reception, a new employee receives information and guidelines concerning ISO14001 from the personnel department regarding general matters, and from his direct supervisor with regards to ISO14001 requirements at his own workplace. A work instruction was also developed for this purpose.

### 5.2. Minimization of waste

Flyering is done to a very limited extent, each time weighing up what it yields. Leaflets and brochures are only provided if requested.

#### Events

Small or large activities or events have an impact on many environmental aspects: materials used, catering, waste, etc. In-house events are organized as sustainably as possible. In some cases, it is also mandatory to request a temporary environmental

permit. That is why an event guide (see appendix) was drawn up in the context of ISO14001. Events include the following:

- training moments: study days, seminars, workshops, courses ... with or without catering
- events: concerts, festivals, sporting events, open days, theme days, receptions,...

The event guide contains many points that can be taken into account during an event. Some items are mandatory, other tips are optional. For an easy overview there is also a contention list (checklist).

Waste is always taken away by the organizer of the event, any signage must also be removed. Supervision and monitoring is done by the park rangers afterwards.

### **Waste policy by concessionaires**

When concessions are renewed, contractual agreements are made so that the tenants are in order with the general park policy on waste prevention. The park management ensures sufficient communication about the policy used, the minimum desirable training and logistical support and informs the tenants that they report their waste policy annually.

### **Generation of green energy and composting**

Fresh, short grass cuttings are immediately transported as much as possible to a biogas plant in the neighborhood. Currently this is Biofors, Ginnegeveld 2, 2520 Ranst. The better wood is recycled as much as possible and processed into useful material for the park; banks, signage, ... This is done by our own staff or by students from a provincial technical school that they work with. Smaller fractions of wood are chopped and mixed with fine green waste and then composted in the composting plant of IVAREM. Tree stumps are chopped and deposited or used as mulching in the green composting plant.

Park personnel is sensitized around composting (eg composting game 'what is allowed in the compost bin and what is not?').

### **5.3. Chemical use**

Control of pest species happens regularly in various places in the park. Only when there are no alternatives will chemicals be used for this. These chemical control products undergo screening during the purchase (see purchase guide).

#### **Fighting invasive exotics**

The monitoring of exotics is carried out by the park rangers and workmen and results in an annual evaluation and the creation of a distribution map for the most invasive (plant) species so that evolution can be monitored. The follow-up and control of the distribution of these species are therefore part of the specific job responsibilities of a number of park rangers and workmen. If the control requires herbicides and / or specific techniques or tools, the control only takes place by the workmen or specialized firms. More information about which invasive exotics are controlled in the park can be found in appendix.

The management plan is an important working document for combating exotics. For more detailed information reference is made to specific sheets published by the Agency for Nature and Forest (ANB), while for invasive alien plant species the Technical Vademecum Management of Invasive Alien Plants (ANB) can be used as a reference book.

#### **Control of pests in the greenhouses**

A limited number of products are used in the greenhouses. The park management lists these products regularly and checks whether they are still legally permitted.

#### **Use of disinfectants in the animal enclosures in the children's farm**

In 2018 the last biocide disinfectants will be removed and replaced with less harmful alternatives.

#### **Use of fertilizers**

For the propagation of plants in our nursery and to keep some plantings in the park (eg Easter flowers) healthy, it is necessary to use fertilizers. We choose to use only organic fertilizers.

### **5.4. Peat use**

In the park, peat is mainly used for acid-loving plants such as Rhododendron, Kalmia and Camellia. Alternatives such as pine needles can be used if they are available from forests that have to be removed for other projects (eg a pine forest that disappears in order to expand a river). We also try to use beech leaves as soil cover / substrate for the acid-

loving plants. Beech leaves can be obtained from leaf waste from beech droppings from neighboring municipalities. Since 2018, only the purchase of peat that has been sustainably harvested and bears the "responsibly produced peat label" is permitted.

### **5.5. Adaptation strategies for climate change**

In the management of the natural values in the Rivierenhof, we are supported by various experts from the Department of the Environment (Department of Sustainable Nature and Environment Policy, Department of Integrated Water Policy, Provincial Institute for Hygiene). In close cooperation with the park management and various services of the Flemish Region (ANB, AOE, INBO, ...), the Nature and Landscape Team has written a detailed inventory and management vision for the Rivierenhof (see appendix), whose natural values are an important part. (but also infrastructure, heritage, landscape, ...). This document describes for various terrain units the values, potential threats and potentials of forest plots, spring flowers, exotics, grasslands, hydrology (including surface waters such as canals and ponds) and the associated fauna.

#### **Water management**

The entire domain is located in the valley of the river 'De Schijn' and in case of heavy or persistent rain there is, despite all measures, regular flooding. For this purpose, adjustments to the infrastructure are often also provided, such as raised footpaths and sites, drainage systems, or ground works to improve drainage (vertidrain). Finally, the Rivierenhof teams also have a number of powerful waste water pumps and sandbags to, take extra action in case of flooding.

The water management in the park is kept under control by a complex system of ponds and canals that are connected to each other and whose water level is controlled by overflowing with bulkheads or pumping up groundwater (eg the Mirror pond). The water levels are monitored by the park rangers and workmen.

Rainwater is recuperated as much as possible, for daily reuse (eg rainwater from welding workshop, children's farm, conservatory, minigolf, ...), or by limiting the drainage from the domain by means of quenches, canals (eg rainwater from drainage of sports grounds, green roofs, ...) or through the use of water-permeable (semi) pavements or unpaved roads.

#### **Differentiation in plantations**

In recent years, a number of new plant diseases and pests became more important in our regions (eg essence, elm disease, etc.). That is why we try to plant the floats with different tree species. In this way we avoid that the emergence of a new, species-specific, plant disease would affect all lanes in the park. Since the park is an important botanical garden, lanes can be planted with both indigenous and non-native species.

### **More planting in autumn**

Due to the changes in the climate, in the last few years we experience longer hot and dry periods in the spring. It is therefore advisable to carry out the plantations of trees, shrubs and perennials at the end of the year (end of October, November, December).

### **Climate adaptation strategy**

On 20 February 2018, the province organized a one day conference on the theme of climate adaptation. The ideas of this conference will be incorporated in a climate adaptation strategy at provincial level. Parallel to this exercise, park management will take initiatives to achieve an integrated area vision on the scale of, for example, the downstream valley of the river 'De Schijn', together with spatial planners and neighboring site managers. Such a joint vision should, with respect to the current spatial planning, seek to strengthen the themes of water, recreation, green management and nature.

## 6. Biodiversity, landscape and heritage

### 6.1. Management of natural features, wild fauna and flora

#### Collections

In addition to a general collection, which wants to give an overview of the botanical diversity of winter hardy plants, there is an extensive collection of certain genera or plant groups (comparable to a national collection), with many varieties. The Rivierenhof has important collections of the genera Rosa, Rhododendron, Magnolia, Cornus, Camellia, Corylus, Quercus and Ferns and also has an extensive collection of ferns and forest plants.

Various collections can be found in the park in different areas. There is always a theme for the most important planting: eg arboretum, pinetum, coryletum, rose garden, Celtic tree calendar, Appalachian Trail zone. The most important planting is combined with other plant groups (eg flower bulbs, ground cover plants, etc.). Where possible, different layers of planting are combined. Spring-flowering plants, soil-covering plants and ferns can be added under trees.

Because we want to give visitors a good and happy feeling, special attention is paid to adding flowering plants, plants with special leaf shapes or leaf coloring (spring or autumn colors) and plants with edible fruit (nuts, chestnuts, etc.).

The botanical collections are managed with the software program BG-Base, a management program for botanical collections, developed by the Royal Botanical Gardens of Edinburgh.

The available data (name, source, etc.) of all items arriving in the park (a packet of seeds, a shrub, a tree, ...) are registered and a unique number is assigned to them. This number stays with the plant, even if it is moved from the nursery to the final location in the park. In order to be able to follow the plants, they are labeled with a weather-resistant label indicating the Latin name, the unique number, a barcode and some additional information.

#### Seed exchange program

The botanical garden Rivierenhof has a seed exchange program with 700 botanical gardens worldwide. Every year seeds are collected from about 300 different plants. The seeds harvested by our staff are compiled into an Index Seminum (seed list) which is sent to approximately 700 botanical gardens worldwide. No seeds of aggressive exotics

are collected. Botanical gardens can order a maximum of 20 items of seed for free. To expand the collections, Rivierenhof orders seeds from other Indeces Semina. Every year, the Rivierenhof chooses a limited number of plant genera or groups for which seeds are ordered. The seeds are sown in the greenhouses. Depending on the plant type, a maximum number of plants to be cultivated is recorded. (eg for most perennials, a plate with 24 plants is grown until the second year). Excess plants are put on an exchange list at the end of the year and offered free of charge to other botanical gardens of the VBTA network (Association Botanical Gardens and Arboreta).

### **Waarnemingen.be**

The park rangers make use of the website with modules Waarnemingen.be. On this website, nature observations of all types of groups can be entered and managed as point data. This information is shared with other users of this website and visitors to the park. The data of Waarnemingen.be are public and can be consulted by everyone. The park rangers want to help the users and managers of this website and provide visitors to the Rivierenhof insight into the natural diversity of Flanders.

### **Counting birds**

Every half-year the park rangers cooperate with the Institute for Nature and Forest Research (INBO), which organizes six Mid-monthly water bird counts in Flanders between October and March.

With this project we gather information about numbers, distribution, numerical trends and habitat choice of wintering waterfowl in Flanders. The project contributes to the international monitoring project "International Waterbird Census".

With each count, all the water birds present are counted in as many areas as possible. The counts are coordinated via fixed recos that are also retained with the start-up of the measurement networks in 2016. The Mid-monthly waterbird counts take place in the weekend closest to the 15th of each month, in the period October - March.

### **Bats**

When trees have to be removed, they are first checked for the presence of bats. If there were bats in the tree, it is always ensured that a different habitat is available to them in the vicinity. Throughout the year there are theme activities about bats. These are themed evenings in collaboration with an external bat working group.

## Exotics

See also "Control of invasive exotics" under 5.3 "chemical use" and appendix.

In our nature, more and more exotic species or 'exotics' emerge. These are plants or animals that do not normally belong here but because of all kinds of causes do end up with us. Some are dumped, others escape, yet others are led by increasingly crowded international transport. In our region, the province is fighting the Himalayan Balsam and the Japanese knotweed. In the entire area the exotics were cleared wherever possible. The province supports and insists that very accurate manual aftercare is carried out for at least 3 years. This aftercare means that the once infected locations are visited very regularly and are being released back by hand from these exotics. The goal is the complete eradication of these exotics.

Not all exotic species are a problem. For most of them it is too cold or too hot, there is not enough suitable food, etc. Of the exotic species that are well grounded here, some settle in our nature without causing problems. However, a number of species have a huge expansion due to the absence of natural enemies or parasites: they become 'invasive'. This means that they pose a threat to indigenous biodiversity. The park rangers try, by shaking eggs from Canadian geese, to proactively limit the expansion of this species.

## 6.2. Conservation of landscape features

The various landscape features are bundled in the management plan and are roughly subdivided into natural landscape, historical landscape and sports landscape.



A number of the landscape elements present in the Rivierenhof are protected heritage such as the castle Rivierenhof, the entrance gate of the Jesuit lane, the Schranshoeve, the war memorial at Hooftvunderlei ....

Other elements are described as:

- valuable (architectural) heritage: guards' building, open-air theater, King Albert's bust in Rose Garden, historic grassland between the two castles, ...
- historical landscape relics,
- castle parks or anchorages (Sterckshof and Rivierenhof)
- as part of protected historical landscape 'Valley of the Great Appearance'.

All interventions related to protected or valuable elements of the landscape (eg renovation such as Jesuit gate and Jesuit lane, castle restoration, archaeological finds, ...) are activities requiring a permit, for which we have to follow (binding) advice from various authorities involved (Agency Nature and Forest, Agency for Heritage, ...).

There are various services, each with their own expertise, which support the management of the Rivierenhof:

- the provincial Heritage Department (including architecture archive, archeology, immovable heritage and monument conservation, ...),
- the Nature and Landscape Team of the Provincial Department for Sustainable Nature and Environment Policy,
- the Flanders Heritage Agency of the Flemish community.

The following information can easily be consulted via the Geoboorts (GIS application of the Province of Antwerp): Protection database for the Immobile Heritage, Landscape Atlas, the Immobile Heritage, the provincial landscape map, ....

### **A provincial spatial implementation Plan (PRUP)**

In the 20th century, a lot of new sports infrastructure were placed in the park.

Unfortunately, there was little vision about the most desirable structure of the park at the time. Open space was occupied by football, tennis and korfbal courts. There was even a big tribune in the middle of the park. During the first 10 years of the 21st century, a plan was drawn up to determine the desired spatial structure of the park and to lay down the rules to be followed for spatial planning: the Provincial Spatial Implementation Plan (PRUP). The plan divides the park into different zones, each with its own functions and determines the possibilities and limitations of new developments. All new developments

in the park must comply with these rules. At the moment the sports infrastructures are being reorganized and the clubs in the center of the park are being moved to the western or eastern sport zones (as proposed in the PRUP). At the same time, many other works are planned to improve the structure and logic of the park.

### **6.3. Conservation of buildings and structures**

For a number of buildings, such as the castle Rivierenhof and the accompanying ice cellar, detailed historical studies have been carried out by the Provincial Heritage Service. Via inspections carried out by Monumentswatch Antwerp, reports are prepared with detailed descriptions and recommendations for the restoration and preservation of our monuments.

There are a lot of buildings in the Rivierenhof (see appendix), ranging from very large ones such as the children's farm to very small ones such as the beehive. These are all owned and managed by the provincial government. Some buildings are rented out to third parties, such as to sports clubs, among others.

## 7. Community involvement

### 7.1. Involvement of the community in management and development

The Rivierenhof reaches a very diverse public: joggers, parents with children playing, walkers, cyclists, fishermen, lovers of miniature golf, calisthenics, pétanque, miniature trains, ... A lot of facilities, activities and events are planned for all these park visitors ( see 3.1 "Appropriate provision of quality facilities and activities").

Thanks to the Provincial Spatial Implementation Plan (PRUP) Rivierenhof, the park is currently in full swing. These changes include important and large-scale works: relocation of sports clubs, replanting old lanes, building playgrounds, adding other structures, ... All these important changes are discussed with different partners. Depending on the specific situation and parties involved, different methods are used to involve the community: surveys, info sessions, messages on facebook / newsletter, ... We inform local politicians (Deurne district), the city of Antwerp, the concessionaries and discuss the projects with various parties involved. In some cases information sessions can be held in collaboration with the district (eg closing the park for cars from inhabitants of the Grapheusstreet).

For an ever growing number of projects, we are gaining more and more advice from users and stakeholders, in different ways.

#### Surveys

- **Active survey of visitors via automatically sent survey forms**

When a school chooses to follow an educational program (activity children's farm or NME walk), both the teachers and the pupils are given the opportunity to complete an electronic survey.

- **Targeted satisfaction surveys**

Visitors to the Rivierenhof are involved in the decision-making process regarding the design of the park, especially when target group-specific garden areas are being created or modified.

- **General satisfaction survey**

In 2015, the last survey was done regarding general satisfaction about the park. The data from every 5th visitor provided basic information for 1607 people. Of these 1607

persons, 644 people were willing to participate in the survey. The surveyed visitors are from the vicinity, but sometimes also from a little further. They come mainly on foot (almost 50%), by car (26%) or by bicycle (almost 20%) and regularly visit the park (70% weekly or more). Slightly more than 40% live in an apartment. Visitors come for walking, relaxing, resting, exercising freely and enjoying nature.



All this clearly indicates that the Rivierenhof is a park that offers people in the urban context the necessary peace and relaxation in the green. Or, as one visitor puts it, "it's my second home." The park can also attract people who come from greater distance(s).

Visitors say the care of the park is very important (cleanliness, maintenance). In addition, the safety, 'peace and quiet that this park offers', basic infrastructure (dustbins, toilets and benches) and space for free sports are also mentioned as important (78%).

The overall satisfaction is very high. 97% say to be satisfied to be very satisfied. The visitors are generally very satisfied with the care of the park, the accessibility and space for free sports, but less so with regard to the basic infrastructure (dustbins, toilets and benches), 'maintenance of the trails' (71%) and 'the maintenance / cleanliness of the park' (69%).

Although more than half of them come from the immediate vicinity (Deurne and Antwerp), Rivierenhof also attracts visitors from further on. About 13% come from outside Antwerp and its peripheral municipalities: Kempen, Voorkempen, Lier, Boom and even some people from the Netherlands.

- **Survey children's farm 2014**

This targeted survey among free visitors of the children's farm helped to create new insights into the layout of the children's farm and the need to enrich the behavior of our farm animals.

- **Survey playground 2017**

In 2017, 302 people were questioned about the use of the playground and their wishes for a new playground. These data were included in the design of the new site.

### **External / scientific research**

When opportunities arise to be the subject of or actively participate in scientific research on recreation or environmental education in green areas, this will usually be agreed. For example, in the period 2002-2003 an investigation took place in the park in which the behavior and the findings of children and young people were mapped. This study also resulted in concrete recommendations for park management.

### **Research 'Short-term and long-term effects of NME and EDO'**

A new study 'Short-term and long-term effects of NME and EDO' started in June 2017 and will be concluded in September 2019. During this research it will be investigated whether there is an increase in the knowledge of the participants regarding the theme of the activity. Is there a change in their attitude towards the environment and sustainability? The aim of the study is to develop skills with guides, park rangers and educators to make activities more effective.

## **7.2. Appropriate facilities for the community**

The Rivierenhof reaches very different target groups. It is the intention that everyone feels 'at home' in the park. Extra attention is paid to some target groups, which are target groups that require extra attention or target groups that visit the park regularly, but which we do not achieve with our daily communication means.

- **Persons with disabilities**

A large number of volunteers work at the Rivierenhof. Some of them have autism, they receive extra external guidance. At the children's farm there are regular classes of which one or more pupils have an autism spectrum disorder. In order to take this kind of visitors into account, the staff working at the children's farm regularly follow training

courses on the theme of autism. In the other parts of the park, pupils with autism are learning to do horticultural maintenance, guided by their teachers.

The Rivierenhof wants to be a hospitable place for as many people with disabilities as possible. However, the park can't be the most suitable place for every target group. For example, after consultation with a Center for the Blind, it appears that there is already sufficient supply for blind visitors at 2 other green locations in the Antwerp metropolitan area.

- **Athletes**

If the park detects local or supra-local needs in the region, new sports infrastructure will be funded. For example, in 2017, after consultation with representatives of the "Street Fighters", a Calisthenics group, a calisthenic site was installed.

- **Persons with a different cultural background / non-native speakers**

The park is a place to get acquainted with Belgian nature and to learn how nature is different from nature in the country of origin. Foreign cultures can learn about our experience of seasonality and nature conservation. We like to explain to them what is allowed in the park. In addition, we explain to them the vulnerability of our nature and consequently why certain activities are prohibited. Foreign speakers are given an extra palette of Dutch words so they can join in on these themes.

Since 2012 there have been sporadic contacts with the Integration Department of Antwerp (Atlas). They support us in working with immigrants or questions about this topic.

In 2016-2017 there were active contacts with the mosque Al Ridaa to get to know each other and to work together. This resulted in a some activities in the park in 2017 (making animal houses, bats evening), but we could not achieve the youth and adult to participate in activities, not even to participate in our voluntary work. An oral survey revealed that the members of the mosque visit the park regularly. Their interest mainly goes to playgrounds, picnics in the park, calisthenics and other sports facilities. They would appreciate a barbecue area, but we do not think it is feasible due to the risk of fire.

By other means, people of immigrant origin regularly enter the voluntary work in the park. Learning the language is an important motivation for them to get involved. The park also regularly receives OKAN primary education classes that are guided by one of our employees. These small groups of foreign-language pupils are a very grateful audience for education about our natural values and words.

- **Facilitate an offer for and by the neighborhood**

The Rivierenhof is for many local residents the garden or large backyard that they do not have at home. Park management considers it important to enter into a partnership with as many actors as possible, so that the park is experienced more like 'their park', because in that way you get more support for a respectful attitude towards the whole park.

Local residents are always welcome as a volunteer employee in the children's farm, in the rose garden, conservatory or as a collector of stray rubbish in the park.

There is regular consultation with the sports clubs in the park; they assess their ambitions and new infrastructure (lockers, showers, ...) and grounds are provided to meet the needs of each association already established in the park. As a result, there is always a diverse range of organized team sports in a club for local residents.

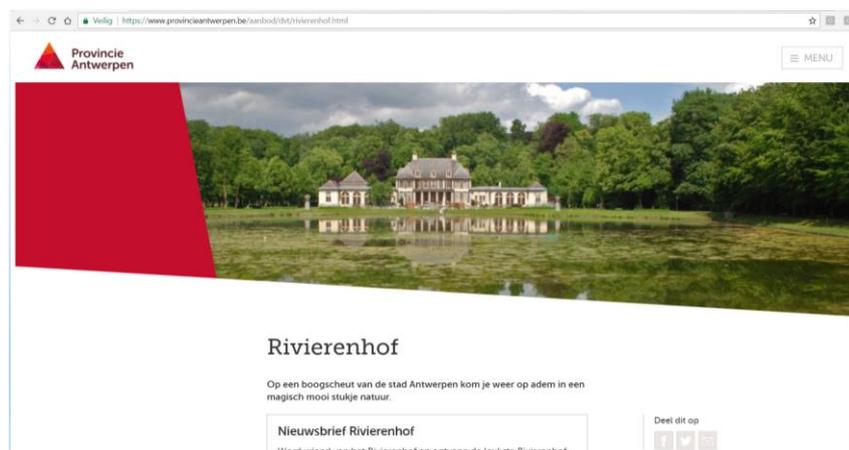
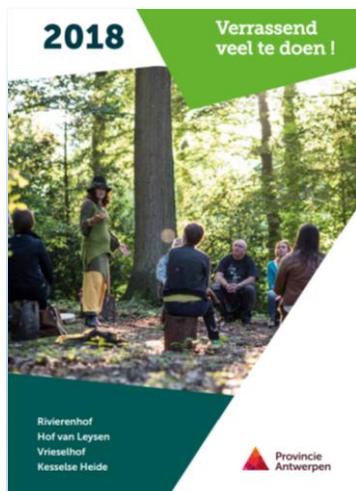
The nearby Sint-Godelieve provincial school accommodates pupils in art and fashion. With the KIDH project in 2014, the students exhibited their artworks in the park.

## 8. Marketing and communication

### 8.1. Marketing and promotion

#### The brand "Rivierenhof"

In the past, the park had its own brand with its own website under the name "Rivierenhof". However, the provincial government recently made the strategic choice to promote the "Province of Antwerp" brand as a single brand, also for all the parks and green domains it manages. It is, for example, that the promotion of the domain on the one hand takes place via the channels provided by the province (website, brochures, leaflets, etc.) and on the other hand via social media with emphasis on the name and logo of the province.



The park is profiled as the oldest provincial park. Following slogans are sometimes used as extra support in marketing; "A magically beautiful piece of nature to catch your breath at a stone's throw from the city of Antwerp", "Oasis in the city", "Dreaming past ponds, lawns and special trees."

These examples of slogans clearly show that factual data is used, aimed at a regional visitor from Antwerp. Potential (international) visitors are currently not sufficiently alerted to the exceptional qualities of the park, here the park management wants to see change in the future.

### **Communication channels**

The Rivierenhof uses different channels to communicate with the public.

- website Rivierenhof: [www.rivierenhof.be](http://www.rivierenhof.be)
- Facebook Rivierenhof: <https://www.facebook.com/Rivierenhof/> (more than 3000 followers)
- Monthly digital newsletter (currently 275 subscribers)
- Twitter DeDomeinen: <https://twitter.com/search?src=typd&q=dedomain>
- Instagram province of Antwerp  
<https://www.instagram.com/provincieantwerpen/?hl=en>
- Press releases sent to various journalists

With these channels visitors are informed and a community is created that loves the park. People who subscribe to the newsletter are called "Friends of the Rivierenhof" because they are considered true friends of the park. The main goal is that people feel that it is their park and that they promote the Rivierenhof with their friends and contacts. By communicating in a positive way with what we do, we also hope to receive support for our actions.

Within the extensive media mix that the Rivierenhof uses, all channels are informed to generate interest and it is always stated how to respond. On the media channels that spontaneously allow two-way communication, increased involvement is regularly provoked with questions to respond, eg. via a poll 'what is your thought?', or post a review, photo or video, put proposal name new animal on children's farm, ...

Where possible, the communication channels used influence and reinforce one another. The website encourages eg. to discover Facebook Rivierenhof and subscribe to the digital newsletter. The e-mail signature of the staff contains links to the website, facebook, twitter and instagram. Reference is also made to Facebook and the website on posters and other printed materials.

## 8.2. Suitable information channels

Everyone who wants to enjoy this beautiful large green lung in urban context with due respect for nature is welcome at the Rivierenhof. That is why communication does not focus on a number of specific target groups, but actually on everyone; local residents, schools for the NME offer, seniors, families, sportsmen, real nature lovers, ...

Visitors and local residents are informed about the ins and outs of the Rivierenhof through a wide range of communication channels. Special attention is given to people who are not so powerful in Dutch, by means of basic language use.

Following communication channels are used to visitors to the Rivierenhof:

- small or very extensive information boards in the park about construction sites, do's and don'ts, facilities and map,
- free annual activity brochure on paper and online. This contains a range of activities with different target groups. Activities suitable for children are recognizable by the logo 'off with fly', directing readers to the online database for outings with children.
- free postcards with info on-going offer,
- posters and mesh cloths in the park to announce activities,
- flyers and leaflets (eg info fishing in the park, groundplan course 10K walkway),
- free walking brochures with marked routes,
- continuous communication via the extensive website Rivierenhof. The activities of the Rivierenhof are linked via the calendar items to the digital platform (database leisure activities) 'Out in Flanders' and if suitable for children also 'Off with fly'.
- Facebook Rivierenhof,
- Twitter DeDomeinen
- digital newsletter,
- the classical audiovisual news media: radio, TV, print and news websites (after press releases, agenda tips, press conferences, official openings).
- If necessary or opportune, the visitor is also informed live and face-to-face.
- individually informed after a question via email, chat, tweet or telephone.
- Through the promotion of concert organizer De Arenberg, the Openluchttheater (OLT) Rivierenhof and the park will get coverage almost daily in the media during the summer period (mid June - mid September). (78,000 people attended the concerts in 2017.)

Rivierenhof collaborates easily with many partners: commercial organizations, non-profit organizations, other governments and governmental departments.

They continuously receive information and images via press releases, agenda tips, the weekly press agenda, the internal exchange platform 'Trello' (channel plan), personal e-mail traffic with customized input, etc.

As a result, activities in the Rivierenhof are not only picked up and disseminated via the traditional media, local or specialized communication carriers also take over the information and reach the general public:

- the TV broadcasts of the City of Antwerp on the regional television ATV
- the TV broadcasts of the Province of Antwerp on the regional TV ATV,
- the quarterly activity brochure District Deurne that every district resident gets posted in their mailbox,
- the monthly free A-magazine of the City of Antwerp (70,000 copies),
- FB District Deurne,
- FB City of Antwerp, FB and Instagram province of Antwerp,
- chat robot and FB Tripfixer, Terra Nova
- Cozy Outside,
- Twitter account #DeDomeinen,
- the ATV Dagkrant,
- FB and Twitter account of the regional TV ATV,
- website City of Antwerp,
- websites (leisure databases) 'Uit in Vlaanderen' ('Out in Flanders'), 'Uit met vlieg' (Out with Fly),
- local or specialized news websites and facebook groups such as [www.gazetvandeurne.be](http://www.gazetvandeurne.be) or <http://www.deantwerpsekoerier.be/> or 'Ge zijt van Deurne as ...' and many, many others!
- Special publications with a small edition such as Zoom, Fence or the Antwerp province staff magazine also report on the activities or realizations in the Rivierenhof.

The Rivierenhof is also active in World Urban Parks and especially in the "Good Practices Group" of the "Large City Parks" section (of which the director is one of the co-founders). In this way Rivierenhof wants to comply with international park standards and promote itself internationally.

### 8.3. Appropriate educational and interpretative information

There are many information boards in the park. These are usually in the communication house style of the province of Antwerp, always tailored to the target group and can be found at car parks, parking places, the children's farm. The access signs, information boards with map and used signposts in the park have already been described in 2.3. Signage.

Additional information will be provided as extra support to visitors to the Rivierenhof.

- Route arrows (external signs)

These signs are provided by external parties and help to find the site or follow a specific route in the area and through the park. These arrows are often tailored to the road user and the scale of the route. The GR markings and cycle node markers for walkers and bicycles are rather small in size, while local tourist routes and arrows for motorized traffic to the parking spaces of the park are more elaborate.



- Educational signs at the children's farm
- The children's farm works with a series of rather large signs for educational purposes. The style is natural, but also colorful, in order to promote cognitive processes in school children. For the same reasons, interactive parts are often incorporated such as books, feelers, etc.



- Walking pole

The walks in the park are marked with short poles with painted top. These colors are also indicated on the floor plans.



- Promotion of events with mesh cloths

These very large-sized signs only have a short lifespan. They are designed and created with the aim of promoting one unique event. The locations used for this purpose are located on the edge of the park, near busy streets and important entrance gates. The provincial logo and contact details of the domain administrator or external organizer are used. For practical purposes, the practical arrangements concerning this signage are described in the scenarios.



- All other (small) signs

This last category includes all other signs that are used in the park. It involves about 100 different types of signs, rarely larger than A3 size. They contain information about e.g. traffic rules, specific local information, nature and environment, temporary measures, park regulations, plant taxonomy, etc. If legally possible, desirable and not visually disturbing, the provincial house style, logo and contact details of the domain administrator are always used.



## 9. Management

### 9.1. Implementation of the managementplan

#### Historical and social context

The Rivierenhof is the largest park in the urban region of the city of Antwerp. It is the most important recreation area for the people who live near the park and because of its diversity attracts visitors from a much larger area and sometimes even from abroad.

As far as the availability of public parks is concerned, the Rivierenhof has an important historical value. It was the first provincial park in Belgium. The castle and grounds were traditionally owned by church or private owners and were not open to the public.

In Antwerp, population growth was so rapid that the city could not immediately process the consequences. Between 1840 and 1900 it saw its population almost quadruple. Due to the increasing population pressure and rising land prices, the last green space was threatening to disappear in the poorer neighborhoods of the city .... Public green was regarded as the remedy for many social problems. Parks and public gardens were not only conducive to public health in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, but also to the moral level of the working-class population. The view grew that the purchase and maintenance of urban green was the responsibility of the government.

#### SWOT analysis

We conducted a SWOT analysis at the end of 2017. This was done in preparation for a large 'legislative memorandum' drawn up every 6 years by the Department of Leisure for the new deputation of provincial government Antwerp. The purpose of this SWOT analysis is to clearly map our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Based on this information, we formulate new (policy) objectives so that we permanently improve our operations.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public transport well developed</li> <li>• PRUP shows future vision</li> <li>• Strong presence in media</li> <li>• Very high reputation as a location</li> <li>• Great appreciation by the public</li> <li>• Location in a heavily built environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety issues: burglaries, vandalism, tramps</li> <li>• No waterproof fence around park</li> <li>• Lack of clarity about policing powers of park rangers</li> <li>• Noise pollution and air quality</li> <li>• Lack of meeting infrastructure</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unique resting point in urban surroundings</li> <li>• Very diverse public</li> <li>• Extended volunteer work</li> </ul>	
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring more diverse topics to the press</li> <li>• A lot of nice projects in pipeline</li> <li>• More work on supply for diverse public</li> <li>• Many opportunities for cooperation; eg. with associations, schools, district</li> <li>• Expansion / connection Rivierenhof in case of putting a roof on the Ring around Antwerp (Valencia)</li> <li>• Future development OLT (master plan)</li> <li>• Park store with park-related items (eg plants, books) and tea-room</li> <li>• Expansion of own brand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overconsumption of domain by external organizers is imminent</li> <li>• Press from local politics (district) to allow activities that do not fit in park</li> <li>• Lack of finances</li> <li>• Climate warming</li> <li>• Takeover by the city</li> </ul>

- Strengths: We will certainly continue to focus on this in the future, although some points (eg good accessibility by public transport) also depends on decisions taken by other authorities. Nevertheless, we do not expect any major changes here.
- Weaknesses: The weaknesses formulated are all points that we have included in plans or actions (eg expanding fencing around the park, monitoring safety problems) or points which we can expect to be (partially) solved in the long term (eg noise pollution and air pollution).
- Opportunities: these are included in actions that we propose for the next legislature. Much will depend on the choices made by the political level.
- Threats: These are points of attention for which we try to take measures (eg danger of overconsumption of the domain) or matters that we try to use preventively in the right direction (for example, by interfering with local politics). With some threats, such as climate warming, we take into account the further design of the park (eg type of plantations).

### **Mission and vision**

An organization needs to know what it stands for and where it is going. That is why it is important to define a mission and vision. A process was started at the end of 2017 to define a mission and vision for the park.

All employees were invited to participate in an exercise to determine the mission and vision statements for the Rivierenhof. Several workshops were held to determine the main purpose of the park and to write out various possible mission statements. After these workshops, a list of 28 possible mission statements was written down. These were reduced to a top 3. This top 3 was presented to all Rivierenhof employees, partners involved and approximately 100 visitors. In this way, the following mission and vision were chosen:

Mission Rivierenhof:

"To be for everyone the park to enjoy and relax in a green environment."

Vision Rivierenhof:

"In the next 20 years we will improve our park facilities and our assortment in collaboration with the public to make the Rivierenhof the most beautiful, complete, diverse and sustainable park in the province of Antwerp to enjoy, relax and learn in a green environment."

### **How we continue with the Green Flag Award**

The park is currently undergoing many changes. These changes are inspired by the Rivierenhof provincial spatial implementation plan, which indicates which actions must take place in which parts of the park. We try to optimize many procedures, make the work as efficient as possible and build in control systems to control the evolution and results.

When we heard about the approach of the 'Green Flag Award', we decided to use this structure to organize our procedures. The great thing about this approach is that it focuses on a management plan that is a single document that can be used by everyone and that can be refined year after year. Because we find the approach really professional and think that this fits well with our park, we now summarize all our procedures in this system.

Until this document, our way of working was a bit different than the way that is proposed in this management plan. The processes of our organization are strongly focused on the financial estimates and reporting to the political level of the provincial government. We are making plans for a period of six years (the current period ends in 2018, that of 2019 is under development and will be approved by the newly elected political council). In those plans, we pay a lot of attention to plans for all larger buildings and infrastructural projects and we propose budget estimates. The final decisions are taken by the political level. We have to report on various aspects of the objectives (financially and what we have realized).

On the other hand, our park has a large number of procedures (eg the storm procedure) and written agreements (eg contracts with external organizers who use the park to organize an event). We are also ISO14001 certified, which means that we have a monitoring system (reporting) and external audits on many aspects of energy consumption, safety, environmental sustainability, etc. Each staff member is involved in this process. There is a separate committee for safety at work. In addition, we have developed good practices in working with, for example, our botanical collections (using a professional database system, BG-Base), our educational activities, our volunteers, etc. The spatial evolution of the park for the next 20 years is noted in a spatial development plan (this divides the park into different areas according to their value [eg historical, natural] and that's why we are currently moving sports facilities to other places in the park) . This means that our way of working and planning has not yet been recorded in a single management plan, but up to now consisted of a combination of many documents.

We view the management plan as a document that summarizes these processes and that will be constantly reviewed, improved and rewritten. Every year a selection of topics is discussed, updated and improved with the people involved in this topic. The resulting changes and improvements will be presented to all employees on a regular basis (for example during a lunch meeting with all persons - these meetings are organized 4 times a year).

The larger actions planned for the coming years are included in the attached action plan. These were categorized by theme so that it is quickly clear which topics are actually being used in the coming years.

## 10. Overview appendices

- 1) Organogram
- 2) Facilities
- 3) Safety clothing
- 4) Safety clothing
- 5) Overview waste processing
- 6) Managementplan
- 7) Example risk analysis
- 8) Example internal control
- 9) Event guide
- 10) Invasive exotics
- 11) Overview buildings
- 12) Actionplan