



Samenwerkingsverband
Markermeer ~ IJmeer

Investing in Markermeer and IJmeer

The Netherlands is under constant development. For the last few decades, there has only been one specially designated exception. We always assumed that the centrally located Markermeer would at some point be made into a polder area (the Markerwaard) and, as long as this future designation applied, we treated it very pragmatically. The turning point came with publication of the Spatial Planning Policy Document, which stipulated that the Markermeer should no longer be considered a national buffer for land reclamation.

With the Markermeer and the IJmeer, the so-called Noordvleugel (or North-Wing) of the Randstad conurbation has access to a conservation and recreation area on its doorstep of nearly 80,000 hectares. The extensive open waters and the varied coastline possess unique qualities, especially given their urban surroundings. The value of this area for nature is beyond question. The lakes are a key link in the international routes of migratory birds. The presence of many thousands of birds is one of the reasons why this area enjoys protection at a European level. But nature is under pressure. It is not obvious at first sight, but nature has declined significantly in this area since the eighties. Bird numbers have fallen. The question is whether and how this decline can be reversed.

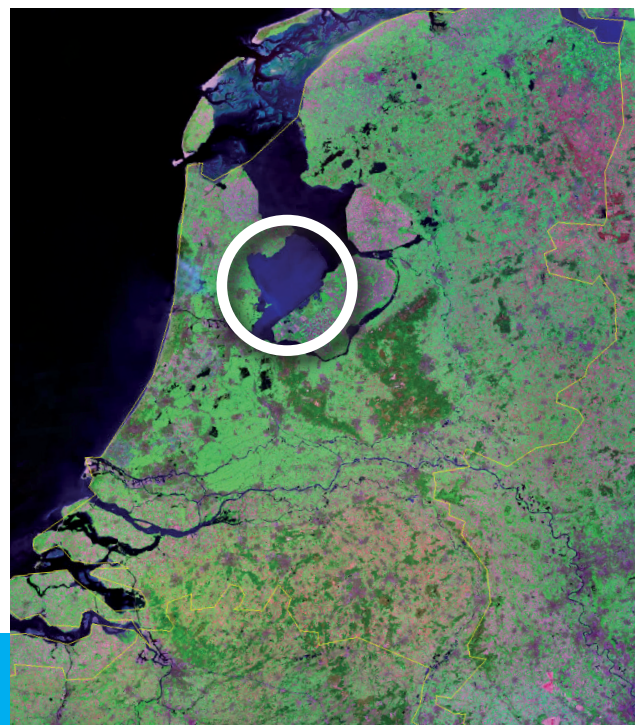
The landscape is a key distinguishing feature of the Noordvleugel

At the same time, the Noordvleugel of the Randstad conurbation is very dynamic. Almere is set to double in size by 2030 to 350,000, Amsterdam and environs continue to grow and Utrecht is about to launch into a new phase of expansion. There will soon be more than 1.5 million people living around the two lakes. All these extra residents mean growing demand for infrastructure, jobs and recreational facilities. This urban development places huge demands on the surroundings. The landscape is a key distinguishing feature of the Noordvleugel, a metropolitan region that, in contrast to most other European metropolitan areas, consists of a network of cities instead of one large continuous urban area. The Markermeer and IJmeer could contribute significantly to this trump card, boosting this area's international competitiveness. The potential is there, but it must be exploited wisely. And this requires pro-active, development-oriented policies. One aspect of this involves a renewed legal approach to

conservation projects that goes beyond the current fashion of environmental compensation.

The need for integral development is recognized at executive level, which has led to this more holistic approach being designated as part of the National Programme for the Randstad. The provinces of Flevoland and Noord-Holland have been requested to manage an Integrated Development Perspective project for the Markermeer-IJmeer. This scheme was submitted to the Minister of State for the Ministry of Transport & Public Works in April as an interim model towards a long-term strategy for the area.

The Integrated Development Perspective project demonstrates that the ecological decline can be reversed with a systematic approach. This approach aims to create an ecological system that is flexible enough to absorb future changes without a substantial loss of quality. This will help to generate space for the urban and recreational dynamics of the Noordvleugel.



Ecological surplus

To realize the above, more work is needed in ecological terms than is legally required to maintain the conservation levels stipulated in the European Natura 2000 programme. Natura 2000 and the Dutch version of this programme have resulted in an ecological task which is drafted in terms of ecological support for specific species and habitats. However, compliance with the above still leaves the ecological system as a whole vulnerable to natural phenomena (such as storms) and human intervention. The system approach of the Integrated Development Perspective project aims to create an 'ecological surplus' that goes beyond the legal minimum. This allows us to realize advantages of scale in ecological terms, and create enough support for protected species and habitats so that new projects and activities no longer form a threat to the ecological balance. The realization of an ecological surplus is an innovative method. External legal advice indicates that the combination of a future-proof ecological system and limited development measures for other functions would be less likely to run up against legal barriers as a matter of course. Development plans lacking such an overall perspective are much more likely to hit such legal obstacles.

Fresh water and sea level

The new policy framework for the IJsselmeer area requires the government to make a decision regarding the Markermeer and IJmeer water levels over the longer term: 2050 and 2100. These dates form points of reference in the KNMI's climate scenarios. The key criterion being to secure the safety and provision of fresh water over the longer term. The regional parties want a decision to be made by about 2010 to uncouple water levels in the Markermeer and IJmeer from sea level rises, and to maintain these levels at around the current position after 2050. This serves the feasibility of the Integrated Development Perspective project.

The Blue Heart of the Markermeer and IJmeer:

- consists of a flexible and coherent ecological system capable of absorbing changes;
- is accessible and enjoyable;
- guarantees fresh-water provisions for the existing supply area;
- provides sufficient protection against flooding;
- ensures landscapes, cultural-historical elements and ground and soil factors are of a high standard;
- allows space for economic usage (fishing, shipping, sand extraction);
- creates space for urban and recreational development.

Further information?

For further information see www.markermeerijmeer.nl;
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Further details of the agenda

A great deal of research is still required before the package of measures for implementing the Integrated Development Perspective project can be finally defined. The research programme is taking shape together with other Randstad Urgent projects around the Markermeer and IJmeer and the policy framework for the IJsselmeer area. The research programme for 2009 and beyond will have been established before the summer of 2008. In order to create an orientational decision-making process regarding the future development and spatial usage of the Markermeer and IJmeer, including the related ecological package of measures, variant-studies may be developed in 2008 that also relate to the Almere Pampus Master Plan and the OV-SAAL Planning Study. This will take place within the government's framework for the entire IJsselmeer area and in Randstad Urgent. The provinces involved (Flevoland and Noord-Holland) may have initiated a process in mid-2008 to arrive at an integral implementation strategy for Markermeer and IJmeer. This includes not only conservational and recreational development, but should also encompass other functions. The objective is cohesive and sustainable development according to the principle of 'people, planet, profit'.