



on the banks of the new Meuse

Ten parties are working together on the banks of the New Meuse river to create attractive new parkland areas. The tidal parks located outside the city consist of landscapes with reeds, willows, mud, and rushes. The ones in the city will have a more urban feel. Wherever they are, they will be places where cyclists, walkers, anglers, and sun worshippers can enjoy the river.

Anyone viewing the New Meuse river from the Erasmusbrug bridge will find it hard to believe that the water is teeming with fish. The open link to the sea means the river is tidal, with the fresh water mixing with the salt water, and this means that migratory fish are very much at home.

This connection with the sea is unique in this delta, otherwise completely cut off by dams and barriers. The difference between the high and low tides in the centre of Rotterdam is an average of one and a half metres. The traces left behind on the river landscape by fresh and salt water and the high and low tides will be made more visible as a result of the development of the banks.

Walter de Vries works as an urban planner with the urban development section of the city council. He is in charge of the 'De rivier als getijdenpark' ('the river as a tidal park')

programme on behalf of the ten collaborating parties. The aim is to enhance the leisure and nature-related qualities of the banks of the New Meuse. "We want to see the river as a natural part of the Dutch delta landscape, and not just as a highway for the shipping industry. We have traditionally only looked at the economic significance of the river. The grey quaysides and the basalt banks along the river look monotonous. We are now coming to realise that the river also has qualities as part of the landscape."

An El Dorado for leisure seekers

Many people are discovering how enjoyable it is to spend their leisure time on the banks of the New Meuse. Walter de Vries points out, "If you let the grass grow down here along the banks of the New Meuse, then it won't be long before people turn up with coolboxes, parasols and folding chairs to sit down and enjoy themselves. There is something about the river that



Stormpolderbos

people like- they are proud of it. Developing natural banks brings the city and nature closer together; people get closer to nature and are able to relax there. It also enhances water safety: a feature of tidal parks is the slowly rising river banks, which help break the waves at high water. That contributes to future-proofing the Rotterdam region. From the pedestrian bridge at the head of the Island of Brienoord, which is

wonderful piece of nature in the city, it is already clear how attractively this can develop. The high and low tides wash water through a small tidal channel every day. There are birds galore there – sparrowhawks, hobbies, green woodpeckers, and kingfishers. A herd of Highland cattle are responsible for looking after the grass. Walter de Vries continues, “We are currently working on the ongoing construction of the Groene Poort at Rozenburg, where we are creating a gentle tidal strip in the river which will be several kilometres long, and will be a perfect spot for people to spend their free time.

The Nassauhaven and the Mallegatpark will also get a tidal bank. There are five other locations that we are drawing up plans for. This is being done in collaboration with the World Wide Fund for Nature, Rijkswaterstaat, the provincial government, the Port of Rotterdam, the water boards, and other local authorities in the city region.”

Biodiversity

The transformation of the bare stone quaysides into a park with trees, reeds, and willows along a tidal river is unique



Existing tidal park Ruigeplaatbos

in the Netherlands and will form a new area in which birds, fish, amphibians, and insects can live. Walter de Vries says, "Because of the mix of salt and fresh water, there is an enormous variation in vegetation. As you get nearer to the sea, you find samphire and sea-lavender, but the vegetation changes as you go further upstream. It is the combination of wet and dry banks and of salt and fresh water that produces the great variety of plants, birds, and fish. The more biodiversity you have, the more resilient the landscape will be. When creating the tidal parks, we make as much use as possible of natural processes. We refer to this as 'building with nature'.

This means creating areas of beauty along the banks, which will all look completely different. There will be 'wild' nature, as well as specially designed parklands with jetties where

people can walk, fish, or have barbecues. You cannot make tidal parks everywhere, however. It would not be easy in places where there is a strong current and where the river has to be deep enough for ships, for example. But it is clear that the tidal parks on the New Meuse will transform the image of the city, with more leisure opportunities in the region and an improvement to the ecological quality of the river, with salmon and sturgeon swimming to and from the sea, thanks to new rest areas and cleaner water. The river will increasingly become the city's leading attraction."



Walter de Vries

is an urban planner in the urban development department of Rotterdam City Council, and programme manager of the region's 'De rivier als getijdenpark' ('the river as a tidal park') programme.



The tidal parks have been made possible in part by LIFE funding from the European Union.

Impression tidal park Groene Poort