

The Curringherfield Foundation – “From green to red and vice versa...”

The Curringherfield is about 5 hectares and is situated in the the **Ecological Main Network (EHS)** of the Netherlands. The projected area, however, will cover about 50 hectares; only 10% has been realised yet. Its main function will become Nature.

In the Provincial Environmental Plan (POP) of Groningen this area is called 'Kornhorn South', covering the name of its nearby village Kornhorn, of about 700 inhabitants.

The area has been in agricultural use for 2 hundred years, since it was reclaimed from heather and moorland. Due to this agricultural function its typical '**Timber Ribbon Structure**' was developed. And due to the very small scale of farming, its original timber ribbon structure remained largely intact. That's why the realisation of the **main function Nature** was connected with the **objective** to:

1. "maintain, restore and develop landscape, cultural-historic and natural values", combined with 'open to the public' objectives:
2. "promoting outdoor recreation for villagers and tourists"
3. "promoting education and nature & environmental activities"

More than 10 years ago this area was obtained from farmers by the National Forest Reserve or Forestry Commission (SBB) and they are still the legal owner of the land. Intentionally the Forestry Commission should buy all the 50 hectares in Kornhorn South, to realise the projected Ecological Main Network ultimately in 2018.

Than forestry superintendant, mr Nico Boele, went to the Local Authority of Kornhorn to ask them 'how they intended to develop the area' (!). Because it's all about agricultural tradition in Kornhorn, he touched upon a tender string and a local action group was born, named **Cultural & Historical Heritage Kornhorn (C&HEK)**. About 25 volunteers, many of them pensioners, announced themselves to do the daily management of the terrains and meanwhile realised an impressive number of projects and products like:

- the buidling of a classic hay barn
- the building of shelters and bridges
- the laying out of kilometers (mainly historical) footpaths and planting tree ribbons
- the development of a 8 km walking tour 'Curringhepad', incl. 5 information panels
- the development of a piece of moorland, reclaimed from pasture (!)
- the cultivation of the historical crop rye
- the cultivation of historical crops, like yellow lupine and buckwheat, in rotation

In 2001 the Forestry Commission as legal owner signed an official 5-yearly agreement with the **Local Authority (Village Board)** with the committment to organise and execute the daily management (by C&HEK) in exchange for a management fee per hectare.

At the same time the nature & environmental educational objective was embedded by signing an adoption-agreement between the Village Board and the Primary School of Kornhorn. They agreed to use the area as an 'outside classroom' for their regular educational programming, supported by the volunteers of C&HEK. It didnt take long before a new local action group was installed: the **Nature & Environmental Education group (NME)**; a mixed team of teachers and volunteers of about 10 persons. Some of their joint products and projects:

- the building of an outside classroom (Curringheschuur)
- the building of a 'tiny beast-garden'
- the placing of nestboxes for singing birds and bats
- the organisation of regular activities concerning nature and environmental education
- the organisation once a year of a 2-weekly school-project
- the development of an 'elf-path' and nature-exploration path

In 2003 C&HEK started the development of the Ekohorn; a majestic 'Nature Theatre', surrounded by wall of stubs and soil. In 2006 it was opened as 'the open air podium' for regional artists, musicians, poets, schools etcetera. To organise these events again a new local action group of 10 persons was formed spontaneously: the **Ekohorn Committee**. In september 2007 they organised a part of the 2nd Lutjegast Abel Tasman Rummage Hike; the passing through the Curringherfield of 4000 hikers. They organised a great american walk on the wildside in 'the Westernquarter' of Kornhorn.

To cover all the activities of the action groups, both organisational and financially, and to be able to acquire and/or manage terrains for private land owners, in 2006 the **Curringherfield Foundation Kornhorn** was established. Meanwhile, also the original expectation that the Government would transfer the hectares to the Forestry Commission was changed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management & Fisheries (LNV). It was decided that the projected 50 hectares had to be managed in the future as natural area by private landowners under the "Programma Beheer" agri-environmental schemes, without a longer lasting role for the Forestry Commission..! The Forestry Commission has been our partner for 11 years and in this respect we will ask for a 'special status' of the Curringherfield to continue this successful cooperation.

In the scheme below you'll see the organigram ('**Ekoweb**') of the Curringherfield Foundation with the action groups and numbers of resp. volunteers at the 1st of january 2008. Corrected for the cross-links in total 44 volunteers are directly involved! Not to speak even about all the parents-volunteers, guiding educational school programs.. Further the diagram illustrates the participation of the Curringherfield Foundation in the village development process of **Vision Kornhorn Vital** (from 2003). This vision opts for the building of a new **Multifunctional Village Center (MFC)** in 2009. Initially C&HEK came with the idea to build a visitorscentre in the village, near the entrance of the Curringherfield, but at the same time the Primary School and the **Villagehouse Association** were planning to restore their old facilities. The result was the proposal to synergise the actions and combine them with the development of the Curringherfield.

The Curringherfield Foundation went from 'green to red' in an effort to realise a visitors centre at the border of the Curringherfield. It turned out to be a complete rural development experience: the building of a new multifunctional centre for the village of Kornhorn. After that mission, the Curringherfield Foundation will go back from 'red to green' to focus even more on the developments of Kornhorn South.

We consider these excercitions working at the most valuable of all: 'bearing surface' from the community, social cohesion and commitment to **their** nature reserve area!

Kornhorn, 3rd of june, 2008
 FB/Curringherfield Foundation

Curringherfield Foundation Kornhorn – 'Ekoweb'

