



PRESS RELEASE

A new project to promote biodiversity has begun at the former Ferme de Malchamps in Spa

Spa, 5 November 2024 – New ecological restoration works have recently been launched on the site of the former Ferme de Malchamps in Spa to promote biodiversity. The aim of this restoration is to create favourable conditions in order to diversify the fauna and flora in this area, by installing hedges, trees, woodland borders, groves and rock gardens. Ponds have already been installed and these new zones will further enhance the site. Numerous public and private partners are actively involved, namely Spa Monopole, the Parc naturel des Sources, the City of Spa, the Department of Nature and Forests (DNF) of the Public Service of Wallonia and European support for rural development. After the Ferme de Malchamps, similar projects will be launched at other sites of major biological interest in the Spa area, in particular in Bronromme.

In Spa, the public authorities and Spa Monopole have been working hand-in-hand for decades to preserve and restore the natural habitat that surrounds us. This led to the creation in 1889 of the Spa spring protection zone, which covers nearly 13,000 hectares. All impactful industrial and agricultural activities, as well as the use of pesticides, fertilizers and chemical amendments, are strictly prohibited. In this vein, the Parc naturel des Sources was also co-created, which extends over the municipalities of Stoumont and Spa and is home to exceptional fauna and flora.

However, we do not intend to rest on our laurels. The objective of Spa Monopole and its public partners is to continue to take initiatives to foster biodiversity and the water cycle at local level. Hence, the project located on the former Ferme de Malchamps, which aims to establish a network of hedges, trees, woodland borders and groves on an area of 48 hectares located along the N62 which links Spa to Francorchamps, very close to the aerodrome, on properties belonging to the City of Spa and Spa Monopole.

More habitats for local wildlife

This restoration, which comes in the wake of the network of agricultural ponds built in 2022 and 2023 by the Parc naturel des Sources, will lead to the creation of a mosaic of habitats on site, and increase the number and types of shelter for local fauna. This strengthening of the ecological network will benefit various species of bats, reptiles, birds, amphibians and butterflies already present in this area while, at the same time, attract new species. These include the Nathusius pipistrelle, the Swiss snake, the Viviparian lizard, the black woodpecker, the grey shrike and the red frog. This project will also have beneficial effects on many flora species.

“The ecological restoration works of this project are part of the strategic plan of the Parc naturel

des Sources to redeploy a network of agricultural areas favourable to biodiversity”, stated Valérie Dumoulin, the director of the Parc naturel des Sources. “In practical terms, 770 metres of hedgerows will be planted to connect ponds, rock gardens, woodland borders and grasslands, as well as 5 groves, 16 isolated trees and 500 metres of woodland borders.”

It is important to note that this project has been achieved with the cooperation of many partners, which is a testament to the success and consistency of the initiatives carried out. In addition to Spa Monopole, the City of Spa, the Parc naturel des Sources and the DNF, other stakeholders were also involved: the hunter and conservation officer, the two farmers, an official of the Department of the Study of the Natural and Agricultural Environment (DEMNA) - a regional expert, the *La Reid* school, local entrepreneurs, and the Nelles quarries.

A positive impact on the water cycle

“This project will have a positive impact on biodiversity, but also on the water cycle. By preserving the health of the local ecosystem, it will further protect and regulate water resources”, added Arnaud Collignon, Spa Monopole’s Water and Environment Manager. “In the future, our aim is to replicate the same type of projects in other places in the Spa region, particularly in Bronromme, with the aim of extending the current area of the nature reserve.”

“It is thanks to the fruitful cooperation such as the one announced today between Spa Monopole, the City of Spa, Parc naturel des Sources and the Department of Nature and Forests that our waters are renowned worldwide”, says Gilles Bruck, Alderman for the Environment at the City of Spa. “These joint projects perpetuate the quality of our environment, our fauna and flora, but also our soils and waters. They are all the more important at a time when there is a lot of talk about new pollutants, such as PFAS. Mindful of its environment and biodiversity, the City of Spa is very pleased with the many collaborations that are already in place and is also looking forward to developing many future projects.”

“Thanks to ongoing contacts between local actors in the area, an opportunity has arisen to bring together, develop and set aside as a nature reserve, the land belonging to three different owners: the Town of Spa (49%), the Walloon Region (29%) and Spa Monopole (22%),” explained Nicolas Denuit, head of the Spa district of the Department of Nature and Forests. “The Department of Nature and Forests of the Public Service of Wallonia has proposed to ensure the joint management of these 68 hectares in the future. We want to ensure sustainable and consistent protection of these remarkable prairie habitats at the entrance to the City of Spa, under the status of a state-of-the-art nature reserve.”

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