

Ilex [PaysageUrbanisme] hands over the 45 hectares Parc des Iles in Drocourt, in the Pas de Calais area of northern France, which takes place on former coking plants.



press release



As part of the redevelopment of its industrial wastelands undertaken by Hénin-Carvin joint urban area authority, Ilex [PaysageUrbanisme] designed the Parc des Iles development in Drocourt.

Located south of the urban area, and taking the place of Drocourt's former coking plants, the Parc des Iles is a multipurpose leisure and nature hub, capable of accommodating many different activities. But it is also a means for improving Drocourt's outlying areas, and a kingpin of the area's urban renewal.

With the Parc des Iles, Ilex brings nature back into the city and recreates dialogue between the urban areas of Rouvroy, Drocourt and Hénin-Beaumont.

This project is an addition to Ilex's numerous completed schemes for developing large "urban nature" parks, such as Parc de la Feyssine in Lyon, Parc de la Moline in Marseille, and Parc du Vallon in the La Duchère neighbourhood of Lyon.



Parc des Iles incorporated in the "chain of parks" on the former mining basin

The 45 hectares site of Parc des Iles extends into the urban areas of Rouvroy, Drocourt and Hénin-Beaumont. It is the first phase of a large 160 hectares "Urban Nature Park" that will take the place of the industrial wastelands of the Charbonnage de France coal-mining company, which went out of business in the 2000s.

It is now part of the "Parks Chain" which aims to transform these industrial wastelands into a prime landscape network on the scale of the former mining basin.

For the towns in the southern part of the urban area, which previously turned their backs on their factories, the Parc des Iles will be a unifying place for leisure activities. Above and beyond designing the park, Ilex [PaysageUrbanisme] incorporated this project within a more ambitious vision for the urban improvement of its outlying areas, proposing a new, very high quality living environment, in direct touch with Nature. In brief, this park will form a new urban façade for the Hénin-Carvin urban area.



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Parc des Iles: a succession of three contrasting features

Feature 1 – Large artificial lakes at the bottom of slag heaps

These 10 hectare lakes placed at the bottom of slag heaps are the park’s “showpieces”. Featuring a set of successive cascades, among other things, they provide a wet habitat with rich biodiversity. They include a series of small thematic islets connected by a timber footbridge. These islets could be used later for specific events, such as garden festivals, etc.

Feature 2 – A large grassy area

The park’s geographic centre is occupied by an extensive grassy area, which consists of areas sown with grass-seed (play areas, etc.) and areas of natural meadow.

Four platforms or “dry” planted islands add interesting features to this meadowland.

Feature 3 – A wooded area

The park’s southern edge consists of 200 metres wide strip of woodland plantation, contributing to the diversity of the natural habitats reintroduced into this wasteland.

A network of walks, linked around a large mall for pedestrians and cyclists, complete this leisure and nature park.

A graphic composition

The park’s design was based on the very powerful energy emanating from the terrils (slag heaps) which have become major elements in the region’s landscaped heritage and natural habitats, full of contrasts of colours and radical changes in scale.

It plays with contrasts between the large grassy areas of “raw” nature and the minute architectural treatment of oval islands by means of gabions, whose black limestone recalls the schist of the slag heaps in the background. This very graphic composition can be seen from the rise towards the observation points on the slag heaps.

As prize-winners of the landscaping competition in 2005, Ilex led the operational project design and construction management of the park together with Maning, a roads, utilities and external works engineering design firm, and Sylvaine Duval, a specialist in high environmental quality. In mid-2008, a part of the artificial lakes collapsed and leaked into unlisted old underground galleries, and the construction work was postponed as a result. The park is been completed in 2013 after this leakage was repaired.

An earthworks project

This park was shaped by 200,000 m3 of earthwork cuts and fills. The artificial lakes were formed by excavations. The excavated materials were deposited on the “dry” wooded islands that look down onto the meadowland, thereby confining the site’s most polluted soils.

L’Orée du Parc

This 7 hectare “island” called “Aquaterra”, which is the Park’s nerve centre, was handed over on 28 September 2013. It is a place for reception, awareness raising and resources concerning the environment. Ilex [paysageUrbanisme], in association with Tectoniques, the Lyon-based architects of the building, organised the reception facilities and designed the educational gardens.

Client : Communauté d’Agglomération d’Hénin-Carvin
[Hénin-Carvin joint urban area authority]

Project designers : Ilex [PaysageUrbanisme] (project leaders), Maning (civil engineering), Tauw Environnement (pollution issues), Sylvaine Duval (environmental issues)

Surface : Parc des îles : 45 hectares

Cost of works: €6.6 M excluding VAT

About Ilex

The Ilex firm’s name is derived from the Latin scientific name of holly (*Ilex sempervirens*). Based in Lyon since 1987, Ilex was founded by Gueric Péré, and now has two other partners, Jean-Claude Durual and Claudine Thomas, and an associate, Nadia Herbreteau.

Building on its expertise in urban planning and the design of public spaces, parks and developments related to mobility and transport systems, Ilex has established a national reputation.

Some recent major projects: Place Brotteaux square in Lyon, Vallée Rive Gauche (development of the River Seine’s banks from Sèvre to Paris), Boulevard du Littoral seafront avenue in Marseille as part of the Euroméditerranée project, Parc des Iles in Drocourt, the development of tram lines T4 and T5 in Lyon, the Avignon Tramway, and the conurbation core in Poitiers.

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