

REGIONAL VISION DEVELOPMENT GUIDE
VISION TO SUSTAINABLE RECREATIONAL MOBILITY
NATIONAL PARK UTRECHTSE HEUVELRUG (NL)





MONA Activity (Interreg)	A.2.7 Pilot A: Developing a regional vision on sustainable mobility (NPUH-only)
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MONA

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I. About project MONA

Nature areas in North-West Europe (NWE) face an increasing number of visitors (intensified by COVID-19) resulting in an increased pressure on nature, negative environmental impacts, higher management costs, and nuisance for local residents and visitors. The high share of car use exaggerates these impacts. Therefore, effective traffic management in national parks has become crucial to enable sustainable tourism.

Project MONA is a European partnership between eight nature areas and three knowledge and dissemination partners across The Netherlands, Germany, France and Belgium. MONA stands for 'MOdal shift, routing and nudging solutions in NAture areas for sustainable tourism'. The goal of the project is to stimulate sustainable tourism in and around nature areas in North-West Europe. The project promotes sustainable tourism by advocating for eco-friendly mobility in natural areas, inclusive route planning and sustainable practices among park visitors.

Launched in 2023, MONA's mission supports nature, visitors, and local economies in north-western Europe. Its approach focuses on encouraging a shift to sustainable mobility, inclusive planning, and environmentally friendly practices for all involved. The duration of the project is 4,5 years, running up until the end of 2027. MONA's three pilot projects across eight nature reserves aim to manage visitor flows, reduce environmental impacts and improve sustainable access.

A multidisciplinary research team, comprising BUAS, KU Leuven, and Wageningen University (WUR), brings together expertise in sustainable mobility and accessibility, sustainable tourism, behavioural change, GIS, big data analysis, impact measurement tools and methods, modelling and the assessment of social impacts.

More information on project MONA can be found on the Interreg North-West Europe website for project MONA: <https://mona.nweurope.eu>

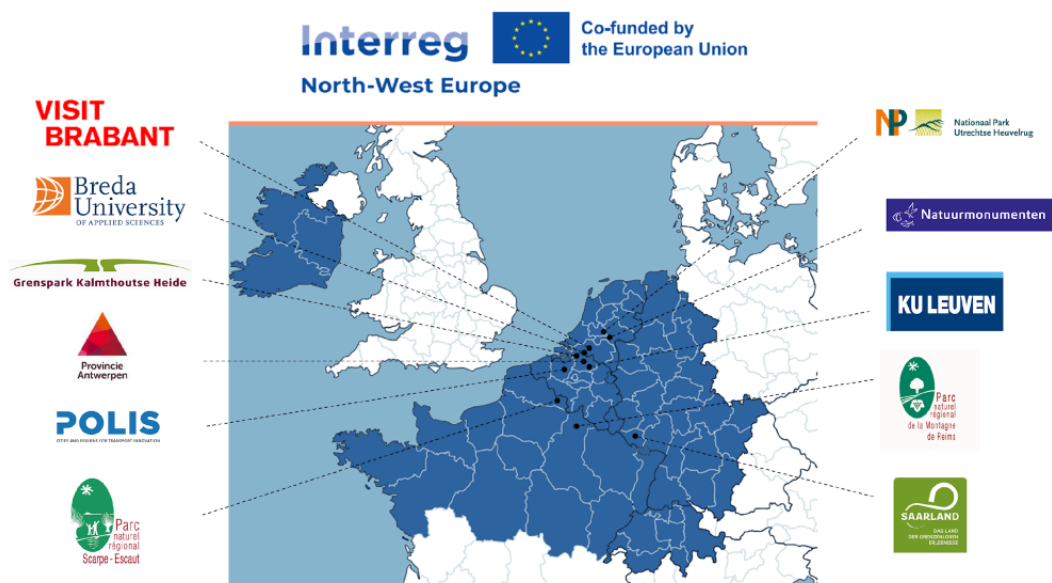


Figure: project MONA consortium



II. Introduction

The growing interest in nature-based tourism has led to a significant increase in the number of visitors to nature reserves. However the way in which visitors travel to the area often is not sustainable. Due to the many visitors, with the majority arriving by car, there are numerous challenges including negative impact on nature, traffic congestion, parking problems and air and noise pollution. At the same time, the urbanised character of North-West Europe, its dense public transport network, well-developed tourism & recreation sector, and presence of shared mobility providers offer ample opportunities for more sustainable tourism and modal shift.

To work on the topic of modal shift, within the MONA project, Pilot project group A was created. This pilot, led by National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug (NL), Grenspark Kalmthoutse Heide (BE) and Montagne de Reims Regional Park (FR), has the primary aim of facilitating and stimulating a modal shift from car-centred travel to sustainable mobility alternatives such as walking, cycling and public transport.

There are many different stakeholders involved when implementing sustainable recreational mobility options. NPUH is in the lead for MONA activity A.2.7 *Developing a regional vision on sustainable mobility*, and has, as part of this activity, facilitated a joint vision development process with the aim to develop a long-term shared vision on sustainable park mobility with relevant stakeholders. This vision can be a leading example for other nature areas in North-West Europe and beyond.

In this document, the process of developing this vision is evaluated, as the lessons learned and in practice examples may be useful for other nature areas that want to develop a vision on sustainable mobility. This deliverable focuses mainly on the process, not the specific contents of the vision. Please refer to the 'more information' segment of this guide for links to the vision (English and Dutch available).

Purpose of this Regional Vision Development Guide

In this regional vision development guide, the process of developing this vision is evaluated, as the lessons learned and in practice examples serve as valuable information for other nature areas and destinations that want to develop a vision on sustainable mobility.

POLIS is a network of European cities and regions working together to develop innovative transport solutions. With extensive experience in capacity building and dissemination, POLIS is responsible for leading communication, dissemination, and capacity building within the MONA project. As part of these activities, selected contents of this regional vision development guide will be shared under the MONA project framework, sharing information and lessons learned with a broad network of mobility and tourism experts, policy makers, nature areas across North-West Europe, DMO's. The insights from this regional vision development guide towards a shared vision on sustainable mobility, will be incorporated into the MONA Guidebook on Sustainable Tourism in Nature Areas that guides nature areas and regions to enable sustainable access to nature areas. More information on POLIS network can be found: <https://www.polisnetwork.eu/>



Framework

Who is this guide for?

Any DMO, Park, or protected nature area, who aim to build a strong joint vision on sustainable recreational mobility and cooperate with regional and local stakeholders to encourage a modal shift to sustainable mobility among their visitors.

What are we talking about in this guide?

An evaluation of the process and lessons learned during the joint vision on sustainable mobility process in Utrechtse Heuvelrug and its flanks in the scope of project MONA are gathered in this guide for other nature areas about how to connect and engage local stakeholders and build a strong joint vision.

How do we propose to achieve this goal?

By delivering an accessible regional vision development guide, containing information on the context of sustainable recreational mobility in Utrechtse Heuvelrug National Park and why the development of a joint vision is essential for the transition to sustainable recreational mobility. It guides the reader through the preparation, procurement, the vision development process and approaches to stakeholder engagement. The guide captures in practice examples and lessons learned, while also looking ahead towards the next phase: moving from vision development to implementation.

III. Sustainable Mobility in NPUH: Context and Challenges

Integrated approach to Sustainable Mobility

Through the Interreg North-West Europe project MONA, the stakeholders of National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug are developing an integrated approach to sustainable recreational mobility. Central to this is a co-created regional vision for 2050, developed through an extensive stakeholder engagement process. This vision defines sustainable recreational mobility as a key enabler for protecting natural assets, improving visitor distribution and ensuring inclusive access to nature.

About National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug

Nationaal Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug (NPUH) is a diverse nature reserve in the heart of the Netherlands, covering about 21,000 hectares. Located in the province of Utrecht in the Netherlands, the park features rolling hills, dense forests, heathlands, sand dunes, and historic estates, shaped largely by glacial activity during the Ice Age. This unique landscape is home to a wide range of flora and fauna. The park also offers numerous recreational opportunities, with well-maintained trails for hiking, cycling, and horse riding. It's a popular destination for those seeking both natural beauty and cultural heritage, as the park is dotted with historic castles and estates that reflect the region's rich past. It has had the status of National Park since 2003.

NPUH is a foundation that has been established since 2018. NPUH does not own any land, it is a network organization that brings together different stakeholders that jointly form the National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug. NPUH combines the expertise of different stakeholders

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to collaborate on the protection, preservation and sustainable development of the area's nature, landscape and cultural heritage.

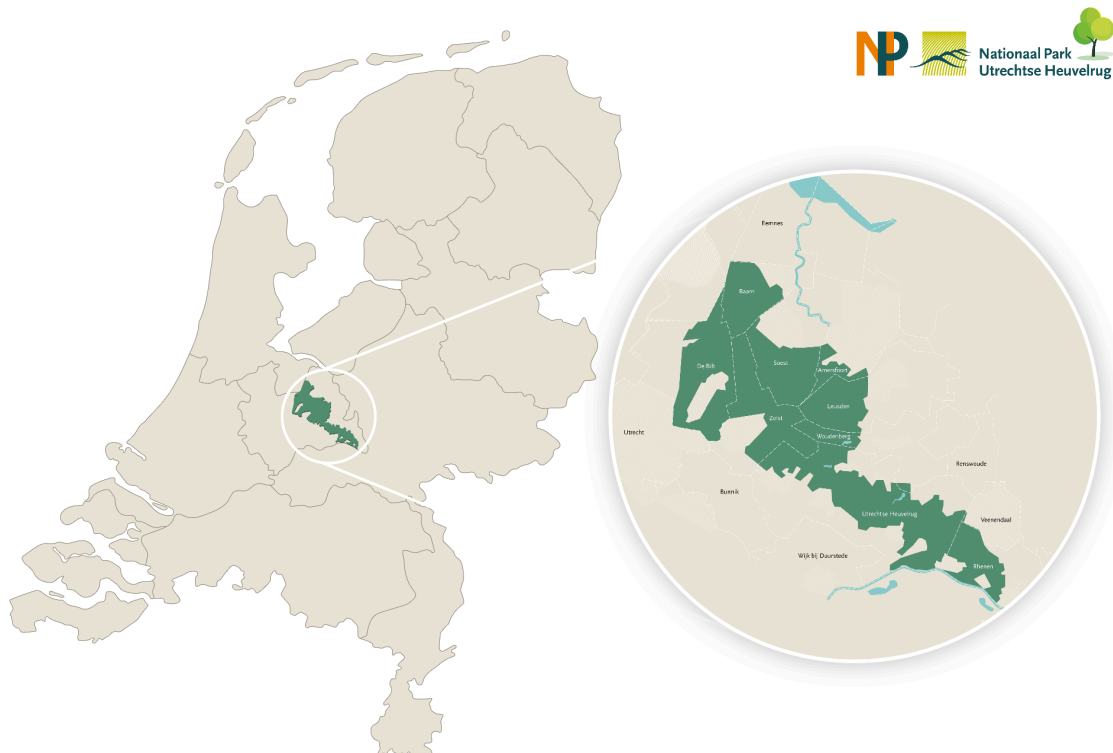


Figure: map of The Netherlands with location of Utrechtse Heuvelrug National Park (NL)



Figures: diverse natural landscapes and cultural heritage Utrechtse Heuvelrug National Park (NL)

The Utrechtse Heuvelrug is popular, both as a place to live and to visit. Millions of visitors explore the area annually to walk, cycle or relax. This growing interest is valuable: it

strengthens the local economy and contributes to our social health and wellbeing. It positions the Heuvelrug and its surrounding flanks as both a destination and gathering place, highlighting its appeal for living, working and recreation (Source: Sustainable Recreational Mobility Vision, Utrechtse Heuvelrug and flanks (2025)).

NPUH is situated in one of the most densely populated regions of The Netherlands, near the cities Utrecht, Amsterdam, Amersfoort and Veenendaal. Located in a highly urbanized area comes with advantages, for example a well-developed public transport system and strong cycling culture and the presence of shared mobility providers, which creates opportunities for sustainable recreational mobility.

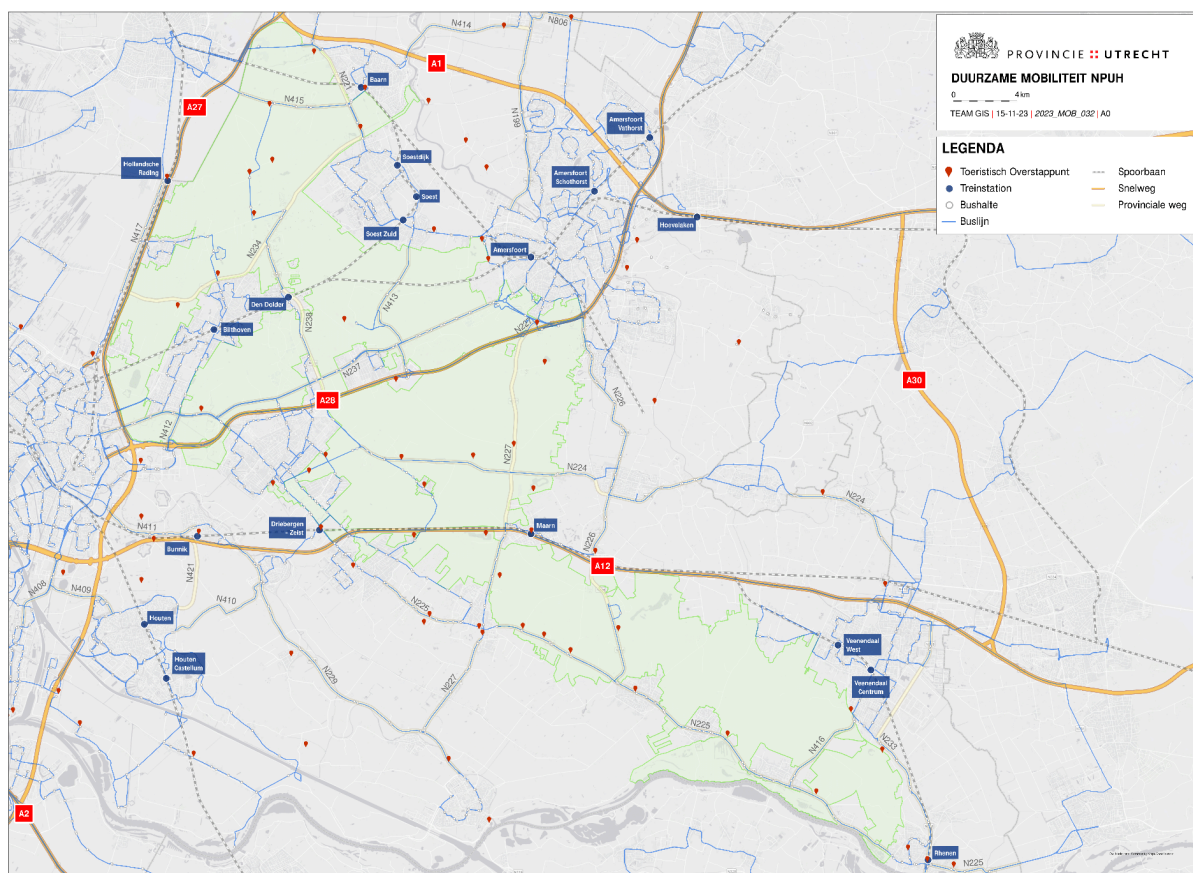


Figure: mobility map Utrechtse Heuvelrug NPUH

Challenges

At the same time, the popularity of the Utrechtse Heuvelrug brings risks, such as recreational pressure, traffic nuisance and damage to vulnerable nature. In addition the region is likely to face increasing mobility pressures in the years ahead. Increasing urbanisation, housing development and economic growth are expected to result in higher population levels, increased employment and greater travel demand. As a result, visitor numbers to the Heuvelrug area are expected to rise, leading to increased visitor pressure, challenging environmental resilience and placing additional pressure on the mobility systems in and around the area (Source: Sustainable Recreational Mobility Vision, Utrechtse Heuvelrug and flanks (2025)).

Today the majority of visitors travel to the National Park by car, resulting in congestion, parking pressure and negative impacts on sensitive natural landscapes. These trends

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threaten both the ecological quality of the area and the long-term attractiveness of the region. Addressing these challenges requires a transition towards more sustainable mobility options for visitors, while maintaining accessibility and enhancing the overall visitor experience.

The National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug is not a landowning authority but a collaborative network organisation, facilitating cooperation between municipalities, provinces, landowners, nature organisations and other regional stakeholders. Ownership fragmentation has led to a large stakeholder ecosystem including (private) land owners, regional and local governments and nature conservation organisations. Decision-making regarding the nature area using a systems approach is challenging, as multiple policy domains, competing interests and administrative boundaries are involved.

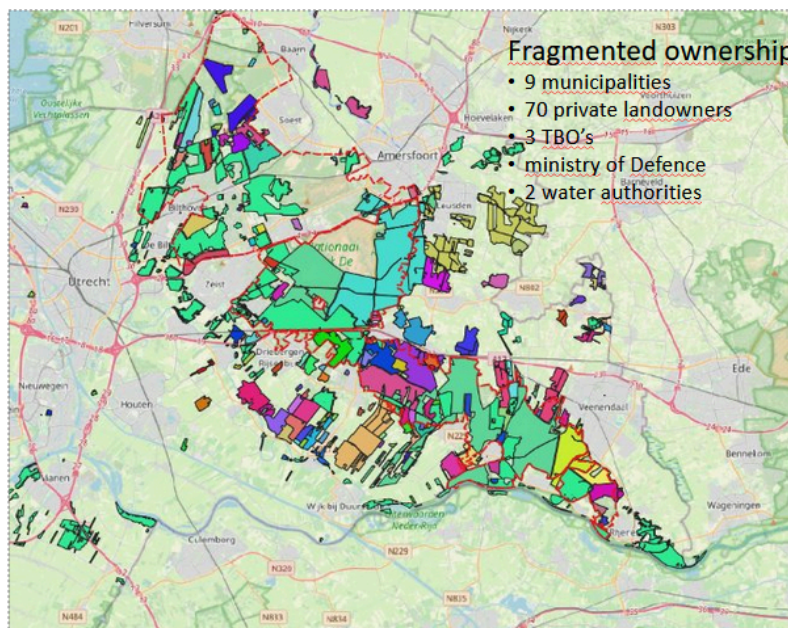


Figure: map of Utrechtse Heuvelrug National Park (NL) showcasing fragmented ownership

Why a Shared Vision?

Recreational mobility is one of the interconnected systems that transcends administrative boundaries. Measures implemented in one area can have effects elsewhere, such as displacement effects caused by local paid parking policies. Therefore, isolated local interventions are often insufficient. A coordinated, integrated approach to mobility management is essential.

A shared future vision is essential to stimulate the transition to sustainable recreational mobility. It creates a strong foundation for cooperation and collective action among all stakeholders by fostering consensus and commitment. A common vision provides direction for joint action, aligns parties around shared goals and outlines the building blocks needed to achieve the desired future together.

To find a future-proof balance between the accessibility of the Heuvelrug area and its increasing challenges, a joint vision for the region was developed in the scope of project MONA. The ambition was twofold: to develop a high-level shared regional vision for sustainable recreational mobility; and to create broad support and ownership among stakeholders and local partners. This involves establishing a common strategic framework for



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sustainable recreational mobility across the Utrechtse Heuvelrug and its flanks. The vision focuses on the Utrechtse Heuvelrug and its surrounding areas, recognising that strong connections with the flanks are crucial. Mobility does not stop at municipal boundaries; sustainable connections between cities and surrounding natural areas are essential.

Central is the co-created regional vision for 2050 (long-term perspective), developed alongside concrete ambitions for 2035 (mid-term) and 2026 (short-term), through an extensive stakeholder engagement process. The 2050 mobility vision demonstrates how sustainable recreational mobility can become an integral part of the region. Sustainable recreational mobility serves as an instrument to protect nature, improve visitor distribution, improve the quality of recreational experiences and ensure inclusive accessibility, both now and in the future (Source: Sustainable Recreational Mobility Vision, Utrechtse Heuvelrug and flanks (2025)).

2050 Sustainable Mobility Vision at a Glance

The shared future vision was jointly shaped by governments, landowners, transport providers and area-based stakeholders and sets out the following ambition:

By 2050, visitors will travel differently than they do today: most will arrive on foot, by bicycle, by public transport, or through shared mobility services. Cars will be accommodated at the flanks of the Utrechtse Heuvelrug, where mobility hubs will serve as smart gateways welcoming visitors to the area. From that point onwards, the visitor experience begins.

Every journey contributes to experiencing nature and the landscape, rather than disrupting it. Real-time, accessible information helps visitors avoid crowded areas and make sustainable travel choices. Mobility will be quieter, cleaner, and accessible to everyone.

(Source: Sustainable Recreational Mobility Vision, Utrechtse Heuvelrug and flanks (2025)).

Mobility principles

Seven mobility principles form the core of the vision. These principles provide guidance for policy, design, investments and cooperation, and can be applied flexibly across different parts of the area:

	Nature and recreational trips in balance	1
	Active mobility is the natural choice for nearby visitors	2
	Public transport is the preferred option for visitors traveling from further away	3
	Hubs as smart gateways	4
	Everyone stays included	5
	Innovation and data guide travel and distribution	6
	The journey itself is part of the experience	7

(Source: Sustainable Recreational Mobility Vision, Utrechtse Heuvelrug and flanks (2025).

Please refer to the ‘More Information’ section to view the full vision document and additional resources. In the next chapter, we describe the joint vision development process and explain how the vision was shaped through an extensive stakeholder engagement process.

Knowledge Development

To support the vision development process, NPUH commissioned an exploratory MSc student research project conducted by Wageningen University & Research (WUR) in November and December 2024. The research was carried out within the MSc programme *Governance of Tourism & Natural Resources*. The findings provided a scientific perspective on regional vision development as valuable input for the joint process.

The independent scientific advice provided by the student team was based on a review of international academic literature, with a particular focus on North-West Europe, an analysis of local mobility policy documents and a workshop with key stakeholders from the project area.

It was structured around two case studies:

- Case Study 1: What are the key building blocks of a regional vision for sustainable recreational mobility in and around NPUH?

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- Case Study 2: How can the process towards a shared regional vision be organised most effectively?

The final reports can be accessed via these links: [case 1](#) and [case 2](#).

The above research within the National Park was facilitated by the Utrechtse Heuvelrug Research and Education Hub. Through this hub, researchers, students and regional stakeholders collaborate on topics identified in the NPUH research agenda, contributing to the protection, conservation and sustainable development of the area's nature, landscape, and cultural heritage.



IV. 2050 Vision Development Process

The vision development process of Utrechtse Heuvelrug took place as part of the MONA project, and ran from late 2024 up until the end of 2025 and involved a wide range of stakeholders. The vision development trajectory took place within Utrechtse Heuvelrug National Park and included multiple co-creation sessions and administrative meetings.



In practice example National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug

A joint vision development process involves many stakeholders and a diverse range of stakeholder groups. It is an intensive process for both the participants and the facilitating organisation, requiring sufficient time and resources. Adequate capacity, budget and commitment are essential for complete preparation, stakeholder coordination and alignment and maintaining progress. The vision development process in Utrechtse Heuvelrug was facilitated by NPUH and was completed over a period of 1.5 to 2 years (including preparation) with co-financing through the Interreg North-West Europe programme. The process was guided by the external consultancy firm Rebel.

Stakeholders

The vision development process followed a multi-level governance approach, involving both political and public official coordination. Multiple domains were involved, with mobility and recreation as the primary focus areas within the vision process. Stakeholder engagement was central throughout the process.

The stakeholder groups involved included:

- Governments; including the province of Utrecht and municipalities
- Railway and infrastructure organisations; NS (Dutch railways) and ProRail (railway infrastructure Netherlands)
- User/recreation advocacy groups;
- Land management organisations; Staatsbosbeheer, Natuurmonumenten, Utrechts Landschap
- Nature organisations: Natuur Milieu Federatie
- NPUH Youth Council

An advisory group with representatives from diverse stakeholder groups was established to provide input, advice and feedback during the process.

For a full overview of the stakeholders involved, please refer to the appendix.

The Role of National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug (NPUH)

Throughout the process, NPUH acted as a facilitating and connecting organisation, bringing stakeholders together and supporting collaboration across the region.

While NPUH contributed to initiating and facilitating the development of the vision as part of the MONA project, the vision itself is not defined by NPUH. It is a shared regional vision, with its content jointly shaped by stakeholders through public officials working sessions and administrative consultations.



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During the process, it was essential to acknowledge the shared ownership within the vision document and ensure that the vision was presented as a collective ambition from the region rather than as a sustainable mobility vision shaped by NPUH.

As a politically independent organisation, NPUH fulfils a facilitating role in service of the region. NPUH supports the translation of shared insights and ambitions into concrete actions and contributes to the continuation of the process. However, ownership and mandate remain with the participating stakeholders.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement and communication were an integral part of the strategy throughout the entire process. From the start, a proactive, two-way communication approach was maintained to ensure that stakeholders remained informed and engaged at every stage of the process. Regular updates helped build trust, address questions and concerns in a timely manner and encouraged stakeholders to actively contribute to the process.

A substantial investment was made in proactively informing stakeholders through regular information emails and other communication channels. This approach proved highly effective in strengthening engagement and support. Proactive, continuous and transparent communication was a key factor in the success of the regional process. This approach was successfully embedded at both the political and public officials levels, ensuring broad ownership and commitment.

Overview of steps taken to come to the regional vision

Developing a widely supported regional vision for sustainable mobility involves multiple steps. To establish a shared and actionable long-term vision, the process is structured into four consecutive phases.

1. **Raising awareness:** The first phase focuses on raising awareness and building commitment among key stakeholders.
2. **Preparation:** This is followed by the preparation phase, with a procurement for an external process facilitation and a baseline assessment to understand the current situation.
3. **Vision creation:** In the third phase, the regional vision is developed through a combination of forecasting and backcasting, enabling stakeholders to explore future trends while identifying the steps required to achieve a desired future.
4. **Vision validation:** Finally, the draft vision is validated with stakeholders to ensure that it reflects their ambitions, priorities, and responsibilities, resulting in a broadly supported regional vision.

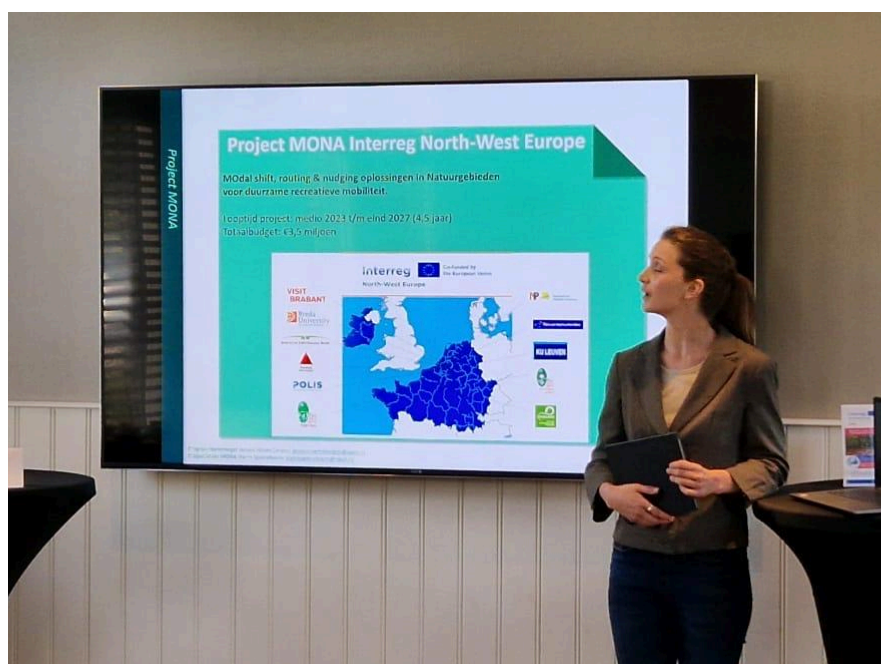
1. Raising awareness: MONA Kick-off Meetings

An example of stakeholder engagement was the organisation of two MONA kick-off meetings involving multiple governance levels.

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A first kick-off was held in January 2024 following the approval of the MONA project in 2023. This meeting was aimed at informing public officials about Project MONA, including its goals, scope, related subprojects, timelines and available budget.

In October 2024, an administrative kick-off meeting was facilitated to secure administrative involvement and commitment from the start of the vision development. During this meeting, policy makers shared opportunities and challenges for the transition to sustainable recreational mobility, as well as their perspectives on which themes should be addressed in the vision.



Figures: Administrative kick-off meeting MONA (October 2024)



2. Preparation: Procurement

The input gathered during the administrative kick-off meeting provided valuable insights into the themes and priorities to be considered in developing the shared vision. These themes, including mobility management & visitor flow; public transport & mobility hubs; road safety and communication & behavioural change, were incorporated into the project brief for the external process facilitation of the process as part of MONA.

In addition, before the procurement procedure took place, public officials were actively involved. Suitable consultancy firms were identified in consultation with these stakeholders. This ensured that relevant expertise was considered and that the process was supported by the knowledge and experience available within the region. Furthermore, this approach contributed positively to stakeholder support and engagement.

The procurement process was awarded to Rebel in January 2025. Stakeholders responded positively to the selection of Rebel as a recognised consultancy firm with expertise in (active) mobility, nature-based solutions, infrastructure and spatial planning, to support and guide the vision development process. This contributed to building trust and confidence in the process from the start.

2. Preparation: Baseline Assessment

The process began with extensive substantive preparation. A baseline assessment was carried out by the consultant of Rebel to provide an overview of the current mobility situation in the area, based on key facts and figures. Existing challenges were identified, and the relevant policy framework, as well as key trends and developments, were mapped out. Together these elements aimed to offer a shared understanding of both the challenges and opportunities at the intersection of nature, recreation and mobility. The information presented in the baseline assessment formed an evidence base for the stakeholder co-creation sessions.

3. Vision creation: Co-Creation Sessions & Administrative Meetings

In 2025 multiple stakeholder co-development sessions and administrative meetings were organised. The process included the facilitation of public official co-creation sessions, processing and consolidating the outcomes, sharing results with the advisory group and broader stakeholder groups and preparing materials and input for administrative decision-making meetings.



Figure: stakeholder co-creation session as part of the regional vision development

In practice example National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug

NPUH intentionally facilitated the stakeholders sessions within the Utrechtse Heuvelrug nature area, highlighting the natural and cultural values of the region while ensuring accessibility by public transport. This choice emphasised the important role that public transport and railway stations can play in the transition towards sustainable recreational mobility. Examples of meeting locations included De Generaal at Baarn railway station and Antropia, located directly next to Driebergen-Zeist railway station.

In addition, meeting locations within the natural areas of Utrechtse Heuvelrug were selected where accessibility improvements are still needed, such as the pilot area of Lage Vuursche, reinforcing the importance of continuing to work on sustainable and inclusive access to recreational areas.





Figures: direct access to NPUH and Antropia meeting location from Driebergen-Zeist railway station.

Forecasting session

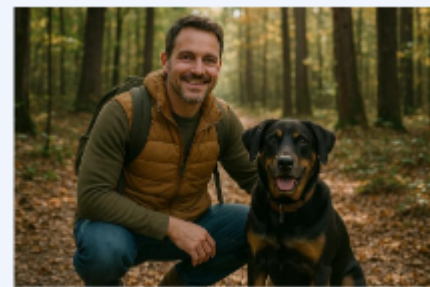
The goal of the first stakeholder co-creation session, held in April 2025, was to gather input for the mobility vision. Focused on defining a shared future image on what sustainable recreational mobility in Utrechtse Heuvelrug nature area may look like in the long-term future. Participants were public authorities, nature groups, railway/infrastructure & advocacy organisation of different user groups (e.g. MTB Utrechtse Heuvelrug mountain bike association & Visio, centre of expertise for people with visual impairments).

Forecasting without limitations:

What does sustainable recreational mobility look like in 2050 in Utrechtse Heuvelrug nature area, in relation to people and nature?

In mixed groups, participants worked on 'user journeys' for 2050, in which they envisioned how people -in a sustainable mobility system- move to, in and through the Utrechtse Heuvelrug and its flanks, in 'an ideal world' without limitations. They did this using fictional personas with diverse wishes and needs, with accessibility and inclusivity well considered. Dream maps were drawn to illustrate the ideal design of the mobility system in 2050.

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Fictional persona groups with diverse wishes & needs	Theme
 	Accessibility & inclusivity
  	Road safety & Various user / recreation groups
 	Flora & Fauna in relation to people & sustainable mobility.

(Source: presentation slides forecasting work session mobility vision Utrechtse Heuvelrug, Rebel 2025)

In practice example National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug

In addition to people, flora and fauna were also used as personas to give a voice to ecology, and to balance the needs of both people and nature (flora & fauna) in relation to sustainable mobility.

VISIE OP DUURZAME RECREATIEVE MOBILITEIT

Yves de Inzichtzoeker



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Nationaal Park
Utrechtse Heuvelrug

"Ik kom naar de Heuvelrug voor cultureel erfgoed en leerzame ervaringen."

- Leeftijd:** 50 (geboren 2000)
- Beroep:** Historicus, docent
- Leefstijl:** Cultureel en educatief geïnteresseerd, zoekt verdieping in zijn uitstapjes
- Bezoekfrequentie:** Onregelmatig, afhankelijk van tentoonstellingen en evenementen
- Voorkeur voor vervoer:** Heeft geen autorijbewijs, reist met de trein + OV-fiets of deelmobiliteit
- Activiteiten in het park:** Bezoek aan kastelen, landgoederen, musea en natuurcentra, historische wandelingen, restaurant
- Bewegingspatroon:** Gebruikt vooral paden die cultureel erfgoed verbinden, bezoekt informatiepunten en lezingen
- Obstakels:**
 - Onvoldoende OV-opties (met name in de avonduren)
 - Beperkte (fiets)routes die cultureel erfgoed met natuur verbinden

Figure: example 'User journey' of future persona (Source: presentation slides forecasting work session mobility vision Utrechtse Heuvelrug, Rebel 2025)

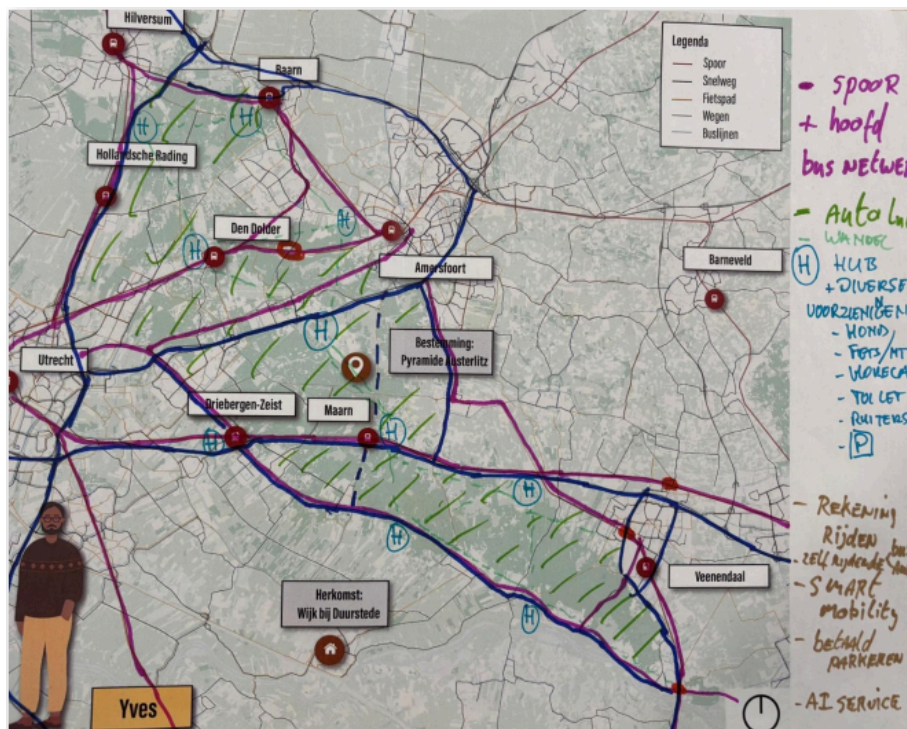


Figure: example of 'ideal' mobility system NPUH in 2050 as part of the forecasting session. (Source: presentation slides forecasting work session mobility vision Utrechtse Heuvelrug, Rebel 2025)

Backcasting session

A second co-creation session for public officials was facilitated in May 2025. During this session, strategic pathways were developed through a backcasting approach, using the shared future vision as the desired endpoint and working backwards towards the present situation.

By assessing the current situation and defining where we aim to be in 2050, the process focused on identifying the steps, actions and commitments needed to bridge this gap, both on the mid-term (2035) and short-term (2026). The session resulted in the development of guiding mobility principles to guide future actions.



Figure: image backcasting session, May 2025

4. Vision validation: Administrative Meetings



Figure: image administrative meeting, April 2025

After the administrative kick-off in October 2024, a second administrative meeting was facilitated in April 2025, gathering input and substantive feedback on the potential shared future vision as developed during the forecasting session. A fundamental substantive discussion was guided on how to balance increasing recreational demand with nature conservation and accessibility from a mobility perspective.



Figure: image administrative meeting April 2025

A third administrative meeting was organised in September 2025. During this administrative consultation, the focus was on gathering substantive feedback and responses to the concept version of the sustainable mobility vision. The feedback received was used to further refine and strengthen the vision. In addition during the meeting it was decided to continue the program table as a platform for ongoing collaboration.



Figure: image administrative meeting September 2025

4. Vision validation: Vision Delivery & Declaration of Intent

Individual interviews were conducted with local entrepreneurs, landowners, and visitor attractions to gain a broad perspective. Next to this, a reality check of the proposed mobility principles was carried out through expert interviews with experts in one or more mobility domains (active mobility; hubs, shared mobility and autonomous mobility; car mobility; and public transport). The objective of this step was to validate the guiding mobility principles. This reality check was essential to develop a realistic vision that could be properly substantiated.

The final vision was delivered at the end of 2025. In December 2025, stakeholders signed a declaration of intent, formally endorsing their shared commitment to continue cooperating on a sustainable recreational mobility system. This has strengthened long-term cooperation and established a shared framework for coordinated action across municipalities and sectors. The joint vision was published on NPUH communication channels to make its contents available to a broader audience.



Figure: administrative signing of Declaration of Intent: together towards a sustainable recreational mobility system for the Utrechtse Heuvelrug and its surrounding areas.

In practice example National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug

There was strong administrative commitment and momentum throughout the process. Following the completion of the vision at the end of 2025, this momentum was actively sustained and built upon through the facilitation of the Declaration of Intent signing. As the continuation from 2026, the focus shifts towards the next phase: translating the vision into implementation (see also the segment 'From Vision to Implementation').

V. Lessons learned

- ❖ The 2050 horizon provided a clear long-term perspective for the vision development process. The forecasting workshop encouraged stakeholders to think beyond the current day and envision where the region wants or could be in 2050, exploring joint steps needed to achieve the desired future situation. The process created space for open dialogue and reflection, as the vision was not perceived as individual/partisan. but as a shared regional vision. The central question throughout the process was: how do we organise this together?
- ❖ A high level of engagement was achieved across the region. Stakeholders were actively engaged, partly because the scope of the process was carefully defined and manageable. This created a secure environment in which participants were willing to



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step outside their usual roles and perspectives. Consistent communication and the repeated reinforcement of key messages proved essential in maintaining momentum and engagement throughout the process. In addition important progress was made in involving a broad group of political representatives.

- ❖ A key lesson is that advancing sustainable recreational mobility requires close collaboration between the tourism and mobility sectors. Only by working together can meaningful impact be achieved. As this is still an emerging field, the process has fostered new collaborations between stakeholders who had not previously interacted. This creates valuable opportunities but also requires active effort to bridge differences in priorities and ways of working. Regional and local stakeholders are cooperating under MONA, linked to the mobility and recreation/tourism domains. Previously recreational mobility was not clearly positioned in policy and was often part of recreation. Now a vision for the region was developed. The connection between mobility and recreation is being strengthened. Mobility and recreation are no longer approached as separate policy domains, but are being developed in an integrated manner. This represents an important step towards more sustainable and future-proof mobility and recreation in Utrechtse Heuvelrug.
- ❖ Recreational mobility is now more integrated locally and is firmly on the agenda of local authorities, in NPUH's case for example the province of Utrecht. This has created more awareness and momentum, strengthening the notion that this is a collective responsibility. The vision sets out mobility principles that are broadly supported and difficult to oppose. Ownership is shared among all relevant stakeholders, ensuring that it is felt and carried by those who need to act on it. This is a result of the MONA project. MONA is a European project, but locally the stakeholders also unite through the project. This improves cooperation with and between local stakeholders, and works as an accelerator for the transition to sustainable mobility.
- ❖ The objective was to reach consensus and establish a high-level shared vision, while respecting the autonomy of land management organisations and private landowners. One of the challenges was finding the right balance between developing a vision that was sufficiently specific while also ensuring consensus, representing a shared vision among stakeholders.
- ❖ Another challenge was defining the scope. The focus was on both recreational and utilitarian mobility within the administrative and public officials domains, which were initially considered separately. Distinguishing between utilitarian and recreational mobility proved to be challenging. Clearly defining the scope was therefore an important issue throughout the process. An important lesson is to maintain a clear focus on recreational mobility, while actively seeking connections with utilitarian mobility. Keeping the scope sufficiently focused enables concrete impact, whereas linking to everyday mobility where relevant strengthens synergies, increases effectiveness and supports the business case for sustainable recreational mobility.
- ❖ Another important insight is the extent of institutional fragmentation. Responsibilities for mobility, tourism and nature management are spread across multiple governance levels and organisations, leading to silos both between and within institutions.

Overcoming these divides requires continuous effort and clear coordination.

- ❖ Long-term success depends on embedding sustained stakeholder engagement from the start. The transition requires time for both implementation and behavioural change, therefore governance structures should be designed to ensure continuity and commitment beyond political cycles.

Critical Success Factors

The ambition for sustainable recreational mobility is widely shared. At the same time, translating this ambition into practice requires clear choices and collaboration across organisational boundaries and different interests.

To successfully implement the vision, a number of key conditions need to be firmly in place. The vision identifies multiple critical success factors that provide the foundation for a successful transition:

Collaboration and coordination

Integrated decision-making and a shared approach are essential. This requires strong collaboration and governance across organisations, supported by a public–private–community action program.

Data and insights

Better understanding through data is needed, including insights into visitor flows, congestion and travel behaviour. This starts with measuring current patterns and investing in a data strategy for recreation and mobility.

Consideration of everyday mobility (utilitarian)

The mobility system must serve both recreational and daily travel needs. Understanding the interaction between recreational and utilitarian movements is essential to assess impacts on infrastructure, spatial distribution and facilities.

Funding and implementation capacity

Sufficient resources and organisational capacity are required to turn ambitions into action. This includes exploring shared funding models and establishing the capacity needed for implementation.

Prioritising attractive alternatives over restricting car use

Sustainable alternatives should become the preferred choice by prioritising investments and implementation in high-quality, attractive mobility options rather than focusing primarily on limiting car access.

(Source: Sustainable Recreational Mobility Vision, Utrechtse Heuvelrug and flanks (2025))

From Vision to Implementation

Rather than a statutory plan, the vision serves as a framework for alignment and joint action across stakeholders. Next to the 2050 vision, a concise development agenda with concrete actions was developed. In 2026, the concise development agenda is further elaborated

MONA

together with relevant stakeholders into an action program for implementing the vision. This agenda plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between vision and practice. It gives substantive direction to the collaboration and provides a framework for action. The action program is being continued, focusing on a balance between nature and recreation from a mobility perspective, with the aim of protecting and maintaining the liveability of the Utrechtse Heuvelrug. To operationalise this vision, two implementation projects with pilots are being executed.

As of April 2026, a network of shared bicycle hubs has been introduced, with over 800 shared electrical bicycles. The north of the National Park is part of this system. The system, operating via an app and working on a back-to-many-system, strengthens first- and last-mile connectivity between public transport and nature areas. By making the combination of public transport and cycling a convenient and attractive option for visitors, the hubs support a modal shift away from private cars. National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug and stakeholders explore the potential of shared mobility for recreational use. This initiative contributes to a more accessible and flexible mobility offering, while reducing environmental pressures.



Second, nearby train stations are being transformed into “*Buitenpoorten*” (green stations), redefining them as attractive entry points to the National Park. Located within walking distance of the park, these stations are redesigned to integrate natural elements and improve wayfinding, encouraging visitors to start their visit at a train station instead of a parking lot. This intervention strengthens the role of public transport within the tourism system and enhances the overall visitor experience. Shared bicycles are available at these train stations, linking these projects and supporting the mobility system as a whole. The first Buitenpoort at Baarn railway station was officially opened in June 2026.



Figure: Buitenpoort railway station Baarn



Figure: Buitenpoort railway station Baarn

Together, the regional vision and these implementation measures demonstrate how sustainable mobility can support a resilient tourism sector. By integrating transport and tourism strategies, improving multimodal accessibility, and fostering cross-sector collaboration, this regional vision development guide by National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug as developed in the scope of project MONA, offers valuable insights for other peri-urban nature destinations facing similar challenges.



VI. More information

- National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug:
 - np-utrechtseheuvelrug.nl/europees-interreg-project-mona/
- MONA:
 - <https://mona.nweurope.eu/>
 - <https://mona.nweurope.eu/blog/mona-news-25/a-shared-vision-for-sustainable-recreational-mobility-on-the-utrechtse-heuvelrug-and-its-flanks-1655>
- Summary Vision to Sustainable Mobility (English):
 - https://mona.nweurope.eu/web/content/525339?unique=12711e5be4765afa4829178e3267450010566ae7&download=true&access_token=2f46b99b-d33a-4105-a001-ee4fb71d9701
- Vision to Sustainable Mobility (in Dutch):
 - <https://www.np-utrechtseheuvelrug.nl/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Visie-duurzame-recreatieve-mobiliteit-Utrechtse-Heuvelrug-en-haar-flanken-1.pdf>
- Two-pager (in Dutch):
 - https://www.np-utrechtseheuvelrug.nl/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/mona-visie-two-pager_0412_Ariel.pdf
- Student research project conducted by Wageningen University & Research (WUR) within the MSc programme *Governance of Tourism & Natural Resources*.
 - Case 1: [Casus-1-Elements-of-a-green-mobility-vision.pdf](#)
 - Case 2: [FINAL DOC](#)



VII. Appendix

Stakeholder list

Government - provincial

Province of Utrecht

Government - regional

Regio Amersfoort

Government - municipalities

Gemeente Amersfoort

Gemeente Baarn

Gemeente De Bilt

Gemeente Leusden

Gemeente Rhenen

Gemeente Soest

Gemeente Utrecht

Gemeente Utrechtse Heuvelrug

Gemeente Veenendaal

Gemeente Woudenberg

Gemeente Zeist

Land management organisations

Staatsbosbeheer

Natuurmonumenten

Utrechts Landschap

Infrastructure/railway

Nederlandse Spoorwegen

ProRail

User/recreation advocacy groups

ANWB

MTB Utrechtse Heuvelrug

Stichting Ruiteren en Mennen Utrechtse Heuvelrug

Trail & Running Club Utrechtse Heuvelrug

Koninklijke Visio

Wandelnet

Tourism & recreation organisation

Routebureau Utrecht

Other

Hoogheemraadschap De Stichtse Rijnlanden

Youth council NPUH

