

# FOUR RESTORED ICONIC BUILDINGS OPENED AT THE UCCLE-BOITSFORT HIPPODROME

Press release 14-09-2016

**At midday today, the Minister-President of the Brussels-Capital Region, Rudi Vervoort, opened four remarkable buildings at the Uccle-Boitsfort Hippodrome following exterior restoration work overseen and financed by the Urban Development Corporation (SAU-MSI) and carried out by Origin Architecture & Engineering. The Grandstand, the Small Stand, the Weighing Building and the Judges' Tower, whose restoration has just been completed, will be open to the public on Sunday 18 September on the occasion of the Heritage Days.**

The Minister-President cut the ribbon together with three other people: Gilles Delforge, director of the Urban Development Corporation (SAU-MSI) of the Brussels-Capital Region, which oversaw and financed **this ambitious restoration project, costing a total of 6 million euros**, in collaboration with the Directorate of Monuments and Sites; Charlotte Nys, a partner at the Brussels firm Origin Architecture & Engineering, specialising in the restoration and renovation of monuments and sites; and Michel Culot, Managing Director of Droh!me Invest, to which the SAU-MSI has awarded a concession for the **operation of the former race course for recreational, educational and cultural uses appropriate to this listed 32.5-hectare site.**

In conjunction with the experts from Origin, Droh!me is also organising **the guided tours which are scheduled to take place this Sunday 18 September between 10 am and 6 pm, as part of the Heritage Days.**

Minister-President Rudi Vervoort wished to 'congratulate the SAU-MSI and Origin for the quality of the restoration, which has restored these four buildings to their former glory. By conducting this operation, the SAU-MSI has given back the listed race course site its defining buildings. These will enhance its appeal and, through the concession awarded to Droh!me, help meet the Region's goals for this "gateway" to the Sonian Forest of welcoming families, restoring key historic buildings and preserving the environment.'

Gilles Delforge stressed that 'the successful completion of this landmark restoration project in two years and the award and supervision of the concession for the site's development show the SAU-MSI's ability to fulfil the diverse roles assigned to it by the Region'.

**Welcoming families, restoring the heritage and preserving the environment: the Region's goals and the SAU-MSI's role**

Located at the edge of the Sonian forest, at the intersection of Avenue Roosevelt and Chaussée de la Hulpe, the Uccle-Boitsfort Hippodrome is a gateway to the Sonian Forest. The 32.5-hectare site includes the former race course and 29 buildings in total. The Brussels-Capital Region has three main goals there: to preserve the site's natural and historic heritage; to develop a recreational green

space for families; and to develop the site's recreational, educational and cultural functions and its role as a 'gateway' to the Sonian Forest.

In 2012, the Brussels-Capital Region granted the Urban Development Corporation (SAU-MSI) a long lease of 99 years with two purposes: to restore the site's main historic buildings and to organise its development and operation by means of a concession.

The first phase of the restoration work, entrusted to the company Group Monument, which specialises in restoring structures of historical and artistic significance, was launched on 12 August 2014, and it was the four remarkable buildings concerned, the restoration of whose exterior was supervised by Origin Architecture & Engineering on behalf of the SAU-MSI, that were opened today.

To organise the development of the recreational green space, the SAU-MSI launched a tender process at Belgian and European level, based on strict selection criteria including respect for and utilisation of the natural and architectural heritage and free access to most parts of the site. This led to the appointment of Droh!me Invest as the site's operator for a period of 15 years commencing on 1 July 2014. Droh!me Invest is responsible for interior work on three of the buildings opened today.

### **Origin restores the Hippodrome to its former glory**

Origin Architecture & Engineering's restoration philosophy, both for this project and for many other outstanding buildings, was to give a future to the riches of the past, taking a respectful approach to the heritage. It has aimed to do this by recreating the original buildings' picturesque spirit without seeking complete authenticity, given the many irreversible transformations that have occurred over time. A further goal was to make the links between the three buildings clearer.

With its multidisciplinary team of 29 professionals (architects, engineers and an historian), Origin was responsible for all preliminary studies and for monitoring the restoration of the four iconic buildings from the race course, where racing came to an end in 1995.

The origins of the Boitsfort Hippodrome date back to 1875, when plans for the race course were drawn up by landscape architect Edouard Keilig. Built in 1878 in a picturesque eclectic style, the Grandstand and Small Stand are of interest from the architectural, technical and historical viewpoints. Originally featuring wooden stairs and walkways, brick and stone façades, and protruding cornices which have now disappeared, the Grandstand was converted and extended several times, but its original size and function can still be discerned. The Small Stand has undergone few external changes, and gives a good idea of the race course's original form. The original part of the Weighing House, built in 1900 in an eclectic style influenced by Art Nouveau, has retained its characteristics and authenticity. In 1951, the architect Breydel added a modernist extension consisting of a small concrete structure on stilts with a bay window over its entire width, providing a panoramic view over the course. Breydel also built the Judges' Tower or Starting Tower in a modernist style.

### **Droh!me Melting Park: an amusement park for a new generation**

For the site's operation, Droh!me Invest, a VO Group subsidiary, has developed innovative plans. Droh!me Melting Park is a new-generation amusement park with

