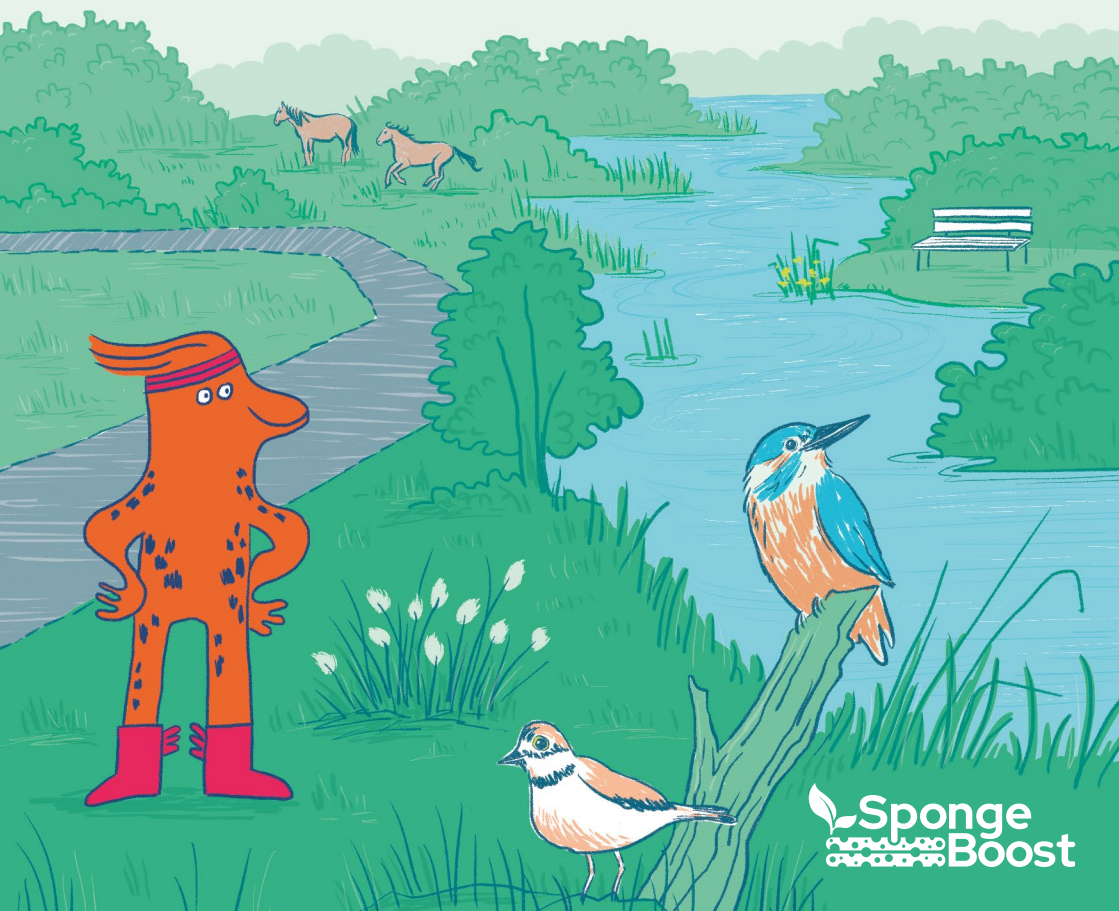


New directions

Guided by nature

PART 2 OF THE SPONGEBOOST COMIC SERIES





sigh

Are we there yet?

We will get there
in three more hours.

Here, I got you
some coffee.

Thanks!

Spongy, what are we
actually going to do when
we arrive in Brussels?

Well, we must find the right
people in the EU Parliament and
make it clear to them that:
Europe needs sponge solutions!



But suddenly ...

squeeeak

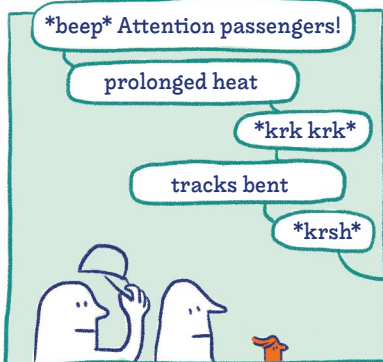


Oh no!

Oh dear, what's
going on now?



Wait, I'll
wipe that up!



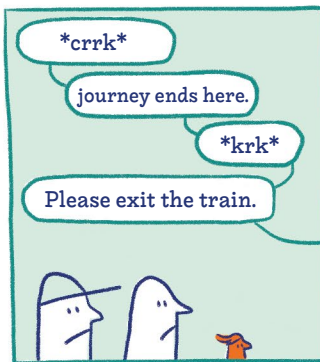
beep Attention passengers!

prolonged heat

krk krk

tracks bent

krsh



crrk

journey ends here.

krk

Please exit the train.



fssssshh

What...get out?

But here, in the middle of nowhere, we can't make any difference!

Yes, I would have loved to tell the people in Brussels my opinion!



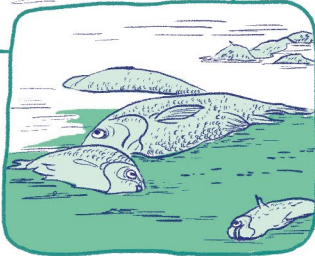
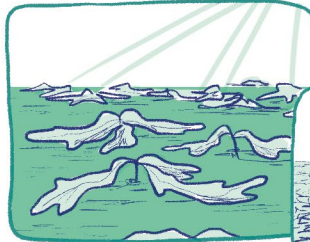
No point moaning now! Shall we go for a little walk? Looks like we have time right now.



Shortly after ...



What's going on here?

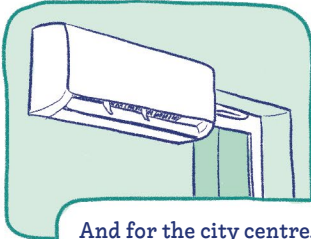




We need irrigation systems for our fields. With the drought, it doesn't look good for the harvest.



And higher dykes against floodings! Our dyke almost broke last time. We need to reinforce it somehow.



And for the city centre, more air conditioning and sun canopies in public places. It's far too hot!

Wow, great ideas. It's amazing what we can do. I'll take the ideas to the next city council.



ahem

Of course, these technical solutions are a great idea!

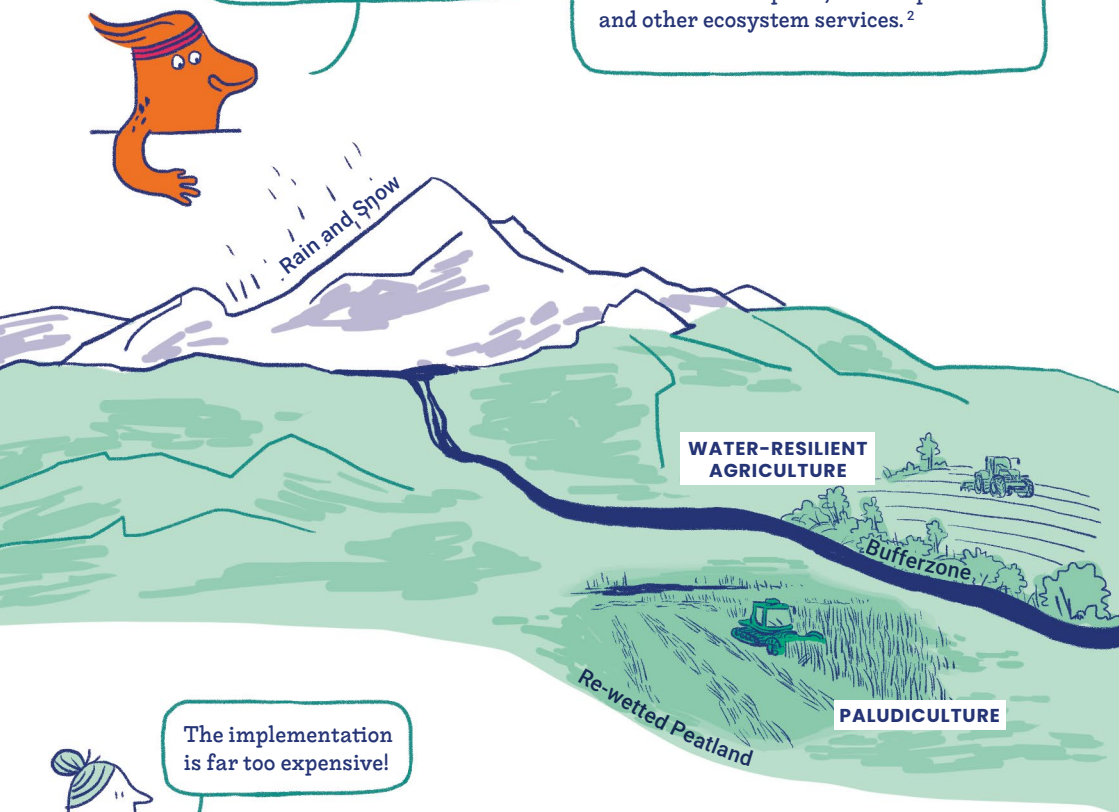
But what's wrong with having more trees for shade and cooling?

Green roofs and surfaces cool down the urban climate, not just individual houses. In unsealed areas, water can seep away instead of flowing off superficially.¹

Ah! Sponge cities work like this, right? The city next door is focusing on it now.

Exactly, and the concept can be taken much further. Sponges can be found everywhere.

When we strengthen ecosystems with sponges in the areas surrounding our towns and villages, they help us with climate adaption, climate protection and other ecosystem services.²



The implementation is far too expensive!

And who should take care of all that?

I'll lose my crop land!

Nature-based solutions are cost-effective and just as effective as technical approaches!³ Furthermore, when implemented well, they do not require intensive maintenance, so the effort involved remains manageable.²

Crop land in floodplains must be managed in a different way, and that is possible! If we produce less for livestock farming and reduce food waste, we'll need less farmland. The floodplains can become meadows again, and the subsidies can support those who establish floodplain pastures here for biodiversity⁴ or stop the climate pollution from drained lowland peatlands and develop new peatland products⁵ in the process.

But we already have beautiful nature here by the dyke! Why is that suddenly no longer good enough?

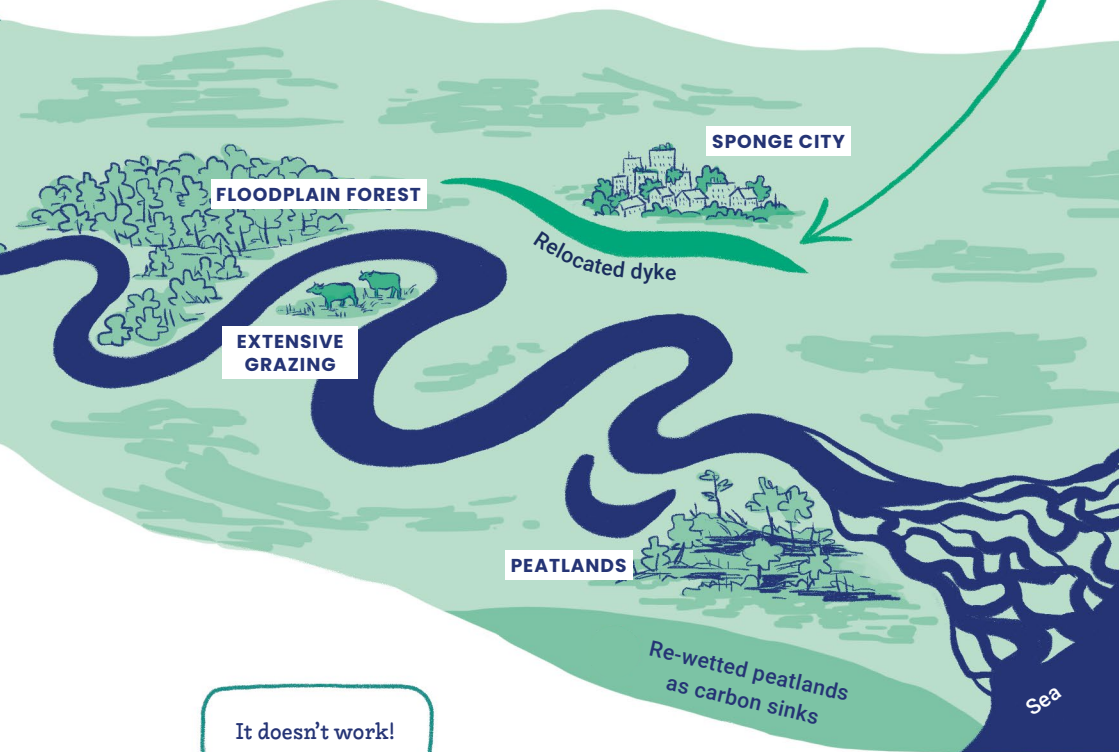


That's what we've always done.



Traditional engineered flood protection only helps in severe flood situations and **should only be used where it is really necessary.**

Because sponge solutions can do much more! **Intact floodplains, peatlands, meadows and forests** help to prevent drought, raise the groundwater level, ensure clean water and enable many species to return to habitats that have disappeared due to dyke construction and river straightening.^{2,6}



It doesn't work!



Yes, there are already **many successful examples of this in Europe.**⁷

Above all, these solutions work in both directions – against drought and flooding!



That sounds
reasonable.

But am I even
allowed to go for a
walk here anymore?

Sure!



LAPWING

EUROPEAN BEAVER

COTTON GRASS

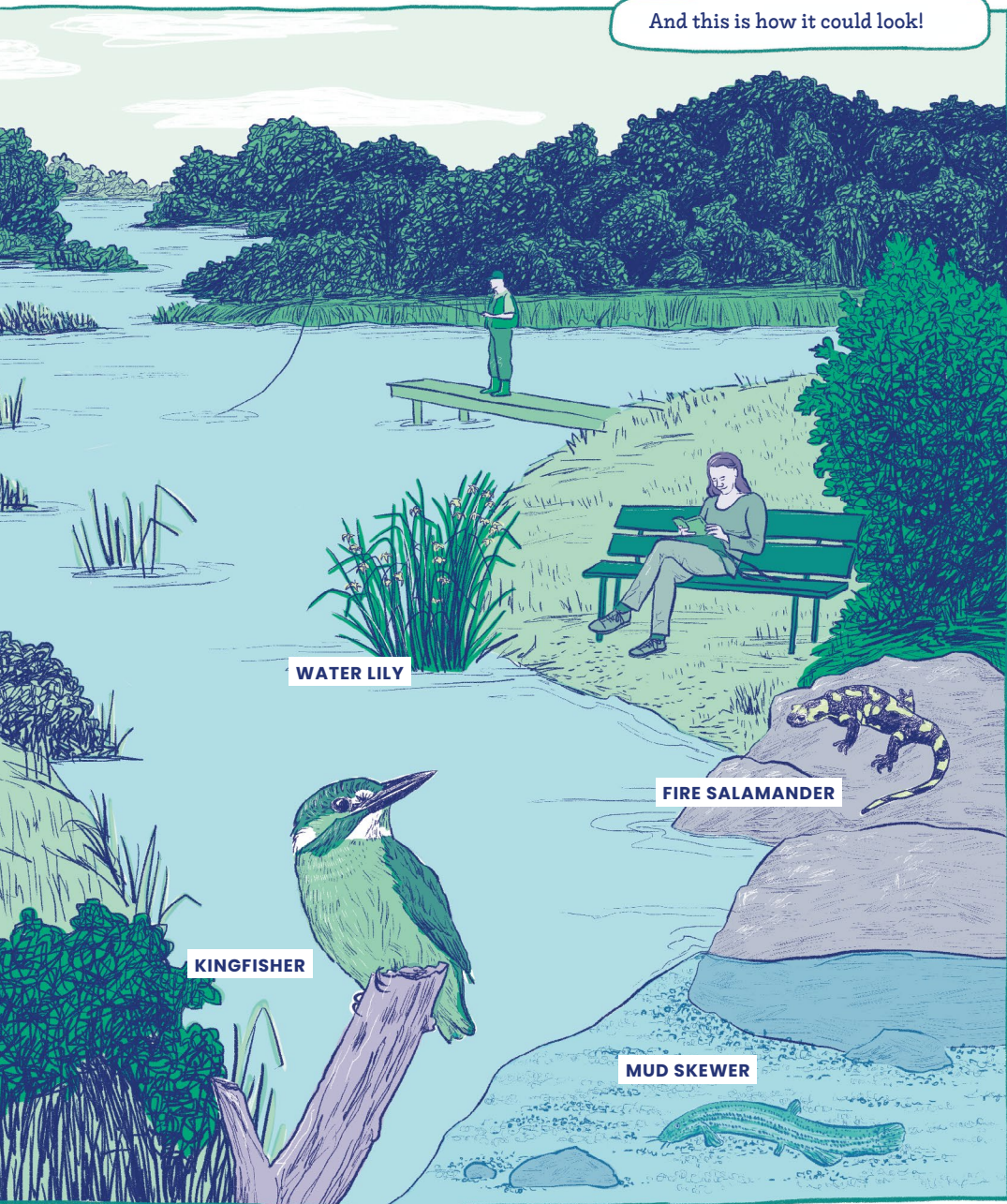
RIVER PLOVER

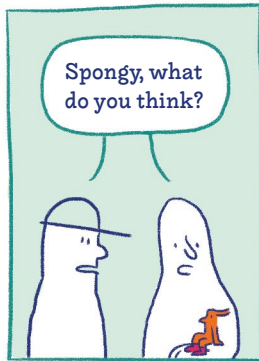
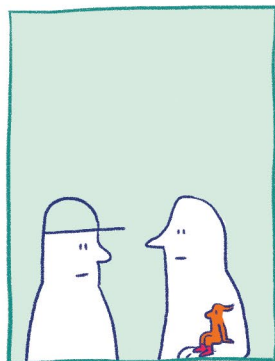
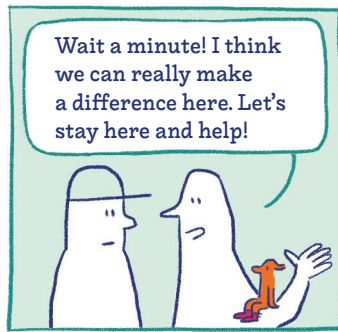
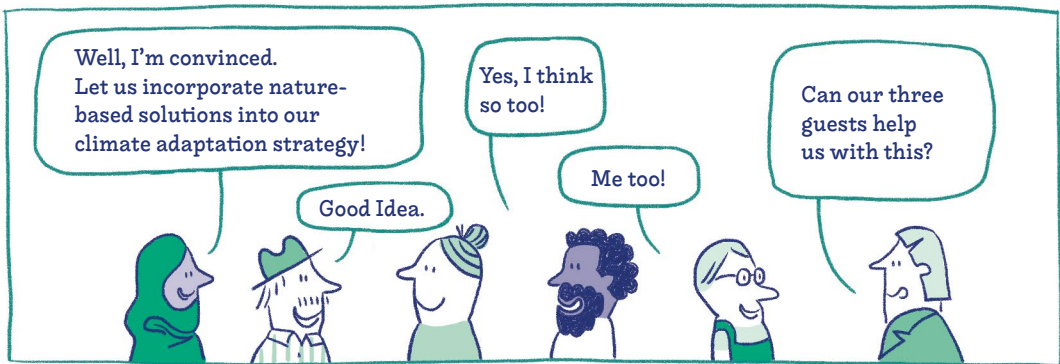
In addition to protected zones, areas for experiencing nature and recreation are also important. Sensitive areas can be discovered from designated paths.⁸

This allows us to do justice to all interests. Because ultimately, it's not about one group winning – it's about no one losing!



And this is how it could look!





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