A centre for cultural encounters

The Englisches Dorf will also play an important role in the future Spreepark. The 1,100-square-metre wooden structure is reminiscent of a tent and reflects the shape of the circus tent which appeared at the centre of the backdrop of the former amusement park. A new English Village will be built as an event venue, in addition to the redesigned Werkhalle. The event venue at the heart of the building will cover 315 square metres and provide space for up to 300 people. The English Village will also house an F&B kiosk and will provide wheelchair access. The ridged design of the 1,400-square-metre roof will collect up to 800,000 litres of rainwater annually, which will then be filtered and fed into the Spreepark's rainwater management system.

The legendary Ferris wheel

As early as spring 2022 (see EAP News of 21/03/22) it was decided that after a complete overhaul the amusement park's Ferris wheel, which opened in 1969, would also become part of the visitor attractions in the new Spreepark. The original goal of Grün Berlin was to complete the newly designed Ferris wheel and its water basin by the end of 2024, with the attraction scheduled to open its doors to visitors around Easter 2025. At the time the costs for the renovation and redesign of the Ferris wheel including the water basin were estimated at 6.4 million euros. Easter 2025 is now no longer a realistic date, but progress is still gradually being made on the Ferris wheel in the Spreepark.

After the historic Ferris wheel was dismantled in 2021 and the individual parts were inspected, the 45-metre-high and 35-year-old structure went on a renovation journey. Instead of being located in the middle of the water basin as before, the landmark will in future be anchored at the edge of the now perfectly circular water basin with a bold construction of supports and tensioning ropes, so that the wheel and gondolas will float directly above the water. The contract for the renovation and modernisation of the historic attraction was awarded to Dutch Wheels, a Netherlands-based company specialising in the construction and renovation of Ferris wheels. In an interview at the Spreepark Jan Philippen, CTO at Dutch Wheels, explained the special features of this project, stating that the main aim is to bring the wheel up to the very latest technical standards, while also re-using as much of the existing structure as possible, in particular the steel sections. However, safety-related areas such as the control system, which – according to Philippen – can no longer be used after 30 years, are being completely replaced. "For me as an engineer, redesigning the wheel is particularly appealing because of all the technical challenges that come with it – for example, analysing the natural vibrations and how to solve any related issues." The engineer sees it as a major advantage that Dutch Wheels has access to the original drawings of the wheel and is also working closely with the TÜV technical inspection service, which has in the past already been responsible for the former Vekoma wheel.

A total of around 90 tonnes of the historic Ferris wheel were removed for renovation and recycled. The more than 300 steel sections to be renovated are being sandblasted and cleaned, thoroughly inspected, welds repaired if necessary, components reinforced and then re-coated. At the same time planning is underway for the required new components such as the drive system, the controls, the gondolas and the new artistic design.

As announced at the end of 2024, the Spreepark is now scheduled to be fully completed and operational in the spring of 2027. According to information provided by Grün Berlin GmbH in response to a parliamentary question to the Berlin Senate, "Investment of around 90 million euros is currently planned for various structural and engineering works, such as the Englisches Dorf, the service areas, the Ferris wheel with its water basin, the functional buildings and the outdoor spaces both inside and outside the Spreepark". Accordingly, it now looks as if there will be a foreseeable time frame for the opening of the new Spreepark in its entirety.

