

Europe's longest heated cycle path to connect Dutch cities

1.7km Wageningen to Arnhem link set to be kept snow-free by energy from local paper plant



Beauty spot in Renkum, Netherlands, where the longest heated cycle path in western Europe will be built. Photograph: www.gelderland.nl

The longest heated cycle path in western Europe, and possibly the world, is set to be built in a Dutch beauty spot to cut the commuting time¹ between two of the country's cities all year round.

The new 1.7km cycle highway linking Wageningen and Arnhem, in the east of the Netherlands, will be kept warm by residual heat from a local paper plant to keep it free of ice and snow.

Concerns have been raised that frogs might find the warm path a little too comfortable, putting them and cyclists in danger. But Gelderland council has promised to monitor the impact on the local wildlife, which includes many water birds and beavers.

Towns across the Netherlands have been investing in heating stretches of cycle paths, but nothing on the scale proposed in Gelderland has been constructed.

Cutting through the *Jufferswaard*, a nature reserve near the *Nederrijn* in Renkum, the two-way cycle path is also likely to be one of the most idyllic, and is due to be completed in time for the winter of 2019.

De Jufferswaard, a nature area of 31 hectares (77 acres), is located in the floodplain along the *Nederrijn* river, between the factory site of the paper mill *Parenco*, one of the area's biggest employers, and the Rhine bridge at Heteren village, 7.5 miles (12km) south-west of Arnhem.

Petra Borsboom, a spokesperson for Gelderland council, said they believed the path would be the longest of its type in western Europe.

"We don't want to make the claim that it is the longest in the world because there might be one in China we don't know about," he said.

The cycle route will shorten the riding distance between Wageningen and Arnhem by 600 metres. The biggest gain of the route would be *"time, safety and experience"*, the council said.

Borsboom said the project would be put out to tender soon.

¹<https://www.theguardian.com/money/2015/nov/09/million-people-two-hours-commuting-tuc-study>

"We want to work with companies developing new techniques", she said. "The company who [wins the contract] will have a great influence on how they do the heating."

The spokesperson added:

"This path is mainly for commuters. It is a beautiful protected area and that is the reason we wanted to do this. We don't want to use salt there to keep it snow-free. There was a lot of fear that frogs in the road would want to stay there but we will follow the impact on the smaller animals very closely."