

Dutch Cycling Culture nominated for the National Intangible Heritage List

Today, Utrecht inaugurated the world's largest bicycle parking facility with a total of 12,500 spaces. At the grand opening of the bicycle parking facility 'Stationsplein', State Secretary Van Veldhoven (Infrastructure and Water Management), together with the Municipality of Utrecht, ProRail, NS (Dutch Railways), and Stichting Landelijk Fietsplatform (Dutch Cycling Platform Foundation) nominated Dutch Cycling Culture to be added to the national intangible heritage list.

State Secretary Van Veldhoven (Infrastructure and Water Management) said, *"Today, Utrecht celebrates the opening of the largest bicycle parking facility in the world. It's an important moment and one to celebrate because the number of travellers is growing and continues to grow. From today onwards, thousands of travellers in Utrecht can once again park their bikes right near the train platforms they use. We've already expanded the number of bicycle parking spaces in the Netherlands from 200,000 to 490,000 in recent years – and we're certainly not finished yet. With the extra money that the government is allocating for this, many more spaces will be created at busy stations throughout the country."*

A country of cyclists

A recent study conducted by the Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau (Social Cultural Planning Office) shows that cycling is part of Dutch identity. Dutch people collectively cycle about 15 billion kilometres per year. This means that bikes are used for more than a quarter of journeys made in the Netherlands. These high usage figures require creative solutions. Huge bicycle parking facilities and real 'fietsflats' (bike stacks) are being built in the Netherlands so that people can put all these bicycles somewhere. The absolute jewel in the crown is, of course, the largest bicycle parking facility in the world at Utrecht Central Station (12,500 spaces).

Victor Everhardt, Councillor for the Utrecht station area said, *"Cycling is part of our genetic makeup in Utrecht. This city opened the first cycle path in the Netherlands in 1885. Utrecht wants to be, and will remain, a beautiful, healthy, liveable city. That is why we are focusing on cycling as a healthy and sustainable means of transport in a growing city. The largest bicycle parking facility in the world compliments this perfectly. I am proud that we have been able to build this in the Utrecht station area."*

The largest bicycle parking facility in the world

The Municipality of Utrecht, Prorail and NS jointly built and manage the Stationsplein bicycle parking facility in Utrecht. In addition to 12,500 parking spaces, the parking facility also has space for 1,000 public transport bicycles (OV-fietsen). The parking facility is open 24/7 and users can park their bikes for the first 24 hours for free. The parking facility consists of three floors and a continuous cycle path runs through the facility so you can cycle in and out of the parking facility on both sides. A digital bicycle space indication system helps cyclists find free spaces easily. Travellers can easily reach the train platforms from the facility. This makes Utrecht Central Station a multi-modal public transport hub.

Making cycling even more attractive

Rail traffic will grow by around 30% in the coming years. The Municipality of Utrecht, ProRail and NS see this every day. In order to make cycling to and from stations easier and even more attractive, substantial investments are being made in bicycle facilities at stations. The largest bicycle parking facility in the world is a good example of this. So far, 22,000 public spaces are available around Utrecht

Central Station. The partners are investigating expansion possibilities to keep up with the increase in bicycle usage.

Roger van Boxtel, CEO of NS said, "*The busier our city centres become, the more relevant the bicycle and train combination will be because trains and bicycles complement each other perfectly. Half of the people who travel by train get to the station by bicycle and the increase in the usage of our public transport bicycle (OV-fiets) is overwhelming. Using a bicycle has no disadvantages in the Netherlands, as long as you can find somewhere to park it properly. These 5,000 extra spaces will help with this. We'll help even more people travel by public transport in this way.*"

Ans Rietstra, Director of Projects at ProRail said, "*We've been renewing and extending parking facilities for 20 years now. With greater pressure on the space around stations, this is becoming increasingly difficult. But a parking facility like this in Utrecht shows that we are still succeeding; we are continuing to encourage people to cycle to our stations! It would be impossible to conceive a more sustainable solution.*"