



Working towards climate neutral and circular infrastructure projects

2016 and 2019 were the warmest years on record worldwide¹. In the Netherlands, record temperatures followed one another. With climate change expected to cause steadily more extreme weather events, there is every reason to address the phenomenon with greater urgency. The strategy document 'Towards climate neutral and circular public infrastructure projects' (Naar klimaatneutrale en circulaire rijksinfrastructuurprojecten) contains guidelines for implementing circular and climate neutral principles in the procurement and execution of infrastructure projects. The strategy is a guide for partners in the civil engineering sector and an invitation to them to join us in working together in finding new and better ways of making infrastructure projects more sustainable.

Ambition

By 2030...

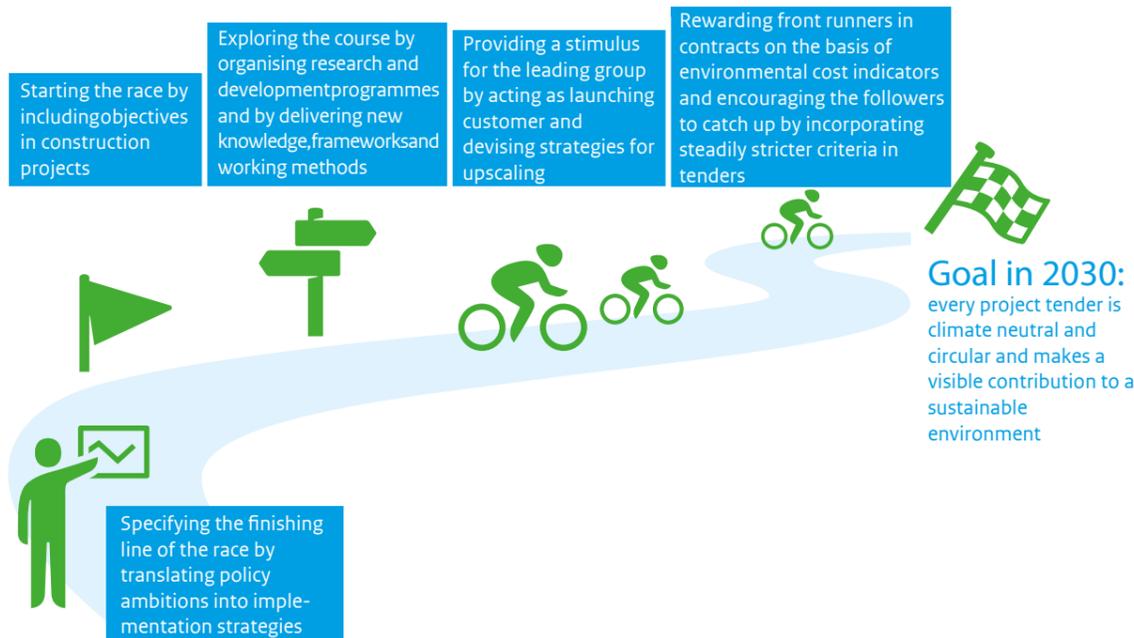
- ...the operations of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management will be entirely climate neutral and circular. We will consume no more energy than we generate ourselves and will not emit CO₂ or other greenhouse gases. We will implement high-grade recycling of raw materials and minimise the waste we produce.
- ...Rijkswaterstaat will operate according to circular principles and its infrastructure projects will be climate neutral.
- ...ProRail will be well on its way to becoming fully climate-neutral and circular by 2050.

Strategy

We distinguish three tracks for achieving the goal of making national infrastructure projects circular and climate neutral:

1. Building on what already exists

The Ministry is already taking numerous steps to improve the climate neutrality and circularity of the procurement procedures and the execution of infrastructure projects. We will build on what we are already doing by focusing more on innovation, the procurement strategy and sustainable commissioning. The course we will follow involves the following stages (by analogy with a cycle race):



2. Collaboration

The strategy is a launchpad for reaching agreements with regional authorities and the private sector to maximise efforts to make civil-engineering projects climate-neutral and circular. With existing technologies, CO₂ emissions could be reduced by half in 2030. But by joining forces, the reduction could be up to four times greater. Accordingly, we will together flesh out the transition paths for different types of infrastructure projects starting with:

For Rijkswaterstaat:

- Road, dyke and rail construction equipment (previously 'construction sites and logistics')
- Civil engineering structures
- Shoreline management and waterway maintenance
- Road surfacing

For ProRail:

- Rail superstructures
- Rail energy supply
- Road, dyke and rail construction equipment (previously 'construction sites and logistics')
- Civil engineering structures and other materials

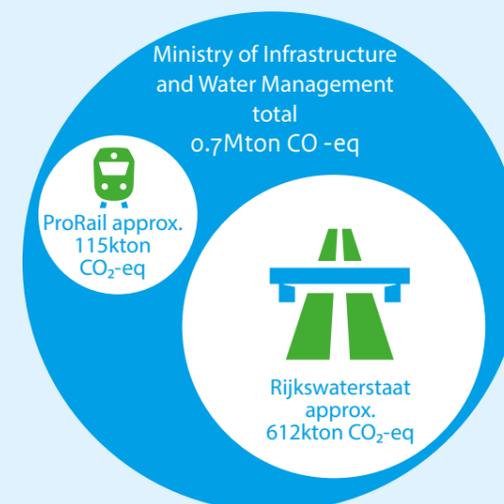
These transition paths are not cast in stone and will be further elaborated in consultation with market actors and local authorities in the coming period.

3. Evaluation and adjustment

We will evaluate the strategy and identify the results no later than 2024, when we will also review whether the ambition of becoming fully climate neutral is feasible or whether we need to revise the strategy.

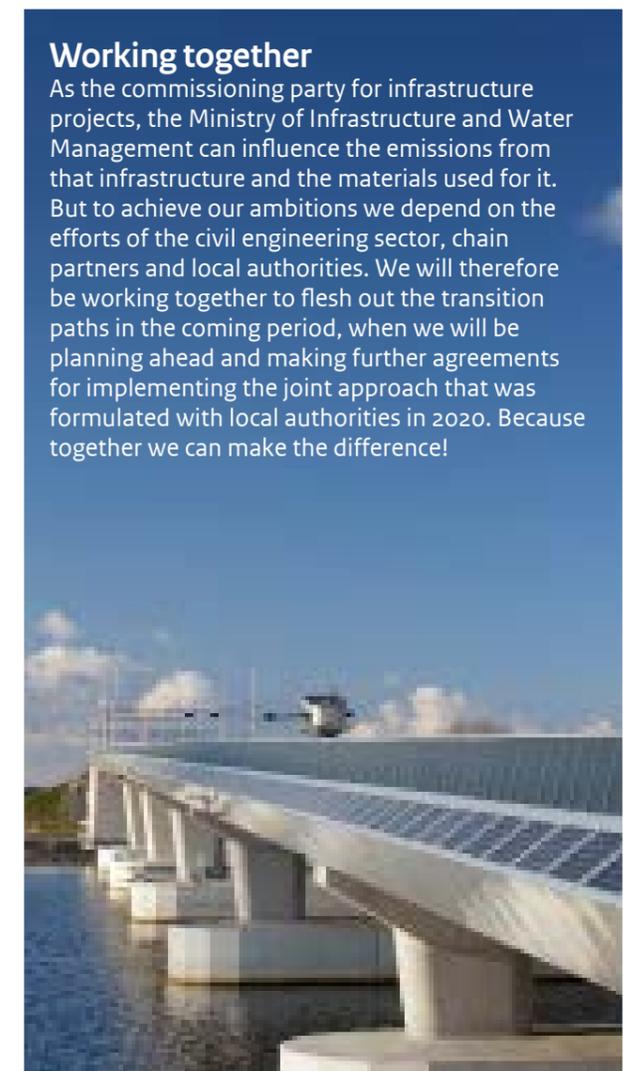
Emissions

The total emissions from infrastructure projects commissioned by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management come to 0.7Mton CO₂-eq. These are the emissions caused by extraction, production, transport and the recycling of materials. Rijkswaterstaat accounts for the largest share of the total at around 612kton CO₂-eq. Most of Rijkswaterstaat's emissions are caused by projects relating to the main road network, for example during road surfacing. ProRail's emissions come to around 115kton CO₂-eq. The largest source of those emissions is the superstructure (ballast, sleepers, rails).



Working together

As the commissioning party for infrastructure projects, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management can influence the emissions from that infrastructure and the materials used for it. But to achieve our ambitions we depend on the efforts of the civil engineering sector, chain partners and local authorities. We will therefore be working together to flesh out the transition paths in the coming period, when we will be planning ahead and making further agreements for implementing the joint approach that was formulated with local authorities in 2020. Because together we can make the difference!



¹ World Meteorological Organization, January 2020