

NEWSLTR

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THE GROWING
NEED FOR
QUALITY GREEN
OUTDOOR SPACE

Stadspark Antwerp

STRONG PUBLIC
SPACES EMERGE WHEN
DESIGN, ENGINEERING
AND PRACTICAL
EXPERIENCE
REINFORCE ONE
ANOTHER

Colab BestBridges and VONK

MAKE THE RIGHT
DESIGN AND BUDGET
DECISIONS EARLY ON

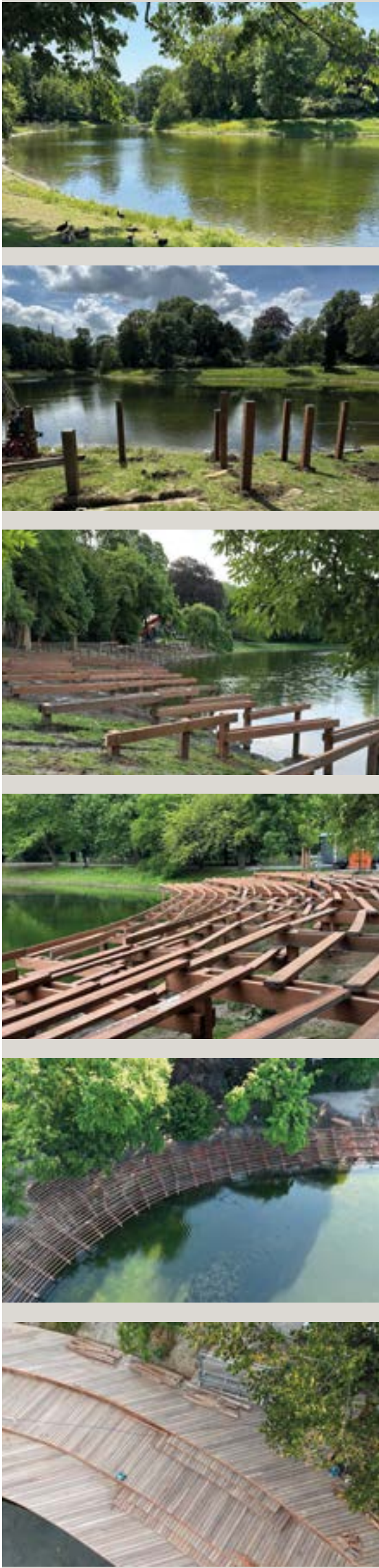
BestBridges LAB



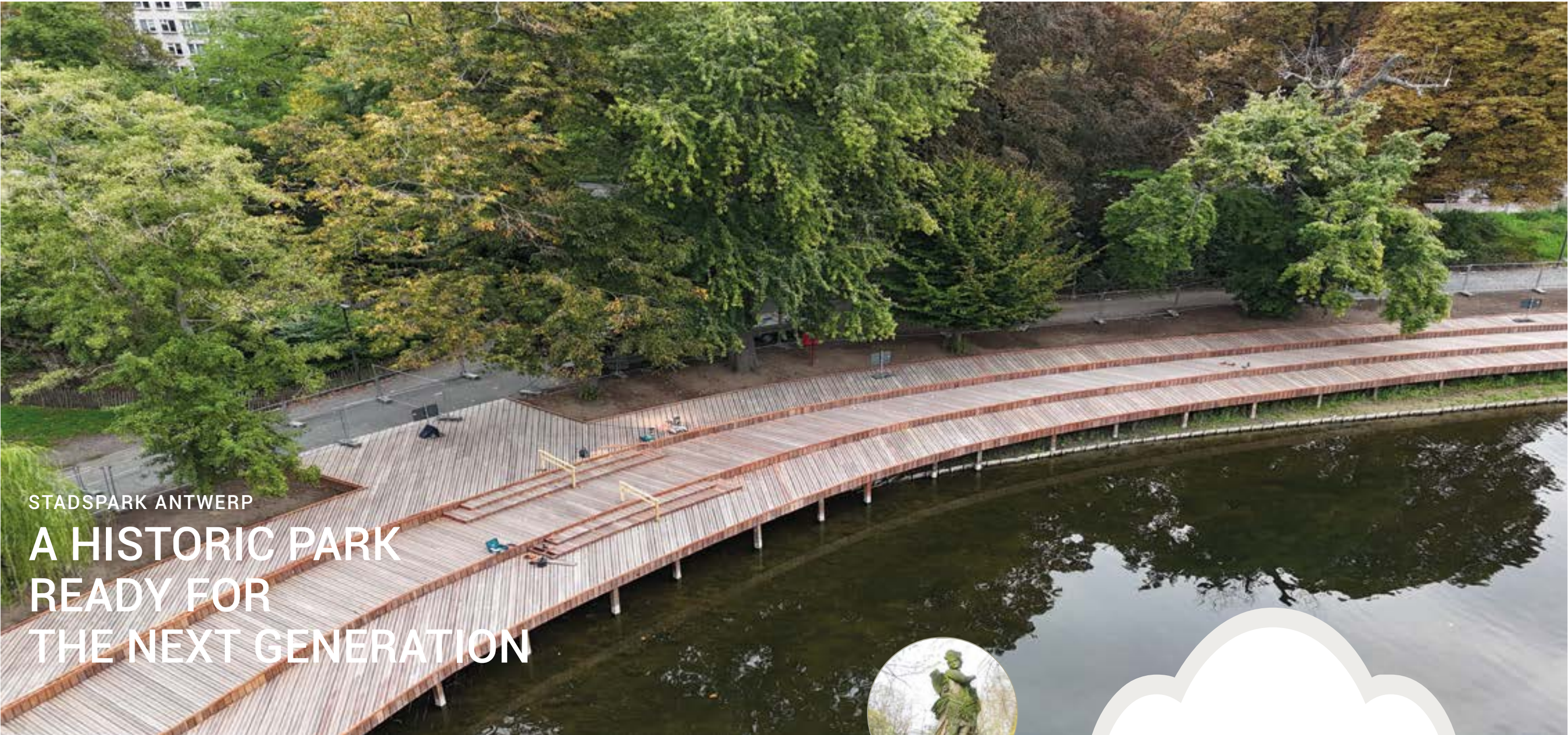
STADSPARK ANTWERP

WOODEN DECK

A new perspective on the
pond and its surroundings.



FROM START TO
FINISH:
A BEAUTIFUL
PROJECT REALISED
STEP BY STEP



STADSPARK ANTWERP

A HISTORIC PARK READY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

The Stadspark has been the green lung in the heart of Antwerp for generations. For local residents, families, students and visitors, it is much more than just a park. It is a place to walk, relax, meet each other and escape the bustle of the city for a while.

The area around the Stadspark has changed considerably in recent years. The neighbourhood has become more densely built, more diverse and livelier. At the same time, the need is growing for quality green spaces where people can find calm and reconnect with nature and with one another.

With the renovation and revitalisation of the Stadspark, the City of Antwerp is making a deliberate investment in the future of this special place. The park is evolving from a classic urban setting into a contemporary meeting place where nature, relaxation and recreation go hand in hand.

The renewed playground creates more space for young families and makes the park even more appealing to children. The upgrade of the pond also plays an important role. The pond is the beating heart of the park and is getting the attention it deserves once again. By making the surroundings more accessible and attractive, visitors can get closer to the water and nature, while the park's ecological value and biodiversity are strengthened further.

In a highly urbanised environment, meeting places like this are invaluable. They bring people together, improve quality of life and make the city more resilient and healthier.

At BestBridges, we are especially proud to be part of writing this story. Our contribution is the construction of an accessible wooden boardwalk that invites visitors to experience the park in a new way.

The boardwalk is much more than a structure. It is a place to rest, a place to meet and a gentle transition between people and nature. Thanks to the use of durable, natural timber, the construction fits perfectly with the green character of the park. Timber is also a renewable material that stores CO2, and its warm, natural look contributes to a pleasant and inviting public space.

From the boardwalk, visitors get a new perspective on the pond and its surroundings. They are invited to slow down, pause by the water and reconnect with nature in the heart of the city.

Projects like the Stadspark in Antwerp show how carefully designed infrastructure can contribute to more experience, more nature and more connection in the city.

Because sometimes it is the small interventions that make people rediscover a place and feel at home there again.

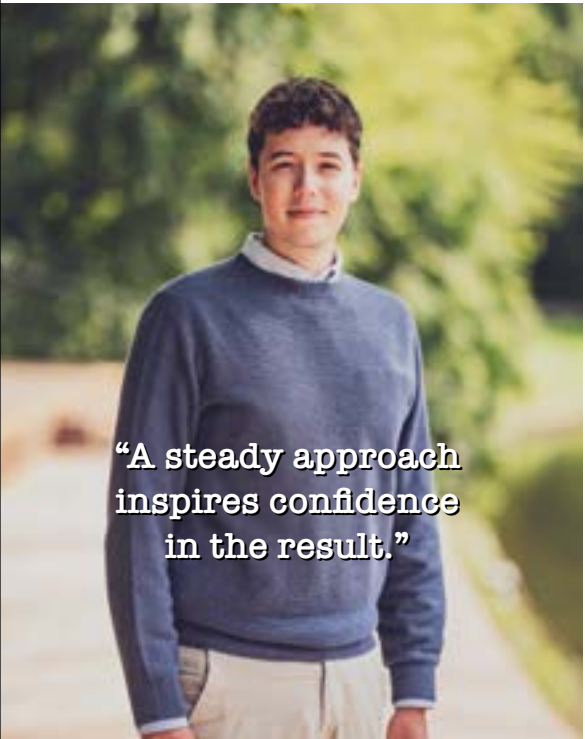
Design: Omgeving
Main Contractor: Lareco BV
Fabrication and Installation: BestBridges BV

REVITALISATION OF STADSPARK

Scan the code to watch the video







“A steady approach
inspires confidence
in the result.”

MEET ANTON, OUR NEW PROJECT DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Anton recently joined the BestBridges team as a project manager. With his experience as a site manager at Viabuild! and his training in technical drawing, he brings a strong technical background and a practical view of projects.

Anton is a meticulous and driven professional who wants to bring every site to a successful completion with heart and soul.

At BestBridges, he is responsible for preparing and following up on quotations, as well as for the execution of our projects. Thanks to his structured approach and eye for detail, clients can count on smooth, high-quality project follow-up.

Welcome to BestBridges, Anton!



CERTIFIED SUSTAINABLE HARDWOOD

BestBridges uses only FSC®- or PEFC-certified hardwood from sustainably managed forests. Depending on the application, we choose European hardwoods such as Robinia and Oak, or tropical species such as Azobé and Massaranduba, which are known for their high natural durability.

Species are selected based on their durability class under EN 350, the environmental conditions and the required service life of the bridge.

This lets us build bridges and walkways with a long service life and low maintenance requirements.



A Brief History of the Stadspark

The Antwerp Stadspark was laid out between 1867 and 1869 to a design by the German landscape architect Eduard Keilig. The park was created on the site of the former Lunet of Herentals, a triangular defensive redoubt built in 1818-1819 under Dutch rule to reinforce the old Spanish city walls.

Keilig transformed this military structure into a romantic landscape park. His design combines an irregular pond with an island and suspension bridge, artificial rock formations, rolling grass slopes and varied planting. The park was deliberately designed as a green oasis to shield visitors from the busy city.

Throughout the twentieth century, the park changed several times. During the Second World War, bunkers were built, some of which are still visible today. After the war, several monuments were moved to the park, and the widening of surrounding avenues led to the loss of parts of the original park edge. Despite these changes, the Stadspark is still regarded as one of the most important and best-preserved examples of 19th-century landscape architecture in Belgium.



A beautiful design?
No guarantee of
a buildable project!

In the preliminary design phase,
a bridge or deck often
remains a sketch.
A beautiful concept, without enough
insight into engineering, materials
or the actual cost.



**DESIGN AND EXECUTION
UNDER ONE ROOF**

Scan the code to watch the video

At BestBridges, we find that pedestrian and cycle bridges and deck structures are often a small part of a larger infrastructure or landscape project. As a result, these structures are not always developed in much depth during the preliminary design phase. Technical feasibility, buildability and budget implications are only examined thoroughly later in the process. That is exactly why we developed **BestBridges LAB**.

BestBridges LAB supports public sector clients, engineering consultancies, landscape architects and design teams at a very early stage of the project. Drawing on our practical experience, parametric design tools and extensive material knowledge, we quickly turn an initial idea into technically feasible design variants that can be compared side by side.

Our knowledge is not only built at the drawing table, but tested daily in the practice of engineering, fabrication and installation on site. This combination of thinking and doing makes us a pragmatic and reliable partner. We explore solutions in steel, timber, composite or hybrid structures and complement them with:

- technically substantiated design variants;
- 2D and 3D visualisations;
- bills of quantities and technical specifications;
- budget estimates and cost comparisons;
- fabrication details and technical starting points for further engineering.

The goal of BestBridges LAB is simple: to give clients the right insights early on, so they can make decisions with more confidence and reliable information. This reduces the risk of:

- incomplete or contradictory tender documents;
- underestimated budgets;
- unexpected extra work;
- execution problems on site;
- delays and disputes between the parties involved.

BestBridges LAB is therefore much more than a study or design office. It is a practical, technically sound bridge between an initial idea and a buildable project.

**WITHOUT A PRELIMINARY
PHASE**

- ✗ Drawings, bills of quantities and specifications that don't add up
- ✗ A concept that only proves technically unfeasible or too expensive on site
- ✗ Contractors who have to price an incomplete tender package
- ✗ Extra work, disputes and budget overruns during construction

WITH BESTBRIDGES LAB

- ✓ Drawings, bills of quantities and specifications that align
- ✓ A concept that has been tested for engineering and budget upfront
- ✓ Contractors who price precisely on a complete tender package
- ✓ A smooth execution without extra work or budget overruns

DID YOU KNOW...

BEST in BestBridges stands for Build, Enjoy, Smile & Trust?

Those four words sum up what drives us every day: building sustainable solutions, enjoying working together, creating smiles and trust as a solid foundation for every project.



ALFIE, OUR OFFICE DOG

Meet Alfie, our most fun colleague. This 1-year-old Vizsla is not only a fixture at the office, but also joins us enthusiastically on site visits to "inspect" bridges and walkways. His inspection method? A sniff here, a wag there, and of course a thorough check that everyone is giving this four-legged colleague enough attention.

Besides his undeniable talent for managing the atmosphere, Alfie brings a smile, a friendly chat and an extra dose of love to the office every day. And honestly? No meeting is made worse by a Vizsla at your feet.

Fancy meeting Alfie in person? Feel free to drop by! Chances are you will get an enthusiastic welcome. You score extra points with a dog treat or a snack, which our favourite colleague never says no to.

**BESTBRIDGES AND VONK
COMBINE
THEIR EXPERTISE**

Today's public space demands more than standard solutions. Cities, municipalities, developers and designers are looking for places that are functional, yet also invite people to meet, relax and enjoy the space.

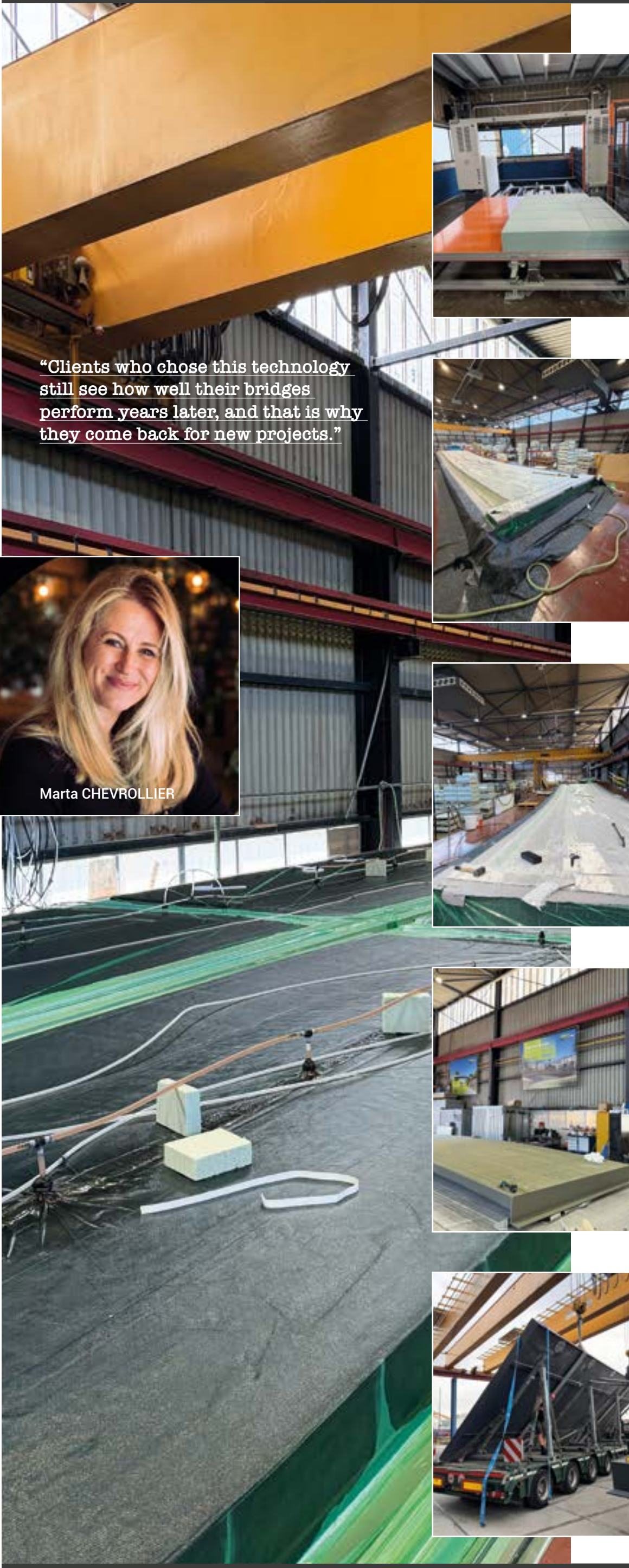
From that shared vision, BestBridges and VONK are joining forces to develop a new line of street furniture. This collaboration brings together two complementary areas of expertise.

Behind VONK is designer Jonas Willems. His love of wood, background in interior design and affinity with Scandinavian design come together in furniture with pure forms and a character of its own. Wood and steel play a recognisable role in it. With attention to sustainable materials, VONK designs outdoor furniture that is allowed to age along with its users. The ambition is clear: to bring people together and create space for people to meet.

For its part, BestBridges has developed its own vision of street furniture over the past few years, as part of quality public spaces. Besides bridges and walkways, we design and build custom outdoor furniture that combines functionality with spatial quality. Through our daily involvement in public projects, we understand how outdoor spaces are used and what clients expect in terms of sustainability, maintenance, technical feasibility and budget certainty.

It is precisely in this combination that the strength of this collaboration lies.





Marta CHEVROLIER
International Sales/Marketing Manager FiberCore

In which European countries are you currently seeing the fastest adoption of composite technology for bridges, and why?

Scandinavia, and Norway in particular, is seeing strong growth. This is driven largely by harsh climate conditions, such as the use of de-icing salts and corrosion in coastal areas. There, the corrosion resistance of composite offers a clear technical advantage over steel and reinforced concrete. In addition, the Scandinavian countries are generally very open to prefabricated infrastructure solutions that need little maintenance. In Norway specifically, we also work with an experienced partner with a background in bridge construction and an extensive network in the infrastructure sector. That helps enormously in establishing the technology in the market. We are also seeing growing demand in Belgium, England, Poland, Germany and Austria, where composite materials are gaining more and more recognition in infrastructure projects. In several of these countries, we have been working with partners for years. Many projects also lead to follow-up work: clients who used the technology still see how well the bridges perform years later, and so come back to us for new projects.

What usually convinces a public client to choose composite for the first time?

The decisive factors are usually fast installation with minimal traffic disruption, performance over the full service life, and the bridge's low weight. That low weight becomes especially interesting when the existing abutments of a previously demolished bridge can be reused. It also naturally helps when composite bridges are already in use in a neighbouring country. That gives the client visible, credible references on which to base the decision.

Are clients increasingly looking at total life-cycle costs instead of just the initial investment?

Yes, we find clients showing growing interest in value and costs over the full service life, rather than looking only at the initial investment. We therefore put a lot of effort into explaining these benefits clearly. But we still have some way to go. Sometimes the initial investment ends up being the deciding factor after all. Budget cycles, tendering rules and short-term political pressure still regularly mean that the lowest upfront price wins, even when the figures clearly show that composite is more economical over its full service life.

What can Belgium and France learn from the Netherlands, Scandinavia and other mature composite markets?

We now have a proven track record in several European and other countries. This allows us to show that composite bridge technology does not only work in theory, but has also proven itself in practice and over the long term. The experience and evidence built up in different markets is one of our strongest arguments for giving public clients who are considering composite for the first time the confidence to proceed. Another important lesson is to find an enthusiastic engineer within an organisation and give them the space to act as an internal champion. A large part of the early success of composite bridges in the Netherlands was due to individual engineers who were genuinely interested in new technology and willing to invest time in understanding it. They studied design guidelines such as CUR 96, the original Dutch recommendation for the design of FRP bridges, early on, long before the technology was widely applied.

What developments do you expect in the European bridge market over the next five to ten years?

The most important development ahead is, without a doubt, the new Eurocode specifically for composite structures. CEN/TS 19101, the technical specification for the design of fibre-reinforced polymer structures, is currently in the testing and implementation phase and is on track to become a full Eurocode: Eurocode 11, with publication expected by June 2028. This could be a real game changer.

For the first time, composite materials will sit alongside steel, concrete and timber in a single harmonised European design framework. That will give engineers and public clients much more confidence, clarity and legal certainty when specifying and applying composite structures.

COMPOSITE IS NO LONGER AN EXPERIMENTAL TECHNOLOGY

Matthijs Raak
Managing Director FiberCore

What are the biggest misconceptions about composite bridges that you still come across?

One of the biggest misconceptions is that composite is not sustainable because people associate it with plastic. That is why we deliberately speak of fibre-reinforced polymers (FRP). There is also a belief that the material releases microplastics. But the material we use is not a thermoplastic, it is a thermoset. As a result, hardly any microplastics are released, in any case no more than from the coatings applied to steel bridges. A second major misconception is that composite is inherently expensive. When you make a fair comparison, composite can be competitive with steel, timber or concrete even on initial investment cost. Many of these preconceptions stem mainly from unfamiliarity with the material. People still do not know composite well enough and so sometimes regard it as something new, while we have now been working with it for almost twenty years and have built around 2,000 bridges.

Where do you see the greatest advantage of composite when it comes to Total Cost of Ownership?

The first thing that comes to mind is, of course, maintenance. For our composite bridges, it is very limited. For clients, this means not only a financial advantage but also much greater certainty about the bridge's performance throughout its full service life. Composite does not rust and does not rot. As a result, maintenance requirements and long-term uncertainties are much smaller. Inspection requirements are limited as well. There are also the societal costs, which a traditional financial comparison sometimes fails to take fully into account. A composite bridge is largely produced in a controlled factory environment and can then be installed on site very quickly. This keeps the disruption to a road, cycle link or other infrastructure very limited. Downtime is short, the route can reopen sooner and the disruption to the public is greatly reduced. Quality plays a part too. Because we produce under controlled conditions in the factory, we can monitor and inspect the entire production process closely. A large part of the work is therefore moved from the site to a controlled production environment.

How significant are the maintenance savings over a bridge's service life?

They can be very substantial. A good practical example is the municipality of Purmerend in the Netherlands. We have now installed around 150 bridges there, and that number will eventually move towards 250. We have worked there since 2010. The municipality reports that more than two million euros in maintenance costs has already been saved. That is a very significant amount. In practical terms, that saving quickly equals the investment value of several new bridge decks. When infrastructure managers experience these benefits in practice, their view of the material changes too. They choose composite again because they know they will have far less maintenance and fewer operational worries over the service life. That also explains why we see so many repeat orders from several clients.

What role can composite play in the renovation and service life extension of existing bridges?

We see significant potential here. Which solution is most suitable

depends on the condition of the existing bridge, and above all on its sub-structure. For an existing concrete bridge that falls just short of current structural requirements, a composite deck can be added and structurally connected to the existing structure. This makes it possible to use the full available construction depth and to increase the load-bearing capacity of the bridge. Such an intervention can be carried out relatively quickly and



“Composite is a proven bridge technology that has been used widely in practice for almost twenty years.”

is in many cases cheaper than replacing the bridge entirely. Another option arises when an existing concrete or steel bridge deck needs replacing but the abutments and intermediate supports are still in good condition. The existing structures can then be kept and a new, lightweight composite deck placed on top. We applied this in Iceland, for example, on a bridge of around 22 metres. We were able to keep the existing supports and place a completely new bridge deck on them. Because the deck was produced in advance in the factory, everything fitted during assembly and the installation could proceed exceptionally quickly.

Combinations of steel and composite also offer interesting possibilities. Where the existing abutments are still sound, a new or refurbished steel structure can be combined with a composite deck. The composite deck also helps protect the steel structure beneath it from moisture, which can extend its service life as well. Renovation is becoming more important as the demands on existing infrastructure increase. Vehicles are getting heavier and authorities are setting higher load-bearing requirements. With a lightweight composite deck, an existing structure can in certain situations be strengthened and adapted to these higher, modern loads. This is not only faster but also more sustainable than full replacement, because you reuse as much of the existing structure as possible. From the perspective of circularity and material use, the first question should therefore always be: can we renovate this bridge and extend its service life before we decide to demolish everything and build anew?

What would you say to an engineer or public client considering composite for the first time?

Be curious and open to other materials. Come and listen and look. Visit existing projects where composite has been used for years. Talk to infrastructure managers who have such bridges in their portfolio and ask them why they chose composite and what their experience has been. If you are willing to look beyond the traditional paths of concrete and steel, composite will naturally become a serious option when materials are being weighed up. That does not mean composite is automatically the best solution for every project. Sometimes steel will be better, and in other situations a hybrid solution may be the best choice. What matters most is that different materials are considered objectively. One challenge is that specific knowledge of composite is still limited at some engineering consultancies. That is exactly where one of our strengths lies. After almost twenty years of experience and around 2,000 bridges built, we have a great deal of accumulated knowledge and standardised solutions. This allows us to go from a question to a technically developed, buildable solution very quickly. Composite is therefore no longer an experimental technology. It is a proven bridge technology that has been used widely in practice for almost twenty years.



TWO YEARS OF STRONG PARTNERSHIP

BestBridges has been FiberCore's exclusive partner for Belgium, France and Luxembourg for two years now. This partnership combines FiberCore's technical expertise in composite with BestBridges' extensive experience in building bridges for pedestrians and cyclists.



Discover our composite projects at <https://bestbridges.eu> or scan the QR code.



Did you know that the core of our composite bridges is made from 100% recycled PET bottles?

13,125 PET bottles in a bridge measuring 15 x 3 metres





Over the past few years, Sportkringpark has grown into more than sports infrastructure. With its swimming pool, sports fields and outdoor areas, it is now a lively meeting place where sport, relaxation and leisure come together.

The park is used daily by several generations. Children learn to swim and play with friends there, athletes come to train, and local residents use the grounds to walk, meet each other or simply take a moment of calm. It is a place that brings people together, where movement and social contact go hand in hand.



That is precisely why the experience around sports infrastructure is at least as important as the sports facilities themselves. People do not come only to play sport. They also want to linger, enjoy their surroundings and spend time together. Quality outdoor spaces contribute greatly to that experience and strengthen the social role of a recreation park.



With the fabrication and installation of the furniture, zen platforms, information kiosks and walkways at Sportkringpark, we have contributed to more than purely functional structures. Through our work on site, we helped translate the design into places that bring calm, encourage social contact and enhance the experience of the park.



With the benches, calming timber zen platforms, durable timber information kiosks and walkways that we fabricated and installed, we have helped create places where people can rest, meet and consciously connect with their surroundings. The walkways are much more than boardwalks or structural elements. They create a gentle transition between infrastructure and nature, slow the pace and invite visitors to experience the surroundings in a different way.

Timber plays an important role here as a natural and sustainable material. Timber decks offer a stable, safe and low-maintenance solution that works perfectly in recreational settings and public spaces. Timber is also a renewable material that contributes to a warm look and a pleasant experience in public spaces, and it supports sustainable,

future-oriented public spaces in a natural way.

Projects like Sportkringpark show perfectly that public space is much more than infrastructure alone. At BestBridges, we therefore believe that well-designed public space connects people. By fabricating and installing sustainable timber structures and deck solutions in parks and recreation areas, we contribute to places that invite people to meet, relax and enjoy themselves, young and old alike.

Design: Omgeving & ARA
Main Contractor: Wulteputte BV
Fabrication and Installation: BestBridges BV



Do you come here often?
Yes, almost every day. I have been able to follow the whole evolution of Sportkringpark, and I can really see how much the park has improved. It has become a pleasant place to walk and take a moment of calm.

What stands out most to you?
The new walkway bridge is a real asset. It looks good and makes the walk much more enjoyable. The dog needed a moment to get used to it, but by now he crosses without any problems. That says it all.

Is the park finished, in your view?
The greenery still has to grow, of course, but you can already see how much potential it has. It already feels much more attractive and inviting today than it used to.



A huge asset for the city of Sint-Niklaas!



What do you think of the renewed layout of the park?
Very positive. The benches are comfortable, and you can tell they were designed with different users in mind. A lot of thought has clearly gone into them.

Does the park also make you feel safe?
Definitely. The fencing adds extra safety, especially when you are here with children or a dog. It really makes a difference.

Do you come here more often since the redevelopment?
Absolutely. Since the redevelopment, we enjoy walking here even more. Everything feels well kept, accessible and inviting. We are glad this renewal happened, because it makes the park more pleasant for everyone who wants to walk or relax here.



Plenty to enjoy for big and small!