

Fluvius to drill beneath medieval culvert and the River Demer to strengthen the energy network in Aarschot

13.8.2026 - Bart Wouters | Fluvius

On Monday 17 August, Fluvius will begin the final phase of the renewal of the electricity and gas networks in Aarschot. In doing so, the network operator is preparing the energy network in the 'City of Statues' for the future. Work carried out during an earlier phase led to a remarkable discovery: a medieval culvert was found to lie exactly on the planned route of the new electricity cables. To protect this historic structure, Fluvius carried out a guided drilling operation beneath the culvert and the River Demer in early July.

Fluvius is currently upgrading the electricity and gas networks in Aarschot, in conjunction with Aquafin's sewerage works. During the preparatory work, it emerged that a medieval underground water or drainage structure lay exactly on the planned cable route. As the new cables need to be laid deep enough underground, conventional trench digging was not an option. The network operator therefore opted for directional drilling. This began at the Demervallei car park and runs for a distance of 226 metres, at a depth of 14 metres, beneath the River Demer and the historic structure, all the way to the centre of Aarschot. In this way, modern utility works and centuries-old history literally intersect underground. Thanks to this approach, the culvert is preserved, whilst Fluvius builds the networks of tomorrow.

Customised underground work

Directional drilling involves creating a route underground without having to dig up all the streets. Specialised measuring equipment is used to continuously monitor the drilling path digitally and make precise adjustments. Once the drilling is complete, conduit pipes are installed, through which the new electricity cables will later be pulled.

Investing in future-proof networks

The drilling forms part of a larger project in which Fluvius is upgrading the electricity and gas networks in Aarschot. For electricity, new, thicker cables are being installed to provide greater capacity to meet the growing demand for power.

"Demand for electricity continues to rise. By strengthening our network today, we are ensuring that residents and businesses can continue to rely on sufficient capacity in the future for, amongst other things, electric cars, heat pumps and solar panels," says Cedrik Clemens, site coordinator.

Fluvius is coordinating its utility works with Aquafin's sewerage works. This means the same streets do not need to be dug up again in quick succession. This minimises disruption for residents, shopkeepers and road users in this busy area in the centre of Aarschot.

In the spring, Fluvius already renewed the first section of the route along the Demer. On Monday 17 August, the next phase will begin, during which the network operator will renew the energy networks towards the Koemarkt and later on towards Elisabethlaan. If everything goes according to plan, the works will be completed by the end of 2026.

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