INTERNATIONALE SCHELDEDAGEN
JOURNÉES INTERNATIONALES DE L'ESCAUT
INTERNATIONAL SCHELDT DAYS

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Ride with us against the water that is coming: Ride The Tide 2026

8 – 11 October 2026: Poperinge – Diksmuide – Boekhoute – Antwerp – Brussels



From 8 to 11 October 2026, ***Ride The Tide*** once again travels through Flanders and the Netherlands, on the cycling tour that has by now become a fixture for everyone who wants not merely to hear the climate story, but to experience it. Organised by ***Climate Express***, the ride follows the line the water could reach around 2100 if global warming continues unchecked: from Poperinge to Diksmuide, via Boekhoute to Antwerp, and finally on to Brussels. Four days, more than 250 kilometres, and a message that cannot be misunderstood: ***the flood of the future begins with the choices of today***.

Those who join are not simply going for a leisurely spin. Every kilometer is a statement against the idea that climate disruption is something far removed from our own lives. Climate Express points out that ***victims of extreme weather*** already often receive insufficient support from government and insurers: a reality that will only become starker as sea levels rise and storms grow more severe.

That is precisely what makes a critical look at our own water management unavoidable. Flanders is struggling not with one water problem, but with two at once: ***too much and too little***. At the end of August 2026, groundwater levels were still low or very low at no fewer than 80% of monitoring sites, reports the Flanders Environment Agency (Vlaamse Milieumaatschappij) [1]: a structural problem that increases the risk of both drought damage and flash flooding during heavy rainfall.

Part of that vulnerability is self-inflicted. Between 2013 and 2024, Flanders sealed more than 21,000 additional hectares of soil, bringing the share of ***pavement coverage to 15.7%***, at a rate of 5.3 hectares per day. Every square metre of

[1] **COORDINATIECOMMISSIE INTEGRAAL WATERBELEID.** ***Op de hoogte van droogte*****. See: Op de hoogte van droogte — Coördinatiecommissie Integraal Waterbeleid.**

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concrete or asphalt is a square metre that can no longer buffer rainwater, and therefore a square metre that increases the flood risk further down the valley[2] (Departement Omgeving, 2024).

Funding is lagging behind as well. The Blue Deal, the Flemish action plan against drought and water scarcity, requires 100 to 150 million euros a year, hydrologist Patrick Willems (KU Leuven) has calculated[3]. Yet the Flemish government is providing only an extra 14 million euros per year for 2025-2026, out of a total budget of 285 million euros for the entire legislative term. Former UN water envoy Henk Ovink calculated that every euro invested in water resilience yields ten euros in avoided damage: an argument that carries hardly any weight in the budget discussions[4].

Ride The Tide is therefore more than a symbolic bike ride: it is an invitation to make that ***gap between rhetoric and investment*** visible. Ride with us from 8 to 11 October 2026, on your own or with your team, for a single day or for the full route, and become part of the story that refuses to accept the water in silence.



The ***International Scheldt Days*** support every initiative that helps create ***public awareness*** of water or environmental problems, that looks towards ***solutions and cooperation***, and that stimulates ***research*** and ***innovation***. Initiatives such as the "***Ride The Tide***" event contribute to ***awareness***; awareness stimulates ***research***, and research results in ***innovation***.

More information and registration: Ride the Tide 2026 FR - Climate Express

2 DEPARTEMENT OMGEVING. ***Verharding.*** **See: Verharding | Departement Omgeving .**
3 GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN. ***Experts dringen aan op extra investering in Blue Deal 2.0.*** **Antwerpen, 24 juni 2025.**
[4] VILT. ***Blue Deal: 'Minstens 100 miljoen per jaar nodig om ons te wapenen tegen klimaatextremen'.*** **See: https://vilt.be/nl/nieuws/blue-deal-minstens-100-miljoen-per-jaar-nodig-om-ons-te-wapenen-tegen-klimaatextremen**