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Minister Kajsa Ollongren visits Mijnwater B.V. power station in Maankwartier district of Heerlen

On Monday 5 March 2018, the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, Kajsa Ollongren paid a working visit to Parkstad Limburg. During her visit to Heerlen, she spent time in the Maankwartier area of the city, where Louis Hiddes of Mijnwater B.V. explained to her how this new urban district is heated and cooled using sustainable energy. A look around the power station fired her imagination.

Minister Kajsa Ollongren knew of their existence but had never seen a mine-water power station from the inside before. She didn't know what to expect as she and her entourage entered the power station below the Maankwartier district, where impressive heat pumps, buffer tanks, and digitally-controlled systems ensure the right supply of energy to all the flats, the Jumbo supermarket on Maanplein, the offices, and in the near future also a hotel and the station in the southern part of the Maankwartier district. She also saw how the return flows (heat that is released from the refrigeration units at the Jumbo supermarket, for instance) are used to complete the energy cycle. The minister was very impressed.

Continued development of the technology

The Netherlands is facing a complex task: it needs to boost sustainability, which is not merely a matter of connection to a heat-distribution grid; the country needs to devise an integrated approach to the problem or question in order to set up the right measures for each building. By continuing to develop the technology, Mijnwater B.V. now has around 200,000 m² of indoor space (homes and offices) connected. So far, this equates to 270 homes, various office buildings, schools, a crèche, a sports hall, and two supermarkets. The centre of Heerlerheide will be expanded with the addition of 153 terraced houses, 96 back-to-back houses, and 60 porch-access flats. As already mentioned, the final 38 flats of the 111 new homes in the Maankwartier district will be connected this year, along with the hotel and the station. The technology can also be used in built environments throughout the Netherlands and abroad. As the first geothermal project in a Dutch built environment, Mijnwater is tasked with scaling up the operation for the whole of Parkstad Limburg.

Major steps have already been taken from the simple utilization of the ground as a geothermal facility to a system whereby the unusable residual energy flows in the built environment are actively and/or passively upgraded and reused. The underground space - the mine galleries - are used as geothermal buffers.

11,000 homes connected in 2022

At present, there is an action plan relating to around 2,000 homes owned by housing corporations in Parkstad Limburg. The execution of the first projects will begin before the end of this year (2018). The intended cooperation with Parkstad should ultimately lead to the creation of a blueprint for the Palet 3.0 implementation programme for the connection of more than 11,000 homes throughout Parkstad in the period from 2018 to 2021/2022.