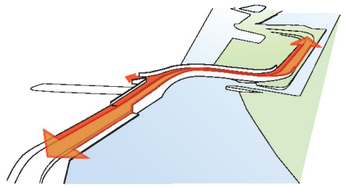
The starting point for the design is a mutual benefit for both people and nature: nature increases the liveability of the area for the residents of the Westland. NEXT involved ecologists such as the bat-expert Marcel Schillemans from the Mammal Society at an early stage of the design process. Obtaining the insight that the project is located along a flight route of several bat species, which cross the water to catch small insects, NEXT architects realized a bridge that provides a unique opportunity to house bats.

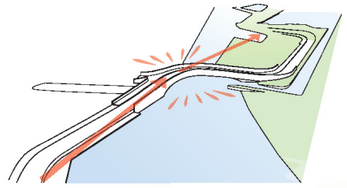
BAT BRIDGE

The Vlotwateringbrug or popularly 'batbridge' has three specific components that provide roost for several bat species. At the north side the abutment functions as a winter stay. The deck and the brick balustrade accommodate stays for bats during the summer. The bridge design is intended to constitute the ideal habitat for various species of bats, aiming to grow a large colony.

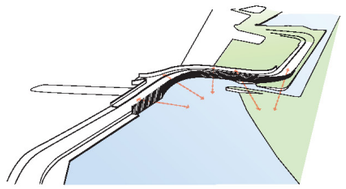
To optimize the suitability of the bridge for bats, the structure is made out of concrete. The mass of the concrete provides a stable and pleasant climate. The underside of the bridge is provided with entrance slots. The openings have a rough finish for grip. The slots are part of a pattern of grooves in the concrete arch. Clever use is made of the structural space in the cross section to implement the roosts.
The new bridge over Vlotwatering winds in a surprising way between two existing parcels and marks the entrance of the Poelzone. The bridge's curving form – designed to offer a place to pause and take in views of the surrounding area provides a new crossing for pedestrians and cyclists. At the highest point, the bridge makes a turn for a clear view of the area. The wooden lamellas provide openness to the natural banks along the water. For the continuity of the route the bridge is visually extended and the profile and materials of the bicycle-pedestrian path are identical as used in the park.



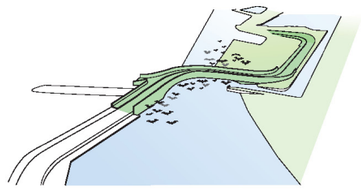
CONTINUITY ROUTE



BRIDGE AS ENTRANCE OF THE ROUTE

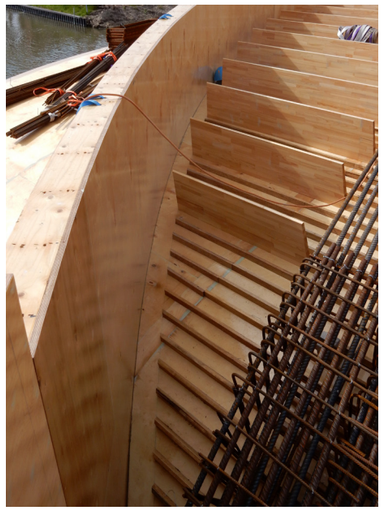


ASYMMETRY FOR TARGETED OPENNESS



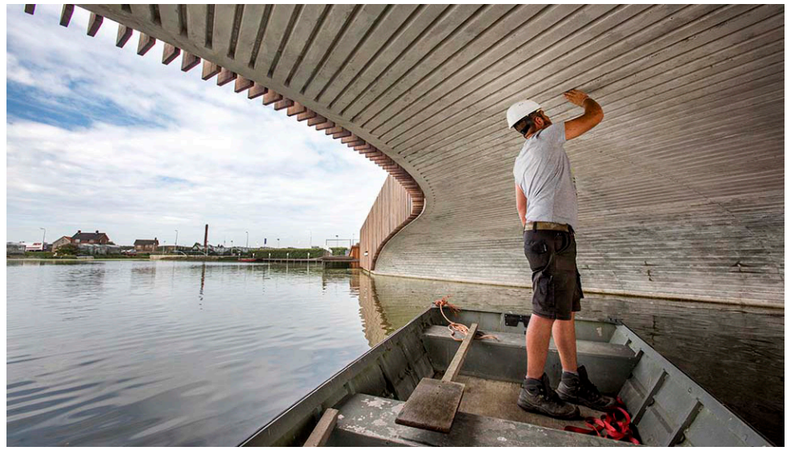
BAT ACCOMODATIONS AS PART OF THE MAIN ROUTE

THE VLOTWATERINGBRIDGE BRIDGE PROVIDES A NEW CROSSING FOR PEDESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS AND IS SIMULTANEOUSLY DESIGNED TO HOUSE BATS



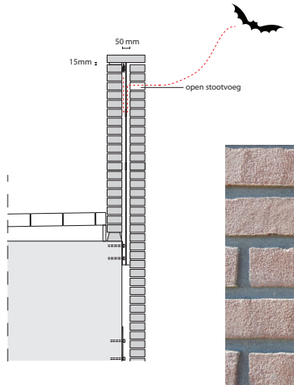
HERMAN LIMPEN FROM THE NETHERLAND'S MAMMAL SOCIETY, ONE OF THE LEADING EXPERTS IN BAT BEHAVIOUR: "THERE IS NO OTHER BRIDGE LIKE IT THAT IS SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED TO HOUSE BATS"

THE BRIDGE DESIGN IS INTENDED TO CONSTITUTE THE IDEAL HABITAT FOR VARIOUS BAT SPECIES, AIMING TO GROW A LARGE COLONY

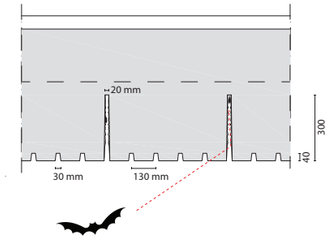


ACCESS GAPS FOR BATS TO SUMMER ACCOMODATIONS IN THE CONCRETE MASS UNDER THE BRIDGE

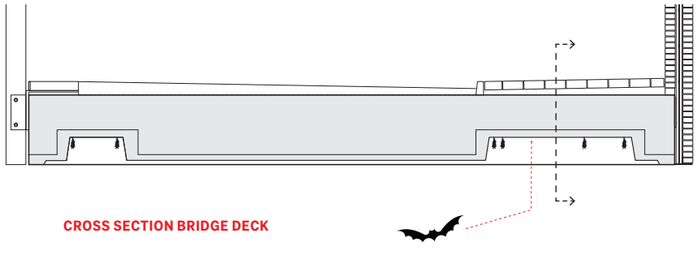
The bridge has to be special and unique, but also has to blend in its surroundings. By applying bricks and wood on the sides of the concrete bridge, the materialization aligns in a natural way with the landscape design of the Poelzone. The concrete bridge is finished with baked bricks and wooden slats. These are low-maintenance materials that age beautifully.



MASONRY BALUSTRADE



GAPS AND GROOVES IN BRIDGE DECK



CROSS SECTION BRIDGE DECK