

Leuven Ecozone is a big success

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The Leuven Ecozone was set up on the initiative of the City of Leuven and bpost in April 2022. Within Ecozones bpost delivers parcels, letters and newspapers emission-free to a finely meshed network of existing pick-up points, including parcel lockers, using a fleet of 13 bike trailers and 46 electric vans. Eighteen months on, the Leuven Ecozone has clearly been a rousing success. Four of the five most popular parcel locker locations in the key hub cities across Flanders are in Leuven. Zero-emission deliveries are the norm in the city centre and carbon emissions per parcel have been slashed by 88% compared with 2018. City of Leuven and bpost have also decided to enlarge the Leuven Ecozone.

A number of key drivers are involved in the success of an Ecozone. A finely meshed network of existing pick-up points (post office, post points and parcel points), supplemented by parcel lockers, has to be rolled out and a completely green city delivery fleet adopted. The results show that this has gone well in Leuven.

"Ecozones are clearly paying off. The more investments in green parcel delivery, the less pollution. Not only in Leuven, but in the rest of the country, e-commerce is colouring ever greener as a result. We have already made great strides with more parcel lockers, electric cars and more. Let's continue to build on this success," summed up Minister of Public Enterprises Petra De Sutter.

The success of parcel lockers

Currently, there are parcel lockers at 27 locations across Leuven, comprising 624 lockers in total. And inhabitants of Leuven are clearly happy to use them. Leuven is home to four of the five most popular parcel locker locations in the key hub cities across Flanders. These are De Bruul park, De Becker-Remyplein, De Bron and Fonteinstraat. The Fonteinstraat and De Bruul park lockers have an occupancy rate of more than 70%. Most other locker locations in Leuven have an

occupancy rate of 50-70%.

No fewer than 103,785 parcels passed through lockers in Leuven between November 2021 – when the Ecozone project launched – and June 2023. The lockers in Leuven are mainly used to receive rather than send parcels. Inhabitants pick up five times more parcels than they drop off. Parcel locker usage more than doubled between 2021 and 2022, and has continued to rise in 2023. The success of the parcel lockers has also driven down the share of home deliveries in Leuven by 6%. On the back of that success, in the next few weeks City of Leuven and bpost are set to install parcel lockers at two further locations: Spaanse Kroon and Blauwputplein in Kessel-Lo.

Together with the 16 staffed pick-up points (post offices, post points and parcels points), the parcel lockers create a finely meshed network within walking distance of every inhabitant of Leuven. A large proportion of the parcel lockers are located at transport hubs, known in Flanders as Hoppin points. This a deliberate strategy. City of Leuven offers transport services and sustainable initiatives at Hoppin points to boost the uptake and profile of sustainable transport.

Jos Donvil, CEO bpost Belgium: "The people of

Leuven contribute to the success of this Ecozone, as do our postwomen and men. They use the dense network of pick-up points intensively, which, together with the use of sustainable vehicles, is driving down carbon emissions sharply, leading to healthier air for all to breathe. We are proud to be able to contribute to the community in a positive way. bpost has set itself ambitious environmental targets and Ecozones play an important role in that. For example, the sustainable delivery model we have adopted in Leuven will be rolled out to a further 25 cities by 2025.”

Sustainability advances

The project drives significant advances in terms of sustainability for both bpost and users. Using bike trailers and reorganising delivery rounds enables bpost to cut the daily distance covered with fossil fuel-powered vehicles by an estimated 240 kilometres. That corresponds to 87,600 fewer kilometres per year, slashing bpost’s carbon emissions per parcel by 88% compared with 2018. The Ecozone also unlocks a considerable sustainability advantage for parcel locker users, 98% of whom visit lockers in a sustainable way given that they are located at a short distance.

“All those home deliveries generate a lot of extra work and emissions. The establishment of this Ecozone with additional parcel lockers and net zero-carbon delivery clearly has a positive impact on quality of life and road safety in our city. We are delighted with these initial results,” says David Dessers, transport portfolio holder. “The Ecozone is also a great addition to other sustainable city logistics initiatives, such as ‘Wij.Leveren’, the digital distribution platform for parcels we’re setting up with some neighbouring municipalities.”

Pluses for local traders

The Ecozone is also a source of added value for local traders in Leuven. Many of them have their own online store and they deliver orders to parcel lockers. The network also offers them the option of placing a sale in a parcel locker for customers who are unable to make it to their store within opening hours. Customers can pick up their shopping directly without the involvement of bpost.

Alderman for Trade Johan Geleyns knows that many customers are keen to take advantage of this opportunity: “Today’s consumers find it an added value that their product is available when it suits them. In a parcel locker, a parcel does not get lost with the neighbours or get wet under garden furniture. There is no queue in a post office, and you can pick up when it suits you. So you can have those purchases at your favourite Leuven shop in no time at all without any worries. A win-win for both trader and consumer.”

Continuation

City of Leuven and bpost began collaborating on the Ecozone in November 2021. The two parties have now decided to continue the partnership for a further 24 months after the pilot period ends in October 2023. Over the coming months they will examine the business case for installing parcel lockers and opening pick-up points at additional locations to enhance the service to the inhabitants of Leuven. At the same time, bpost will continue to invest in the transition to electric vehicles so that zero-emission deliveries can be extended to other suburbs. The centre of Leuven is already exclusively a zero-emission delivery zone, while most deliveries in Heverlee are emission-free.

Source: [bpost](#)