

# Don't water down our future!

Election programme 2023-2027



Student & Water



## Our candidates



**1. Ale ten Cate**



**2. Dewi Koster**



**3. Bram Buigel**



**4. Julia Hofma**

5. Matthias Luijks
6. Myrthe Smit
7. Hannah Jelkmann
8. Leon van der Deure
9. Marc de Groot
10. Jennifer van der Graaf
11. Jesse van Mulkom
12. Hedwig Geuchies
13. Ruben Wagenvoort
14. Jaëlle Straat
15. Jochem Uitham
16. Karlijn van den Berg
17. Jorre van der Berg
18. Sarah Kamp
19. Luca Walhof
20. Elke Sander
21. Joost van der Laan

22. Isabelle Schultink
23. Stijn van Hussen
24. Lousan Zieverink
25. Jeroen Zuidberg
26. Verena Erich
27. Casper Kamstra
28. Suus Meirink
29. Remco van der Velde
30. Wyona van de Poel
31. Kas Bijker
32. Pleun Engelhart
33. Tim Oosterveld
34. Jos Ronduite
35. Sander van Duin
36. Christiaan Brinkhuis
37. Vera Spanjer



## What is a Waterschap?

*Waterschappen* in The Netherlands are responsible for the management and maintenance of the country's water systems. This includes controlling water levels, preventing flooding, cleaning, maintaining water bodies and water-courses, and ensuring safe drinking water.

They are governed by elected councils and operate on a regional basis, typically covering a specific river basin or area. Waterschappen are funded through water taxes and fees, which are levied on residents and businesses in their area. The revenues generated are used to finance their operations and carry out maintenance and improvement works.

### How to vote?

All adults that legally reside in the area governed by the waterschap get to decide who takes place in the elected governing council. This includes EU citizens and other inhabitants with a valid residence permit<sup>1</sup>.

You should receive your *stempas* (voter registration card) by mail on March 1st at latest. To vote on March 15, take your *stempas* and a valid form of identification (European passport, European ID card or residence permit) to your nearest polling station. There you'll find us as list number 9 on the ballot!

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1 Elections of the Water authority. Kiesraad.



## Preface

**Student & Water** is a young and innovative party, focussed on rejuvenating and future-proofing the Waterschappen Noorderzijlvest. We believe that a new wave should come to the Waterschappen Noorderzijlvest: one that gives young people a voice that is more diverse and sustainable.

Our party will fight for a broader approach to the consequences of climate change, in which an active and honest role of the Waterschappen is central. We believe that the Waterschappen should turn its attention towards technology and innovation. Therefore, we can guarantee the long-term improvement of water quality and nature as it continues to deteriorate. Instead of waiting until it is too late, we want action now!

The Waterschappen elections are being held again on March 15, 2023. For the first time, you can vote for a party that is a voice for all generations, populations, and businesses. A party that makes decisions with foreseeability. Let's use our voices to ensure the future!

Curious about our plans? Read our election program below.

**Ale ten Cate, Dewi Koster, Bram Buigel and Julia Hofma**  
*Candidate list Student & Water 2023-2027*

## Our party

Student & Water is an initiative of (former) students of the University of Groningen who have been active within the university's participation bodies. During a conversation about the Provincial Council and Waterschappen elections, we noticed that many students and young people have little or no knowledge about these bodies. We thought that was a shame, so we decided to initiate change ourselves: why not just participate?

Our mission is to get young people and students to utilize their right to vote and be represented in the Waterschappen. With our campaign, we want to create more awareness for the Waterschappen and get more students and young people involved. Together, we advocate for a green and diverse policy of the Waterschappen that ensures the environment's future.



*Co-chairs Ale ten Cate & Dewi Koster, and number 3 Bram Buigel  
at the offices of Waterschap Noorderzijlvest in Groningen*

## Why should you vote for the Waterschap elections?

The Waterschap's responsibilities include the storage, conservation, and quality management of the water that is around us. With climate change, some issues are becoming increasingly important, such as water runoff. How do we make sure our Waterschap keeps up with the times? In addition, how do we ensure that residents and the Waterschap Noorderzijlvest board will work together? By voting, you can influence the Waterschap's policy to ensure that there will still be quality water in the future.

## What are we about?

### Recreation

- No more blue-green algae in swimming water
- More room for water sports

### Diversity & Involvement

- Young people represented in the board
- Lessons in schools
- Increasing awareness about the water board

### Sustainability

- Innovation & technology
- Reducing waste water
- Awareness & Responsibility



## Theme 1: Recreation

The Waterschappen are responsible for the management and maintenance of recreational lakes and other wetlands. It is essential for water quality to remain optimal so that people can continue to enjoy it. For example, this is the same water in which people swim or row. The water quality of surface water in the Netherlands, including in our Waterschap, is currently insufficient<sup>1</sup>.

### More Recreation

There are limited opportunities for recreational swimming in and around the city of Groningen. Waterschap Noorderzijlvest monitors summer swimming water at fewer than 20 locations, many of which are near the Lauwersmeer<sup>2</sup>. The limited choice of swimming options leads to overcrowded (city) beaches, where noise pollution and litter are recurring problems. By creating more recreational opportunities in Groningen and surrounding towns, visitors will be more dispersed. This is better for overall quality of life, and will ensure that fewer people go swimming in undesignated places.

The Waterschap owns several bodies of water and is responsible for its management and maintenance. These private sites owned by the Waterschap can be used for this

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- 1 Waterkwaliteit KRW, 2022 Compendium voor de Leefomgeving.
  - 2 Zwemwater. Waterschap Noorderzijlvest.

purpose, which would require a change in the zoning plan. Therefore, we would like to meet with the municipality to discuss possibilities and our proposals.

#### **What do we want to achieve?**

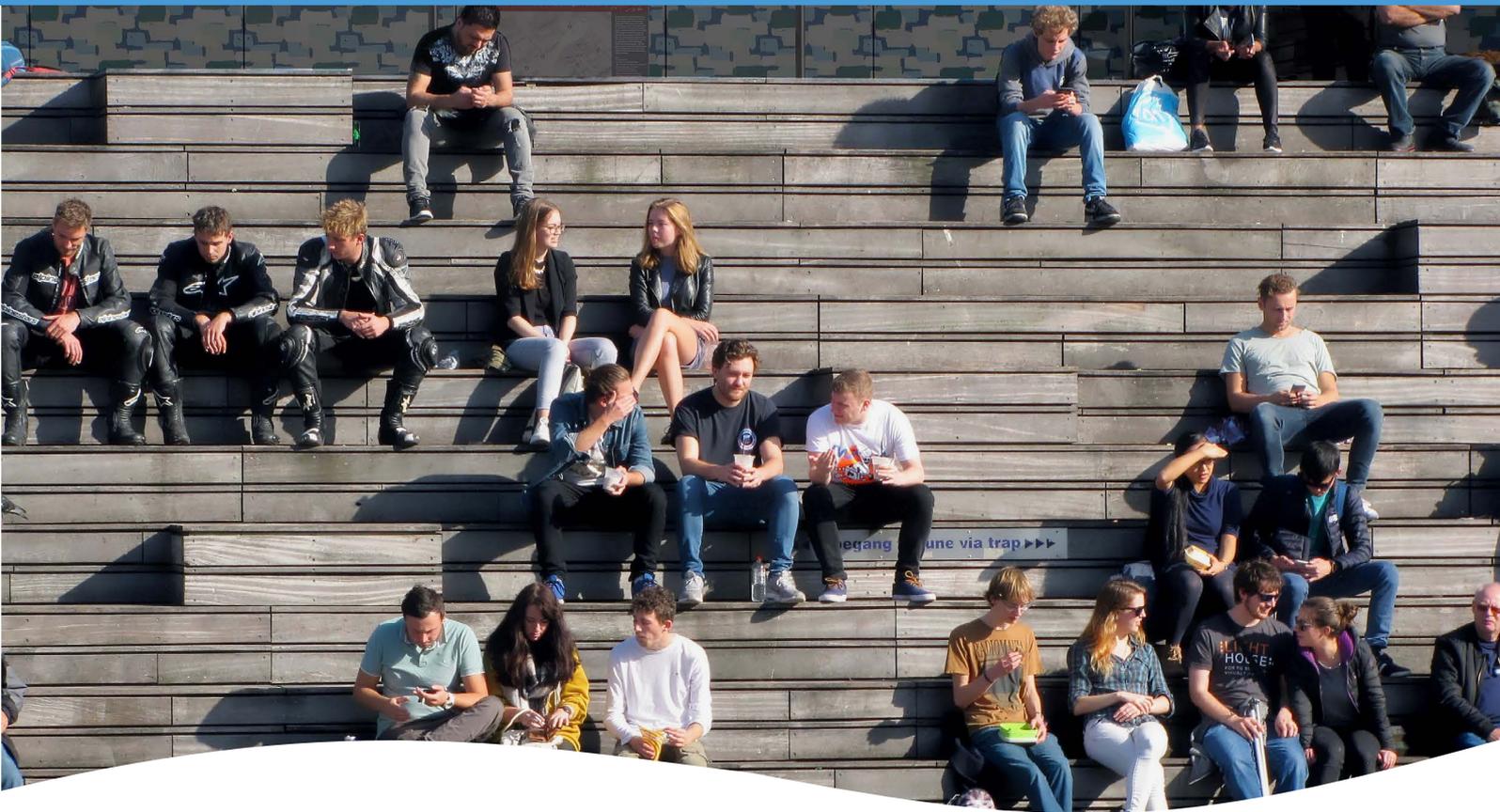
- More recreational opportunities in the Waterschap, more control of swimming water
- Opening up Waterschap maintenance roads for hikers and cyclists
- Opening up green zones and areas owned by Waterschap Noorderzijlvest

### **Existing Recreation**

People who want to use recreational facilities in and around the City of Groningen during the summer are already familiar with the recurring situation: waking up to a news report that a swimming lake has been closed because of blue-green algae or swimmer's itch. Student & Water wants improved water-quality so that these problems will not reoccur in the future. In addition, as a result of improved water-quality, fishers will also have better access to these waters.

#### **What do we want to achieve?**

- Maintenance and improved design of the areas
- Using innovative solutions, for example technical interventions in cooperation with the RUG, Hanzehogeschool and multiple trade schools.
- Dealing with blue-green algae faster with frequent measurements of swimming spots



## Theme 2: Diversity & Involvement

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing this generation. The choices made now will decide our future, and directly impact the lives of young people. The policies of the Waterschap Noorderzijlvest should take into account the interests of youth and students. Furthermore, the forward-thinking national trends in politics must be extended in the Waterschappen.

### Diversifying the Waterschappen

Currently, the average age of the Waterschappen is over 60 and the male-to-female ratio is 72-28%<sup>1</sup>. The Waterschap's policies influence us all, so adequate representation is imperative. Therefore, Student & Water advocates for radical rejuvenation, which can be achieved by having younger board members who are in touch with this generation. We aim to work on gender diversity, including the perspective of different stakeholders, and collaborating with various organizations.

#### What do we want to achieve?

- A seat on the general board of Waterschap Noorderzijlvest

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1 Staat van Bestuur 2020. Ministerie Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties.

- Having our supporters think with us about the policies that we have and the direction of Waterschap Noorderzijlvest

## **Involvement**

To increase the involvement of as many young people as possible, Student & Water wants to focus on collaboration with MBO, HBO and WO students. The city of Groningen has a lot of knowledge and potential due to the presence of various institutions. Therefore, we aim to tap into the potential of students. In addition to students, we aim to increase involvement with other groups of young people.

By collaborating with our institutions, we can introduce new innovations and techniques, address local problems with local solutions, and network to involve businesses. Our goal is to introduce the renewal of our Waterschap by having young people and students participate early on in solving the challenges facing Noorderzijlvest.

### **What do we want to achieve?**

- Create involvement among young people in general. For example, we would like to give guest lessons in social studies at secondary schools to talk about the Waterschappen and the topics of interest to young people
- Collaborate with educational institutions, by involving both companies and government (MBO/HBO/WO students)

## **International Students**

In addition to Dutch residents, international students/residents that are (legally) residing in the Netherlands also have the right to vote in the Waterschappen elections. This group pays Waterschap taxes, but is generally unaware that they have the right to participate in elections. Moreover, the website of the Waterschap and the election programs of the parties are available only in Dutch; residents who do not speak Dutch within Waterschap Noorderzijlvest currently have limited access to information. Therefore, it is imperative to raise awareness among all young people that reside in our Waterschap, not only those who speak Dutch. Student & Water wants to increase accessibility for all residents and provide an English translation of the organization.

### **What do we want to achieve?**

- Increase accessibility by translating the Waterschap Noorderzijlvest's website into English
- Call on other parties to publish their election programs in English as well, so all residents can make properly informed decisions

## Awareness & Responsibility

Residents of the Noorderzijlvest Waterschap generally have a limited idea of what this organization can do for them and vice versa. Student & Water campaigns to raise awareness about efficient water consumption, pollution, and our own personal responsibility. People know about subsidence or climate change, but how can we create substantive change with help from the Waterschap?

Urban greening (including residential neighborhoods) is key for addressing heavy rainfall or extreme heat. Cities such as Haarlem and Gorinchem have already launched campaigns to green their neighborhoods, and subsequently giving residents the tools to take action themselves. Grants or loans for green initiatives are currently available in several municipalities<sup>2</sup>. In addition to offering the subsidies, we aim to generate a specific campaign set up to better inform residents. In addition, cooperation with organizations and educational institutions can ensure public awareness of decisions and sustainability.

### What do we want to achieve?

- Encourage greening of neighborhoods by its own residents through available grants from the municipalities
- Create a campaign, in cooperation with provinces and municipalities to mobilize residents

## Restructuring the Waterschappen

Many responsibilities and tasks around the water sector are split between the municipality and the Waterschappen. This makes it difficult for initiatives and innovation to get off the ground. In addition, responsibility is also passed on. We want to improve the positioning of the Waterschappen in relation to municipalities and provinces so that the vast expertise of the Waterschappen can be more optimized. It must be made easier to have national discussions about Waterschap taxes and price mechanisms for (large) polluters.

### What do we want to achieve?

- Clear positioning of the Waterschappen in relation to other bodies
- Improve cooperation with provinces, municipalities, and government
- More room for national discussions about pollution and to ensure our future

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2      Subsidie klimaatmaatregelen gemeente Groningen. Verbeter je huis.nl



## Theme 3: Sustainability

Waterschappen are important organizations that ensure the safety, health and livability of our environment. Climate change will bring about major changes, such as a rise in water levels and the associated risk of flooding<sup>1</sup>. Cooperation, innovation and technology must therefore be a focal point within the Waterschappen.

### Circular Economy

The Waterschap has the crucial role of responding to current and future developments. Student & Water wants to see greater commitment to circularity, and a focus on reusing products and recycling raw materials. Some raw materials, such as phosphate, are in limited supply on Earth.

Phosphate is mainly used for fertilizer and is needed for agriculture. When too much (artificial) fertilizer is used, it accumulates in the soil. The phosphate can then leach into surface water, affecting both biodiversity and water quality<sup>2</sup>. For example, this can lead to problems with water due to extreme algae growth. In the Netherlands, there is a phosphate surplus in the form of phosphate-rich animal manure. There is a globally

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- 1 Hoe zit het met de zeespiegelstijging? Nationaal Deltaprogramma.
  - 2 Dossier: Fosfaat. Wageningen University.

limited supply, and due to population growth, demand is exponentially increasing<sup>3</sup>. If we lose our supply of phosphate, the food supply will be endangered.

Student & Water believes that raw materials should be used more consciously. In addition, we must prevent raw materials from being unused in surface water through recovering as many products as possible from wastewater.

### **What do we want to achieve?**

- Insist on more conscious use of raw materials
- Recovering raw materials from wastewater

## **Knowledge-Based Economy and Employment**

The Netherlands is one of the countries that will be extremely impacted by the effects of climate change due to the country being below sea level. Currently, the Netherlands is not working hard enough to make impactful changes. With the vast knowledge we have in the North, it is essential to seize the economic opportunities for employment and generate a shift in both thinking and practice.

Waterschap Noorderzijlvest must simultaneously focus on strengthening the water sector, product development, and consider new innovative technology. This aligns with initiatives currently being organized. For example, the University of the North is focussed on a knowledge and innovation network, centralized on prosperity in northern regions. Their aim is to transition from a linear to a circular economy. The North is an environment where research can be done with the use of green energy. Furthermore, we have an opportunity for Noorderzijlvest to be leaders when ensuring our future through sustainability.

## **Water Storage**

We need to make more space to store water. In addition to large storages in the countryside, for example, more water must be retained in residential areas. When it rains heavily, a lot of rainwater flows into the sewers; not only is it wasteful, but the capacity of the sewers is limited. If rainwater can be temporarily stored somewhere, it could be used by the plants and trees present. A wadi (water drainage and infiltration) is a green ditch that occasionally runs dry and can collect water in times of heavy precipitation<sup>4</sup>. When the wadi is dry, it can be used as a playground, for example. Student & Water wants more wadis to be constructed in residential areas where it is advantageous or even necessary.

3 Fosfaatkringloop niet sluitend: 'straks is het op'. WageningenWorld.

4 'Een wadi kun je eigenlijk overal aanleggen'. Kennisportaal Klimaatadaptatie

## What do we want to achieve?

- Urge municipalities and cities to install wadis in new and existing residential areas

## Protecting Water Sources

Current treatment processes are unable to adequately remove pollutants such as microplastics and PFAS from wastewater. Pharmaceuticals are also difficult to remove from water<sup>5,6</sup>. In addition, filtration will be more expensive if more treatment steps are required<sup>7</sup>. These substances pose both environmental and health threats, as microplastics have already shown to be contaminating our drinking water<sup>8</sup>. Known sources of



*Een voorbeeld van een wadi uit Putten, Gelderland (Nanda Sluijsmans)*

microplastics are both litter and household wastewater. Wastewater contains microplastics from washing synthetic clothing, used cosmetics, and detergents<sup>9</sup>.

Due to the intensive use of nitrate in agriculture and processing industries, a lot of nitrate ends up in surface and groundwater, and subsequently drinking water. Due to the rising concentration of nitrate in our drinking water sources, the quality is deteri-

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5 Jaarplan 2023: 'Koers houden in onzekere tijden'. Waterschap Noorderzijlvest.

6 Hoe kun je geneesmiddelen uit drinkwater verwijderen? Vakblad H<sup>2</sup>O.

7 Duurzaam geneesmiddelengebruik: bestaat dat?. ZonMW.

8 "More research into microplastics and a crackdown on plastic pollution". WHO.

9 Microplastics in water. Unie van Waterschappen.

orating rapidly. This can make our water sources unusable or make purification increasingly difficult and more expensive<sup>10</sup>. Student & Water is committed to addressing pollution at the source.

### What do we want to achieve?

- Research should be conducted into new, more accurate treatment of wastewater
- Insist on reducing nitrate use
- Local treatment of drugs from hospital wastewater should be looked into
- Urge (local) governments to reduce littering
- In cooperation with provinces and municipalities, create awareness among consumers about household sources of microplastics. Litter entering water from the environment should be collected and recycled more appropriately
- The design of wetlands should be analyzed. For example, reeds can be used in strategic locations for water purification<sup>11</sup>. Technological solutions, such as the *bubble barrier*<sup>12</sup>, kunnen worden ingezet in kanalen om plastic naar de oevers te sturen waar het makkelijker opgeruimd kan worden.

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10 Kwaliteit van bronnen voor drinkwater steeds meer onder druk. KWR.

11 Rietteelt als mogelijke bouwsteen voor een duurzaam water- en bodembeheer in natte veengebieden. Plant Research International, Wageningen University.

12 The Great Bubble Barrier (<https://thegreatbubblebarrier.com>)

## Sustainable Agriculture

With the major changes and regulations that farmers are going to face, the future needs to look at an innovative & sustainable way of farming. Due to land subsidence and biodiversity conservation, water levels are often kept high. This has effects on the agricultural sector. Since holding back water is not an efficient solution in the long run, we will have to start looking into crops that grow well in wet soils, for example.

Student & Water wants to give the farmer a helping hand by focusing on closer cooperation between organizations, natural areas and knowledge institutions. We need to look at how we can prepare agriculture for climate, nature, and policy changes. This could include looking at wet agriculture, which is already being experimented with in the Netherlands<sup>13</sup>.

### What do we want to achieve?

- Commit to sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture that fits the local landscape



*A farm in the polder near Warffum*

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13 Natte landbouw in het Dommelgebied? Waterschap De Dommel.



## Conclusion

The residents of Waterschap Noorderzijlvest are very diverse: (international) students, families, farmers, entrepreneurs, starters, the elderly and many other population groups. Student & Water wants to cater to these differences. We stand for a Waterschap that will adjust accordingly to our different interests and incentives. In doing so, we want to achieve better representation of young people and women in our Waterschap.

Below we summarize our plans for the improved representation of young people, a more diverse Waterschap, and restoration of water quality and nature.

### Onze plannen

- Making our Waterschap Noorderzijlvest future-proof by rejuvenating the General Board the party;
- More recreational opportunities in the Waterschap Noorderzijlvest and opening up nature and maintenance roads;
- Cleaner swimming water to prevent swimming bans;
- Creating more social involvement by collaborating with knowledge institutions;
- A campaign on smart water use, pollution, and climate adaptation;

- Campaigns for more green neighborhoods through subsidies;
- Better research on wastewater treatment to minimize residual waste production;
- Smarter design of wetlands and using plants in water treatment;
- More attention to innovative, technological developments;
- Flood areas must be properly mapped and residents informed;
- The Waterschappen should provide information in English for international residents and taxpayers.
- There should be a shift of focus in the agricultural sector

Help us implement our plans and make the Waterschap work better for everyone.

**Vote Student & Water in the Waterschap elections on the 15th of March 2023!**



# Student & Water

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