

## **Western Scheldt Dike, Doel, East-Flanders Province, Belgium.**

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**Western Scheldt Dike, Doel, East-Flanders Province, Belgium.** People have always been lured to the Scheldt by its rich estuarine environment since times immemorial. If not for the fish, then for the river's rich agricultural lands on its banks or the ample peat deposits that were extracted around the village of Doel, and there was, of course, the ease of marine transport that it allowed between settlements, ultimately resulting in the development of the port of Antwerp further along the estuary into one of the largest ports in the world. With these increased levels of development came the need for more energy. Thus, also came into existence the windmill (as seen on the left of the photograph). It is remarkable that the mill was not built on the dike but rather is pressed into it. It is fair to conclude the dike was built mostly around the mill, as it was already there well before the initial big dike works of 1614. In fact, it was already mentioned in historic writings of the time as a working grain windmill. But alas, it could not keep up with the changing times and in 1927, it milled its last grain. Yet the ever-growing need for energy endured, and in 1967 the construction of the nuclear power plant commenced (as shown in the background). Currently, Doel is no longer the sprawling polder village with nearly 1400 people of days gone by, and while it has become somewhat of a local tourist destination, it may soon be absorbed by the port of Antwerp altogether. People have a special relationship with the coast — we live on it, we interact with it, we construct it, we reconstruct it — what a fascinating landscape the coastal lands and their study truly do grant us! (Photograph taken 15 August 2021 by Dr. Erik Van Wellen, Maverick Enterprise, Antwerpen, Belgium.)