

NETHERLANDS

The registration, protection and preservation of monuments and historic sites in the Netherlands are in accordance with international standards. There are no serious shortcomings with these procedures, although there are many aspects for which special attention should be requested. These concern the backlog in maintenance and management and the protection of complex structures – such as lines of fortifications and historic parks – in urban and rural areas. Problems of this kind arise even at large-scale World Heritage sites, such as the Defensive Line of Amsterdam and the New Dutch Waterline (tentative list). In addition, the legal frameworks are an area of concern. The high degree of urbanisation requires an effective legislation. In this respect the Dutch legislation does not reach far enough, especially in the protection of areas whose significance is based on combined cultural and natural values.

Especially alarming is the situation of monument conservation on Curaçao, the main island of the Netherlands Antilles, which is a self-governed part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Due to the economic crisis on Curaçao, the restoration of historic buildings has practically stopped. We fear that essential parts of the World Heritage in Willemstad, especially the areas containing public housing and some large stately homes, will continue to decay (see also *H@R Report 2000*, p. 138/139).

In the field of archaeological heritage management, the Netherlands is about to adopt a law ratifying the Valetta Treaty. Procedures in this country are already adapted to these new regulations, but in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba the laws still have to be adapted.

Conservation Policy

The Dutch conservation policy consists of several aspects, such as the selection and listing of monuments, townscapes, rural sites and historic gardens, legislation and financing for restoration and maintenance, historic urbanism, town and country planning and international affairs. The Historic Buildings and Monuments Act (Monumentenwet) of 1988 forms the framework for further legislation. The Netherlands Department for Conservation (Rijksdienst voor de Monumentenzorg, abbr. RDMZ) is the main actor in the field, responsible for upholding these laws. As many of the monuments are privately owned, private initiative is indispensable. Nationwide, some 1000 private organisations (NGOs) deal with monuments, or with special categories of monuments. The overall policy is no longer focused on restoration, but on upkeep and avoiding neglect.

In the Netherlands there are more than 47,000 monuments listed by the State, of which the major part dates from before 1850, and more than 300 protected townscapes and rural sites. In addition to this, many monuments profit from municipal (30,000) or provincial protection. After 15 years of work, we expect to conclude a survey in 2001 concerning the selection and registration of examples of modern town planning and architecture of the period 1850–1940. The result will be an extension of the national list, which will increase to more than 50,000 monuments.

During the last few years, strategies have been developed to preserve the whole context of a monument, both in space and time. This particularly applies to the valuable structures such as rural estates, fortifications, lines of defence, canal zones and post-war reconstruction architecture in their context of urban planning. A number of Dutch World Heritage Sites, such as The Defence Line of Amsterdam and the Mill Network at Kinderdijk, Schokland and



Museum Paul Tétar van Elven in Delft; not all historic interiors are in such a good condition.

the Beemster Polder can be rated among these complex structures. Protection and dynamic development of these large-scale sites is a severe challenge. Their size and complexity require an integrated approach for maintaining the whole area, with respect to content and financial aspects. This way of conservation, related to urban and landscape planning, is a new challenge that has to find its place in the ongoing process of spatial planning.

Private housing initiatives

2001 is the centennial year of the first Housing-Act of the Netherlands. This law improved the quality of public housing, both in the quality of living circumstances and in the architecture. Several initiatives have dealt with the same theme of housing: a symposium entitled 'The Historic Interior' and the Dutch Heritage Day-theme 'At Home'. As stated above, Holland is not a country renowned for its palaces and large stately homes; the majority of Dutch listed monuments consist of private houses, determining the character of Dutch towns and villages. Many private houses dating from the early 20th century have recently been added to the official list of monuments. Out of 47,000 listed monuments, 31,000 belong to the category of private housing. However, many houses and especially the interiors are at risk. Most private monuments are listed for their exterior, while insufficient information on the interiors is available. This creates problems with the execution of the monument act. The State has started a large-scale project to improve the description of all monuments, including the interior. A second problem is the lack of motivation of owners to restore or even to maintain their monument. The system of subvention does not stimulate this sufficiently. Subvention is generally granted for the restoration of the construction, not for the interior, which is therefore largely neglected. The redefinition of the rules for subvention is currently in discussion.

Shared Heritage

In the scope of international affairs, special attention has to be drawn to the mutual heritage from the time of the West Indian Company, which is in an alarming position, especially on the island of Curaçao as stated above. A restoration plan is in progress on the island of St. Eustatius. Following the work done for the VOC (Dutch East-India Company) Heritage, additional efforts are a prerequisite.