



Heritage Counts

The Meaning of Heritage for Society



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Introduction: the value of heritage

When Dirk Frederik Wouda, an engineer in the Frisian town of Lemmer, decided to build a pumping station to pump excess water into the Zuiderzee in 1913, he could not have anticipated that it would achieve national heritage status. As the chief engineer of the Provincial Water Authority, Wouda was responsible for the building's design. He opted for something modern; the innovative architectural style of the Amsterdam School. Queen Wilhelmina opened the pumping station in 1920. The pumps hissed as they began to run and now Friesland had protection against flooding in bad weather.

As the world's largest steam-powered pumping station still in operation, the Wouda Pumping Station is now one of the Netherlands' heritage icons. In 1977, it was made a listed building by the government. In 1998, the Wouda Pumping Station became a World Heritage site, thanks to its extraordinary architecture and the ingenuity of Dutch hydraulic engineers. Everyone who visits it is impressed by the huge steam-powered machines that have been draining excess water from the Frisian soil for almost a century. Every year, many thousands of visitors, including hundreds of school classes and numerous scientists,

become acquainted with this wonder of technology and gain an impression of working conditions in the steam age.

Across the Netherlands there are windmills, castles, archaeological sites, residential communities and landscapes that keep history alive and appeal to people's emotions. They tell us stories about where we come from, who we are and how we are developing. Against the backdrop of major changes in our living environment, heritage offers familiarity and provides a sense of security and identity. Most importantly, monuments, historic city centres and cultural landscapes have a value in themselves; they represent history and are cherished for their inherent meaning and beauty. We are proud to pass them on to future generations.

Anyone who looks at old photographs of Dutch city centres in the 1970s can see how much has changed. Buildings and squares have been renovated and re-landscaped. The past has emerged from behind old façades. This is the visible result of efforts that were primarily aimed at refurbishing historic buildings. We are now taking the next step and the time has come to give these buildings a new life, to connect our heritage with major challenges in our living environment and make use of

“Across the Netherlands there are windmills, castles, archaeological sites, residential communities and landscapes that keep history alive and appeal to people’s emotions.”

< the unifying value of that heritage. This is the vision that I see as the basis for protecting heritage and keeping it accessible; the conviction that our heritage counts because of its historic value, its value for our living environment and its unifying value.

The government is not only interested in the social and historical value of heritage, but is also making significant financial investments in it; an additional € 325 million will be available in the next few years. In its policy letter *Cultuur in een open samenleving* (Culture in an Open Society), the government elaborated on its plans outlined in the Coalition Agreement.¹ The letter below takes a more specific look at heritage policy. The focus is on conservation and change of use, the living environment and the unifying force of heritage.



Ir. D.F. Woudagemaal • photo: Wouter van der Sar, Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed

¹ Policy letter ‘[Cultuur in een open samenleving](#)’, 12 March 2018.

Challenges

In preparing this letter, discussions were held with the people who manage our heritage and pass it on to future generations: restorers and conservators, owners and volunteers. In working visits across the country, I have spoken to young people and students (including the young people's think-tank Kidsmindz), to spatial planners, monument owners, government bodies and special-interest organizations, such as the Federation for the Conservation of Monuments (*Federatie Instandhouding Monumenten*) and the association representing the interests of the artistic, cultural and heritage sector, *Kunsten '92*.

Use has also been made of the expertise available from the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (*Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed* (RCE)), the Federation representing municipalities with a large number of monuments in their area (*Federatie Grote Monumentengemeenten*), the National Restoration Fund (*Nationaal Restauratiefonds*) and advice has been sought from the Council for Culture (*Raad voor Cultuur*) and the Council for the Living Environment and Infrastructure (*Raad voor de leefomgeving en infrastructuur*).²

At the request of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW), the Ecorys research agency conducted an evaluation of the financial system for the conservation of monuments.³ In general, the current financial system is working effectively. The monument owners, themselves responsible for most of the investments, are being well served. However, some issues remain, both in the long-term conservation of large monuments and in the case of owners who are finding it increasingly difficult to afford their share of spending.

Based on these discussions and this advice, heritage in the Netherlands remains in a good state. Owners, volunteers, government bodies and market players have made significant investments. In addition, since the conservation of monuments was modernized in 2009 and the publication of *Character in Focus, Vision for Heritage in Spatial Planning (Kiezen voor Karakter, Visie Erfgoed en Ruimte)*, there has been an increased focus on heritage in the living environment.⁴ In practice, municipalities are increasingly linking heritage with the local economy, tourism and education. As a result, there is significant and growing interest in the country's heritage.

² Raad voor Cultuur, Raad voor de leefomgeving en infrastructuur, **Brede blik op erfgoed**: over de wisselwerking tussen erfgoed en transitie in de leefomgeving [Council for Culture and the Council for the Living Environment and Infrastructure, broad perspective of heritage; on the interaction between heritage and transitions in the living environment] 18 December 2017,

³ See **Samenhangende evaluatie van het financiële stelsel voor monumentenzorg**, 15 januari 2018.

⁴ Beleidsbrief **modernisering monumentenzorg**, [Policy Letter on modernization of the conservation of monuments], 28 september 2009.

This positive picture is also reflected in the national heritage review and outlook, Heritage Monitor (*Erfgoedbalans*), from 2017, which provides a good overview of the current situation.⁵ The discussions, advice and Heritage Monitor also reveal the need, alongside a continued focus on conservation and restoration, for a wider perspective on heritage: one that connects heritage with the future by breathing new life into old buildings, applying creativity to connect heritage with our living environment and making use of the unifying force of heritage. Based on these insights and armed with the additional funds made available in the Coalition Agreement, my agenda for heritage is as follows:

- Religious heritage, agricultural monuments and green monuments require greater attention. This also applies to archaeological heritage. The government is investing in these.
- Monuments with no obvious economic value also deserve a future. For example, disused churches in depopulated areas.
- If we want our heritage to be of use in the modern world, we need to prepare it for the future. This is why the government is investing in the sustainability of our heritage.
- Knowledge and craftsmanship are essential for the proper care of heritage. The government is investing in expanding knowledge and encouraging expertise.
- The Netherlands faces several major spatial challenges, including the energy transition, climate adaptation, accessibility and the construction of new houses.

As part of these changes, it will be essential both to protect and develop heritage by taking inspiration from the past as we shape an attractive and recognizable living environment. In this process, the Netherlands can rely on its great tradition of creativity and design.

- The government encourages links between heritage and the creative industry. The vision of architects, civil engineers and designers will also prove essential in the future in finding a place for heritage in our living environment.
- This is not just about conservation – it is also an issue of accessibility and meaning for today's society. As the Coalition Agreement states, it is about learning from our heritage and enhancing knowledge of our history. Heritage is for everyone, irrespective of where you live, the family you come from or your cultural background. This is why it is important for stories about heritage to reach as many people – and above all young people – as possible, for these stories to be relevant in today's world and reflect the interests and diverse population of today's Netherlands.
- The intangible heritage of living traditions, stories, customs and traditional crafts has great value. It connects people of different origins with each other and increases engagement with heritage. The government is investing in intangible heritage and believes that a modern approach is important; young designers are taking inspiration from traditional crafts, creating new and contemporary products.

⁵ [Erfgoedbalans 2017](#), 9 februari 2017. Recently, provincial monument monitors were launched in order to assess the structural condition of non-residential monuments.

- In the conservation and appreciation of heritage, volunteers and citizens' initiatives also have an important role to play. This is why grassroots initiatives need to be given space and volunteers who devote themselves to heritage must be valued.

This agenda is reflected in the main themes of the heritage policy; the conservation of our heritage, the living environment and the unifying force of heritage. In achieving these policy plans, efforts will be made to take account of the particular challenges faced in Groningen as a result of the earthquakes.

Interior of the Grote Kerk in Naarden • photo: Roel Bogaards

“There is significant and growing interest in the country’s heritage”

Conservation of heritage

Church buildings, fortifications, windmills, farms and their landscape, industrial complexes and other monumental buildings and areas provide a face for the stories of our villages, towns and cities, and our country. It is important to invest in heritage in order to ensure that these places remain attractive for residents and visitors.

In addition to the existing funds in the OCW budget, the government is making additional investments in monuments and listed buildings, our living environment, green monuments, religious heritage, education programmes and archaeology.

From tax relief to OCW subsidy

A draft bill has been put forward in Parliament proposing the abolition of the tax relief for maintaining private monuments and replacing this with a subsidy scheme. This change originally involved cuts in expenditure to the tune of € 25 million. In the 2017 Spring Statement, these cuts were withdrawn. This government's Coalition Agreement explicitly states its intention to continue to provide support for private owners of monuments. At Parliament's request, various aspects of the tax relief were investigated by the RCE and Ecorys conducted research into the entire financial support

system for national monuments. The results of this research have convinced the government that an integrated system of monument conservation and maintenance in the Netherlands would benefit more from a subsidy scheme for the private maintenance of monuments than the current tax relief. The reasons are as follows:

Quality of implementation

For decades, we have attempted to use building regulations to achieve a careful assessment of the maintenance of and modifications to national monuments. There is a planning permission system, with advice from municipal monument committees, and, in the case of major interventions, the RCE. The municipalities decide whether permission is granted for the work based on that advice. Any work carried out on monuments requires a careful assessment to ensure that the monumental values are respected.

A quality test is applied as standard when applications are made for a subsidy through the Conservation of Monuments Subsidy Scheme (*Subsidieregeling instandhouding monumenten, (Sim)*) or a low-interest loan from the National Restoration Fund. The tax relief on expenditure on monumental buildings is not subject to any such test. The Tax and Customs Administration does not

have the knowledge and expertise of municipalities and/or the RCE to assess whether the maintenance or repair work has been performed properly. The fact that there are concerns about the assessment of quality is revealed by research conducted by the RCE that concludes that no permission was applied for in more than half of the cases of major interventions (involving more than € 100,000 in declared costs).

A quality assessment helps the owner to draw up a better plan or spend more effectively. Because this makes it possible to adjust plans in time, it can also prevent problems during the work as well as unnecessarily high costs for the owner.

Various conservation organizations such as the Restoration Contractors' group (*Vakgroep Restauratie*), the Netherlands Centre for Heritage Programmes (*Nationaal Centrum Erfgoedopleidingen*) and the Foundation for Accredited Restoration Quality (*Stichting Erkende Restauratiekwaliteit Monumentenzorg*) draw up guidelines, certify and encourage training in order to ensure that proper materials and the right techniques are used to preserve the character of the monuments.

Funds for non-monumental elements

The RCE research also reveals that in 40% of the cases studied, an average 25% of the tax relief was applied to components that are not monument-related. Examples of this include maintenance work on electrical systems, heating and sanitary facilities. This is a much more generous subsidy than that in the existing central government

and provincial schemes for national monuments. These focus solely on costs that have a direct impact on the preservation of the historic material. Indeed, this is what the subsidy for the conservation of monuments is all about: compensating for additional expenditure required to preserve the monumental values.

New subsidy scheme for owners/residents

The government is adopting the conclusions and recommendations from the studies conducted and intends to safeguard the quality and effective use of funds to conserve monumental values by converting the tax relief into a subsidy with effect from 2019. From then on, all plans for the maintenance of monuments will be assessed based on the Guidelines for conservation costs eligible for subsidy (*Leidraad subsidiabele instandhoudingskosten*).

For all existing and future owners/residents currently making use of the tax relief, a new scheme for maintenance will be introduced that is the same for everyone. Under it, owners can make claims to conserve their own monumental properties. According to the new scheme, owners will be eligible for up to 35% subsidy on maintenance costs incurred. This percentage is broadly equal to the current compensation via the tax relief and higher than what would have been available through the tax relief from 2021 (the year when the deduction rate for certain income tax relief, including this one, will start to reach the basic rate, having been gradually reduced).

In order to offer private monument owners as much certainty as possible that there will be sufficient funds within the new subsidy scheme every year to meet maintenance costs, any money left over from the scheme's available budget in a specific year will be rolled over to the subsequent year's budget. The subsidy scheme will be evaluated in 2021, and this will include an assessment of its use, effectiveness and efficiency.

Strengthening Sim

Since the costs related to a monument's residential function are not eligible for subsidy, this creates room in the budget to strengthen the existing Conservation of Monuments Subsidy Scheme (*Sim*). With effect from 2020, I am reducing the individual contribution towards the *Sim* from 50% to 40% and I am doubling the budget for green monuments to € 10 million. Parliament has been in favour of this for quite some time and it is intended, among other things, to support volunteers in their efforts to preserve and maintain monuments.⁶ Owners of inhabited windmills or historic country estates, for example, currently still supported by means of the tax relief, will be better served by this percentage subsidy.

⁶ 2014-2015 Parliamentary session, 34 000 VIII, No. 14, Motion put by MP Keijzer.

Zaanse Schans • photo: Stichting de Zaanse Schans



Below are details of the investments in heritage resulting from the additional funding from the Coalition Agreement.

Conservation of monuments

- Because of their size, the cost of restoring, improving accessibility and enhancing the sustainability of monuments is significant. In view of their particular value for residents and visitors, in 2018-2021, the government is making additional investments totalling € 95 million in the restoration, change of use and improving the sustainability of (large) monuments. Examples of projects eligible for subsidy in 2018 include the Grote Kerk of Naarden and the Domkerk in Utrecht.⁷
- The criteria for allocating money include matching by other government bodies (and by private funds and lotteries), the need for repair, improving sustainability and regional distribution. Parliament receives a report on these projects on an annual basis.
- The government considers long-term and stable financial support for large monuments to be particularly important.

Together with the NRF, central government is exploring a multi-annual scheme (covering 10 years, for example) for owners of large monuments. This will be restricted to large monuments that are important for the Netherlands' history and need to be or become accessible to a wide public. Examples of large monuments that could benefit from it are the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk in Breda – the city's largest monument that has national significance because of its old mausoleum, the Prinsenkapel, and the Stevenskerk in Nijmegen – a church that symbolizes a city on the front line in World War II. A new scheme of this kind could also prove a solution for a monument such as Amerongen Castle. If these monument organizations have the security of continual investment, the volunteers have more time to make use of the monument and its associated history, to make the monument more accessible and attract a new section of the public inside. I will shortly be consulting with the sector to develop this further. I will provide further information to you in the Spring Statement of 2019.

TABLE 1 Financial framework for **the conservation of large monuments**

(All amounts x € 1 million)

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Restoration and change of use of national monuments, Revolving Fund Plus	30,00			
Restoration of monuments, including churches	30,00	30,00	25,00	10,00
Total expenditure	60,00	30,00	25,00	10,00

⁷ Response to written questions from MPs Dik-Faber and Bergkamp on the [preservation of religious heritage](#), 14 March, 2018.

Sustainability

Improving sustainability is an important government priority. The interventions required can sometimes be at odds with the cultural and historic value of monuments. Not everyone finds solar panels attractive on historic buildings. Currently, the RCE is developing guidelines with its cultural partners to enable us to improve the sustainability of valuable buildings and reuse them, taking account of their heritage values. The RCE also plans to review the guidelines for conservation costs eligible for subsidy to encourage sustainable measures. Using the additional funds from the Coalition Agreement, I will provide incentives for making monuments and mobile heritage more energy-efficient.

- Partly in view of the government's Energy and Climate Agreement (*Energie- en Klimaatakkoord*), the government will use the knowledge of the creative industry and science education to make monuments as energy-efficient or energy-neutral as possible.
- In 2019 and 2020, projects will be launched involving specific groups of monuments, such as churches, agricultural buildings and 'hofjes'. In the case of these monuments, there can be significant tension between the historic value and sustainability.
- The government wants to see sustainability become a regular part of the curriculum in educational programmes focusing on restoration.
- The government supports the development and application of implementation guidelines for sustainable repurposing and change of use.

- The inter-governmental programme for natural gas-free neighbourhoods run by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations will also include a focus on monuments and protected cityscapes.
- The government will make it possible for the Mondriaan Fund to subsidise showcase projects in which improving the sustainability of mobile heritage is part of any rehabilitation.

Change of use

It was agreed in the Coalition Agreement that the government will invest in maintenance and change of use. In this, the government is particularly interested in historic churches. At times, the desire of owners to breathe new life into a monument and open it up to visitors can be met by concerns from others with regard to the preservation of the historic value. The government is taking a series of measures for the repurposing of monuments.

- The government will continue the subsidy scheme for feasibility studies into changes of use and extend the scheme for repurposing by making energy scans eligible for subsidy.
- In addition, the scheme is particularly intended for churches still used for services in search of a suitable additional function. The RCE will work actively with church organisations, such as the churches committee of the Inter-Church Council on Government Affairs (*Interkerkelijk contact in Overheidszaken – Kerkgebouwen* (CIO-K), to draw the attention of church councils to the scheme.

- Under the leadership of Pieter van Vollenhoven, the Change of Use Committee (*Commissie Herbestemming*) has mediated successfully in several projects that have become gridlocked. The government appreciates the committee's work and will continue to support it.

Education/training and traditional crafts

Heritage conservation calls for knowledge and expertise from range of disciplines, including the creative industry. It is important for young people with a passion for preserving our heritage to be able to enjoy good quality education programmes and devise new creative solutions. For this reason, in the period 2018-2021, the government will be investing € 3.8 million in training courses and traditional crafts. This will include a focus on the already high quality of the programmes and the expertise that will be required for the future, such as knowledge about sustainability and the link between buildings and their surroundings.

- I am supporting the Netherlands Centre for Heritage Programmes in the development of curricula for blacksmiths, glaziers, masons, restorers and millwrights.



TABLE 2 Financial framework for **education/training and traditional crafts**

(All amounts x € 1 million)

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Developing standards and guidelines for change of use and improving sustainability	0,25	0,25	0,25	0,25
Developing curricula for blacksmiths, glaziers, masons, etc.	0,50	0,50	0,50	0,50
Total expenditure	0,75	0,75	0,75	0,75

Photo: Valerie Kuypers, Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap

- I am encouraging businesses to make restoration work attractive for young people; the government's investment in heritage must serve to encourage that.
- The RCE promotes knowledge expansion and expertise in the sector. The RCE is increasing support for municipalities by working together with other organisations, such as provincial support desks for monuments, the Heritage Academy (*Erfgoedacademie*) and knowledge institutions.

Heritage in the wider Kingdom

On the islands of the former Netherlands Antilles, many buildings were designed by Dutch architects. Even more buildings were designed and built locally. It is gratifying to note that private owners and foundations have set to work and restored their monuments. Change of use also has an important role to play here. One issue is that not all knowledge is available on the islands in order to investigate whether such change of use is feasible.

- I am supporting owners in investigating such options and deploying the RCE's knowledge to make feasibility studies possible.

Jewish heritage

The heritage in the Netherlands includes buildings, monuments, places and objects associated with Jewish culture, religion and history; ranging from a small village synagogue or an abandoned cemetery to more familiar places such as the Spinoza House and the Anne Frank House. Jewish cemeteries are already protected



as national monuments, as are synagogues, de Hollandsche Schouwburg and the Anne Frank House. Your Parliament has called on the government to focus particular attention on this heritage.⁸ The government acknowledges its importance, because these places are often associated with a powerful warning for the present and a message for the future. The government will ensure that attention is paid to Jewish heritage in the implementation of the various schemes.

Cocari-complex Bonaire
photo: Stichting Cocari

⁸ This concerns questions to Parliament from MP Bergkamp (D66) in the light of the report on the nos.nl website on 28 January 2018. **'Zorgen over Joods cultureel erfgoed buiten grote steden'** ['Concerns about Jewish heritage outside major cities'].

Church visions

Plans to close churches often lead to discussions between owners, congregations, local residents and experts. Discussions of this kind can often last for years as the condition of the building deteriorates and maintenance costs rise unnecessarily. A vision of the future for church buildings calls for all parties involved (church communities, local residents, developers, experts and government bodies) to work together to find solutions and decide whether churches should retain their current function or be repurposed. This vision can then result in local area visions that municipalities are compelled to compile for the land under their control. The government intends to support municipalities in this process.

- The government supports the development of church visions at municipal level, focusing on vacant buildings, conservation and change of use.

Interiors

The interiors of monuments can be especially vulnerable. Out of sight is out of mind, and for that reason I will continue to record particular interior ensembles in the Netherlands on the (digital) map. This will raise awareness of this social aspect of our heritage and enable new target groups to be reached. The project being run by the Friesland Interiors Foundation (*Stichting Interieurs Fryslân*) also highlights the importance of raising awareness.

- The RCE will expand the list of showcase examples and promote knowledge about interiors, with a view to promoting conservation.

“The government values the efforts made by volunteers. They are indispensable for the preservation and experience of heritage.”

TABLE 3 Financial framework for **religious heritage**

(All amounts x € 1 million)

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Combating vacancy in religious heritage: church visions	1,00	4,50	4,20	3,80
Total expenditure	1,00	4,50	4,20	3,80

Archaeology

Archaeology is what makes the cultural and historic past visible. In this field, certain issues require an additional focus.

For example, there are conservation issues affecting some of the approximate 1,400 national archaeological monuments, especially those on private land. In the case of shipwrecks, there is sometimes no one willing to foot the bill for archaeological research. There is also a need for further investment in research.

- For national archaeological monuments, the government is committed to an integrated approach; better communication with owners, funding small-scale maintenance and setting up a monitor.
- In the context of the Dutch Science Agenda (*Nationale Wetenschapsagenda*), the government intends to develop a programme aimed at encouraging the use of innovative technology in archaeology and collaboration between private parties and the scientific community.⁹
- In the case of maritime archaeology, the government is investing in monitoring, nurturing and protecting archaeological sites.

- The government is making additional funds available for the management of Dutch shipwrecks abroad. This includes working with Indonesia and Malaysia on the joint management of shipwrecks in and around the Java Sea.
- As already announced in the letter 'Culture in an Open Society', I am investing in the conservation and area development of the Schokland World Heritage Site. In 2019 and 2020, € 5 million is available for this.

TABLE 4 Financial framework for **Archaeology**

(All amounts x € 1 million)

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Archaeology	3,30	11,10	11,10	6,00
Total expenditure	3,30	11,10	11,10	6,00

⁹ The focus of this programme is based partly on discussions with the archaeological sector and the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO); as such, I consider the pledge made to Parliament in my letter of the 18th of September 2017 to report on the results of these discussions before the summer of 2018 as having been met. I can also report that, in the NWO call for submissions for in-depth research into archaeological finds of national or international importance, none of the applications in 2018 have been ignored; this also fulfils my pledge to provide information to Parliament on this point made in the budget debate of the 13th November 2017.

The heritage in our living environment

In its letter *Culture in an Open Society*, the government emphasizes the importance of heritage and design for the living environment. In addition to protecting and developing it, the government aims to put heritage to use for current spatial planning challenges, such as the energy transition, climate adaptation, and the construction of new homes in cities and depopulated regions.

The province of Groningen faces a particular challenge as a result of the earthquakes and the government decision to bring a complete end to gas extraction as soon as possible.

The Council for Culture and the Council for the Living Environment and Infrastructure also recommend forging greater links between heritage and the changes in our living environment. This calls for involvement by heritage organisations and the forging of links. The government has already made progress on this by joining forces with twenty-six other parties in signing the Green Deal, 'towards participation of society in renewable energy projects. The aim of this deal is to involve residents of an area and interested parties in solar and wind energy.¹⁰ In this process, knowledge and experience acquired from the policy



Stelling van Honswijk • photo: Siebe Swart, Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed

letter Character in Focus on heritage, participation and spatial integration are being actively shared and applied.

The spatial challenges referred to above are changing our living environment and thereby affecting our heritage. Examples of this include improving the sustainability of the built environment and climate adaptation in rural areas and the protection of World Heritage in an environment undergoing

¹⁰ Further information about this [Green Deal](#), initiated by nature conservation and environmental organizations.

rapid construction. More than 80% of the Dutch population believe it is important that World Heritage sites, such as the Kinderdijk windmills, are preserved.¹¹ The challenge is to preserve our heritage – the historic city centres, monuments and landscapes – in the face of changes to our living environment while at the same time taking inspiration from the power of these designs from the past in shaping our future living environment.

The government is taking the following measures to achieve this.

- The government is strengthening the relationship between heritage, spatial planning and the living environment across a swathe of areas, including the Environment and Planning Act (*Omgevingswet*), the Dutch National Environmental Vision (*Nationale Omgevingsvisie, NOVI*), the Delta Programme and the Dutch National Energy and Climate Agreement. One example of the relationship between heritage and the living environment is the agenda for the IJsselmeer region, which places great focus on the power of design in climate and energy challenges and on the cultural and historic values from the past of the former Zuiderzee. Within the framework of the

NOVI, the government is working to develop the quality of the environment.

- I will join with the municipalities in bringing forward the introduction of a joint system for delivering digital information and will support the initiative to achieve this. In the long-term, this will be linked to the single digital information system containing environmental information (*Digitale Stelsel Omgevingswet, DSO*), as is currently achieved in cooperation between central government, the provinces, municipalities and water authorities.
- The partners¹² who signed the Dutch National Parks Deal (*Nationale Parkendeal*) in 2016 are now working on new key principles for the National Parks, strengthening the link between nature, landscape and cultural heritage. I am happy to cooperate in this.
- In its efforts to combat vacant farms, the government is combining an region-based approach with support targeted at specific buildings.
- The monuments in the earthquake zone around Groningen demonstrate how heritage can make a difference in the development and liveability of an area. The government will

TABLE 5 Financial framework for heritage in our living environment

(All amounts x € 1 million)

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Heritage Deal		20,00		
Restoration of Groningen monuments	2,00	4,00	4,50	4,50
Investment in Environmental Act Digital System	0,60			
Total expenditure	2,60	24,00	4,50	4,50

¹¹ See [Erfgoedmonitor](#)

¹² Including the parks, provinces, central government, the tourist sector, businesses and land-management organisations

continue to be committed to a cautious approach of damage repair and reinforcement of monuments where necessary, striking an effective balance between safety, heritage values and the identity of the living environment. As announced in its letter Culture in an Open Society, the government is making additional funds available for monuments in Groningen.

- Integrating spatial planning challenges involving accessibility and energy transition is a complex process in relation to the World Heritage sites in the spatially dynamic areas of the Randstad conurbation. The government is making every effort to achieve increased understanding of the dynamic spatial character of the Netherlands and the Dutch solutions for preserving World Heritage values. I am engaging in discussions with UNESCO on this matter.
- By means of a Heritage Deal with other government bodies and social partners, the government intends to strengthen the contribution made by heritage to changes in our living environment. A joint implementation programme with new working procedures will form an important part of this. In the period 2019-2021, the government is making € 20 million available from Coalition Agreement funds and is assuming this will be matched by other government bodies.

“The challenge is to preserve our heritage – the historic city centres, monuments and landscapes – in the face of changes to our living environment.”



The unifying power of heritage

Heritage brings people together and provides familiarity in a fast-changing environment. Heritage enables us to share stories about a neighbourhood, a city and our country's position in Europe and in the world. The debate about monuments and listed buildings, customs and traditions from the past has significance for our country's future, for the debate about identity and the quest for what unites us.

In the Coalition Agreement, the government agreed to invest in 'making historic places that tell the story of our history visible and accessible.' The Canon of Dutch History (*Canon van Nederland*) provides guidance in this, as do the country's monuments. The Canon highlights our country's history by means of fifty so-called windows: from Erasmus to Aletta Jacobs, from the State Bible to Annie M.G. Schmidt. The 'World War II' and 'Anne Frank' windows provide a glimpse into the history of this war. As such, the Canon is a powerful resource for teaching young people about the value of freedom and democracy. The Canon also addresses uncomfortable truths, such as the Dutch history of slavery, which were long excluded from historic consciousness. The Dutch Open Air Museum (*Nederlands Openluchtmuseum*) in Arnhem has a permanent exhibition

devoted to the Canon, from hunebeds through to the present day.¹³ Across the country, museums display prize exhibits relating to the Canon and the traces of the past are clear to see.

An important challenge will be to involve all inhabitants in our heritage. This is only possible if the stories told about our heritage appeal to as many people as possible and reflect the composition and interests of the inhabitants of today's Netherlands. In an age of increasing opposition, the unifying force of heritage should not be underestimated. This is why it is important for as many people as possible to experience and become involved in heritage from an early age. Greater diversity – both in terms of the stories told and the staff of organizations – will help to reach a different and more diverse public. The young people's think-tank Kidsmindz has recommended that the world as experienced by young people should be properly reflected, by telling contemporary stories and including a focus on digitisation.

Education brings young people into contact with heritage irrespective of their background. This government considers it important for culture to be embedded in the curriculum in primary and secondary education.

¹³ See [Canon van Nederland](#).



Teams of school management and teachers are developing the building blocks for an updated curriculum for primary and secondary education, including for arts and culture. Heritage represents a rich source for various school subjects, from geography and history through to languages. It is important for schools and museums, for example, to collaborate effectively to enable children and young people to experience heritage. One successful project in this area is *Aannemer gezocht* (Contractor required) in Zutphen, the city that won the BNG Heritage prize in 2017. School students around the ages of 11-13 from year 8 in primary school and year 1 in high school were able to play the role of contractor in the restoration of a church and reflect on a new use for old monuments.

The government values the efforts made by volunteers. They are indispensable for the preservation and experience of heritage. Thanks to their efforts, passion and knowledge, heritage is preserved and made accessible. Their enthusiasm also helps reach out to a wider and more diverse public. Discussions conducted for the purposes of this letter have revealed that volunteers have significant development needs.

The government feels it is important to increase knowledge of history and make use of the unifying force of heritage. For this reason, it is taking the following measures as cornerstones for a cultural participation programme.

- In consultation with the network of Canon museums and other parties, the government is investigating what is required to increase the visibility and accessibility of historic places. This will involve a focus on both physical and digital accessibility.
- The windows of the Canon of Dutch History serve as a starting point and as guidance for teachers in shaping their lessons. As part of the overall curriculum review for primary and secondary education, proposals are currently being made by teachers and school heads for updating the core objectives and attainment targets. I am therefore calling on entoen.nu to inform the development team for the school-subject cluster People and Society - of which history is a part - on the use of the Canon in education. After Curriculum.nu presents its advice in the spring of 2019, I will be asking a new independent committee to explore whether and how the Canon should be adapted.¹⁴ I am also asking - in line with my promise to the MP Sjoerdsma - for a specific focus on the theme of diversity.¹⁵
- Digitisation offers opportunities in terms of visibility and accessibility. Young people involved in discussions for this letter emphasized the importance of using digital media. The government is asking the Digital Heritage Network (*Netwerk Digitaal Erfgoed*) to develop a toolkit aimed at reaching new target groups, such as young people, online and helping them become acquainted with heritage.
- The Coalition Agreement refers to a 'right to challenge' scheme to provide space for grassroots initiatives.

¹⁴ This is my response to the request outlined in the adopted motions by Bergkamp/Sjoerdsma (32830-242) and Geluk-Poortvliet/Rog (32830-237).

¹⁵ Minister Van Engelshoven in the general House of Representatives debate about [Emancipation policy](#) on 5 April 2018.

I saw an appealing example of this during my recent working visit to the Province of Limburg, where many residents of Beesel are involved in the organisation of the Dragon Play ('*Drakenspel*'). This collaboration continues to result in greater joint efforts by residents for the living environment and to enhance quality of life in the municipality. The heritage policy links in with the development of the '*right to challenge*' scheme.

- The government supports initiatives that promote voluntary work and the expertise of volunteers. To achieve this, a volunteer scheme will be introduced in the Cultural Participation Fund (*Fonds voor Cultuurparticipatie*) and the Mondriaan Fund. In addition, there will be funds available for heritage organisations to support local volunteers.

- The government is introducing an annual prize for the best team of volunteers in heritage.
- In 2020 and 2021, the government will continue the nationwide Cultural Participation Fund scheme for heritage education projects in primary schools.
- The government is investing in large-scale public activities, including for archaeology.
- In its letter *Culture in an Open Society*, the government announced that a study would be launched into the ratification of the Faro Convention. The key focus of this Council of Europe Convention is the social value of heritage. The government has arranged for an inventory of examples of the Faro working procedure to be compiled and is supporting projects that focus on social participation in heritage.

TABLE 6 Financial framework for **the unifying force of heritage**

(All amounts x € 1 million)

	2019	2020	2021
Updating and maintaining Canon	0,30	0,10	0,10
Investing in digitization	0,75		
Faro activities	2,35	1,73	1,73
Supporting volunteers	1,00	0,60	0,60
Heritage and education		0,60	0,60
Total expenditure	4,40	3,03	3,03



Excavation in Borgharen • photo: T. Penders, Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed

Finance

The additional funds for heritage and monuments are from two sources; incidental funds from the Coalition Agreement and funds that will become available for OCW as a result of the conversion of the tax relief on expenditure on monumental buildings into a subsidy scheme. For each of these sources, the tables below indicate how the funds will be used.

TABLE 7 Overall financial framework for Heritage Counts letter	2018	2019	2020	2021
<i>(All amounts x € 1 million)</i>				
Available funds				
Coalition Agreement, Intensification of heritage and monuments series**	98,50	140,00	60,00	25,00
Conversion of tax relief for maintenance of monuments		57,00	57,00	57,00
Total available funds	98,50	197,00	117,00	82,00
Expenditure announced for each theme of the letter				
Conservation of heritage from tax scheme		57,00	57,00	57,00
Conservation of large monuments	60,00	30,00	25,00	10,00
Education/training and traditional crafts	0,75	0,75	0,75	0,75
Church visions	1,00	4,50	4,20	3,80
Archaeology	3,30	11,10	11,10	6,00
The heritage in our living environment	2,60	24,00	4,50	4,50
The unifying power of heritage		4,40	3,03	3,03
Total expenditure announced in letter	67,65	131,75	105,58	85,08
<i>Amounts covered by Intensification of heritage and monuments series</i>	67,65	74,75	45,55	25,05
<i>Amounts covered by conversion of tax relief</i>		57,00	57,00	57,00
<i>Amounts covered by Coalition Agreement, Culture series</i>			3,03	3,03

TABLE 8 Use of Coalition Agreement funds for heritage and monuments	2018	2019	2020	2021
<i>(All amounts x € 1 million)</i>				
Available funds from Coalition Agreement, see also table above	98,50	140,00	60,00	25,00
Expenditure announced in letter 'Heritage Counts', see also table above	67,65	74,75	45,55	25,05
Expenditure announced in letter 'Culture in an Open Society'	31,10	26,60	16,10	0,10
Museum acquisition fund	25,00	15,00	10,00	
Restoration and digitisation of Het Nieuwe Instituut design drawings	5,50	5,50		
Digital accessibility of heritage, archives and collections	0,10	6,10	6,10	0,10
Canon	0,50			
Total expenditure	98,75	101,35	61,65	25,15
Difference between available funds and total expenditure	-0,25	38,65	-1,65	-0,15
Coverage from culture budget	0,25		1,65	0,15
Coalition Agreement funds remaining		38,65		

- * As indicated, the course of the series differs from the Coalition Agreement as a result of:
- 1) Funds moved to education policy (fourth Memorandum of Alteration to OCW budget 2018):
 - 2) A direct transfer of € 1.5 million in 2018, from the Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, for Fort Oranje (St. Eustatius, decision by CoM).
 - 3) Funds moved to education policy again: € 10 shifted from 2018 to 2020.

In conclusion

Our cultural partners agree with the government that heritage is an ‘essential building block’ for our society.¹⁶ The government is not only highlighting the value of heritage but is also making significant investments in it. It is doing so in order to ensure that future generations can also continue to enjoy and experience our heritage. The government is opting to make targeted investments in the conservation of our heritage, connecting with the living environment and the unifying force of heritage.



¹⁶ [Kunsten '92, Cultuur & Erfgoed in de collegeakkoorden](#) [Culture & Heritage in the municipal agreements], 8 april 2018.