

(RETROSPECTIVE) STATEMENT OF OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE**BEEMSTER POLDER, THE NETHERLANDS**

Date of inscription	1999
Criteria	(i), (ii), (iv)
Property	7185 ha
	Beemster Municipality, Province of Noord-Holland N52 32 56 E4 54 40
Ref.	899

Brief Synthesis

The Beemster Polder, dating from the early 17th century, is an exceptional example of reclaimed land in the Netherlands. It has preserved intact its well-ordered landscape of fields, roads, canals, dykes and settlements, laid out in accordance with the principles of classical and Renaissance planning. The main reasons for draining Lake Beemster in 1612 were capital investment in land, the need for agricultural land and country residences, and efforts to combat flooding. It is a man-made agricultural landscape with a mathematical land division structure that was unique at the time, being based on a system of squares forming a rectangle with the ideal dimensional ratio of 2:3. This layout of the land can be traced back to Classical design theories that were revived during the Renaissance. The pattern of roads and watercourses runs from north to south and from east to west, with buildings along the roads.

Besides the grid pattern of roads, watercourses and plots of land, the polder is made up of a ring dyke and a ring canal, relatively high-lying roads with avenues of trees, historic farmhouses in the traditional "*stolpboerderij*" style, five forts that are part of the Defence Line of Amsterdam (itself a UNESCO World Heritage Site), and the villages of Middenbeemster, Noordbeemster, Westbeemster, and Zuidoostbeemster.

Criteria

Criterion (i): The Beemster Polder is a masterpiece of creative planning, in which the ideals of antiquity and the Renaissance were applied to the design of a reclaimed landscape.

Criterion (ii): The innovative and intellectually imaginative landscape of the Beemster Polder had a profound and lasting impact on reclamation projects in Europe and beyond.

Criterion (iv): The creation of the Beemster Polder marks a major step forward in the interrelationship between humankind and water at a crucial period of social and economic expansion.

Integrity

Since it was drained in 1612, the Beemster polder has been an independent geographical and administrative unit. It is bounded by a continuous dyke, which also forms the boundary of the municipality of Beemster. It is therefore an indivisible unit containing all the necessary elements to preserve its relationships and functions.

Authenticity

There has not been any essential change in the intellectual and architectural concept underlying the planning structure of the Beemster polder since it was constructed. The essential key features – important from the heritage perspective – have remained intact. These include the pattern of waterways and roads with avenues of trees, a ring dyke and a ring canal, the historical structure and location of the villages, the ribbon development of farms along the roads, the functional agricultural use of the polder, and the original dimensions and land division. The characteristic visual spaciousness and openness of the landscape are recognisable almost everywhere and form one of the key features. The copperplate map engraving by Balthasar Florisz van Berkenrode (1643/1644) therefore corresponds almost perfectly to the pattern of main roads, waterways, and plots of land in the current situation. The fifty or so country residences disappeared, however, in the course of the 18th and 19th centuries. In the case of some of them, remains can be found in the form of what used to be service buildings (now farms).

Management and protection requirements

i Overall framework

The Beemster polder is part of the “Laag Holland” National Landscape. National spatial planning policy emphasises the “preservation, management and reinforcement of landscape-related, cultural, historical and recreational features of the National Landscapes” and deterrence of large-scale property development within them, for example housing, industrial estates, greenhouse horticulture, and infrastructure. The necessary protection and ongoing development of these areas must be set out in and achieved in accordance with the strategic structure agendas and zoning plans. Although a new, national spatial planning policy has been announced (*Ontwerp-Structuurvisie Infrastructuur en Ruimte, 2011*), this will have no detrimental consequences for the Beemster Polder. In order to ensure the necessary protection, the national government will lay down rules governing the content of zoning plans and provincial by-laws in an Administrative regulation on Spatial Planning (*AMvB Ruimte*). The provincial spatial planning policy also aims to maintain and strengthen the characteristics of the open landscape.

The historic village of Middenbeemster has been designated a protected conservation area. Many of the other buildings, for example the historic “*stolpboerderij*” farms, are state protected monuments.

The municipality of Beemster is responsible for preserving, protecting, and guaranteeing the exceptional features of the Beemster polder, and for promoting accessibility and the public’s enjoyment of the area. The Hollands Noorderkwartier Polder Board [*Hoogheemraadschap Hollands Noorderkwartier*] is responsible for the waterways, water retention, and verge planting. There is an overall development policy for the polder, based on its core features and specific identity. That policy forms the decision-making framework for balancing the

heritage qualities and the various aims and developments. Spatial planning interventions resulting from social and economic developments are assessed in the light of the World Heritage status of the Beemster polder. Specific projects ensure that the basic principles and results of the policy are included in zoning plans, the Building Aesthetics Policy Document [*Welstandsnota*], and the Strategic Structural Agenda [*Structuurvisie*] so that new developments strengthen the qualities of the World Heritage Site.

The former country residences are the subject of archaeological and heritage investigation, with the option of making the remains visible at one or more locations for educational purposes in the future.

ii. Specific long-term expectations

An administrative agreement for all parties concerned will be drawn up in 2011. Next, a management plan for the World Heritage site will be drawn up, in close relationship to the formulating of a Strategic Structural Agenda, zoning plans, and an Area Agenda [*Omgevingsnota*]. It will be completed by no later than 2012.