

# **ROBBEN ISLAND MUSUEM OLD POWER STATION**

## **PRELIMINARY REPORT No. 3: ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPE; COOLING POND**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This report follows on from research that has highlighted a number of aspects that may enhance the proposed conversion of the RIM OPS to house the collection currently stored in the MSP.

1. A desk top study has shown the presence of what was the cooling pond to the east of the main building.
2. Discussions with SAHRA and a follow up letter requesting their requirements should an excavation of the pond become necessary was sent on 12 October 2011. Attached as Annexure A.
3. The cooling pond did not fall within the legal definition of ‘Archaeological’ in terms section 1 of the National Heritage Resources Act, 25 of 1999 [NHRA]. The excavation does then not fall within the terms of section 35 of the NHRA
4. SAHRA therefore had to provide formally for the possible excavation in terms of sections 27 and 48 of the NHRA.
5. A meeting was held on 17 October 2011 with Robben Island Museum Heritage at which the idea was proposed to use the cooling pond for the new plant as the proposed building will not have the capacity to do so. The RIM was happy that a deviation of their policy of no changes after 1997 should be effected.
6. At a meeting of the consultants on 17 November 2011 it was also proposed that use of the cooling pond be looked into.
7. On 22 November 2011 SAHRA sent a letter with their requirements for the proposed excavation. A Phase 1 Archaeological assessment by a qualified archaeologist is required prior to the submission of the permit application in terms of section 27 for the conversion of the Old Power station. SAHRA letter attached as Annexure B.

## SITE PLAN



Fig.1. Green square of vegetation delineating site of cooling pond. [Photo courtesy of SARAH Winter]

## DESCRIPTION

An architectural tracing from 1963 of an earlier drawing of the Main Building shows a cooling pond 10 Imperial feet [10' or approximately 3metres] away from the Main Building on the south east corner.

The dimensions are a 20' by 20' square. The depth of the pond is shown as 5' with ground level at the time shown as half of this [2'6"]. Rising above the cooling pond the design shows a wooden louvre [half inch in size] ventilation of 5' with a 4"x 3" head. 4"x4" posts are indicate for the corners and the posts to secure the



## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations are consistent with current thinking on the adaptive reuse of historical structures. The National Heritage Resources Act, 25 of 1999, The 1969 ICOMOS [Venice] Charter and its amendments, as well as the Australia ICOMOS [Burra] Charter all provide for adaptive reuse strategies to be implemented within historical contexts.

The aim is not an absolute return to the past but to reintegrate the WWII landscapes in their current setting. The number and size of the artefacts, as well as the requirements for environment control in housing the artefacts, cannot be adequately housed within the Old Power Station building itself.

The small outbuilding initially allocated to house both the fumigation and plant is inadequate bearing the requirements for storage of artefacts in mind.

It is therefore recommended that:

1. The cooling pond is excavated as per SAHRA requirements to assess the merits of reuse of the pond.
2. The cooling pond be suitably reinstated as per the project architects specifications to house the plant.

## **REFERENCES**

Tracing of architects drawing dated 29 March 1963.

Aerial Photograph dated 9 April 2010 courtesy of Sarah Winter.

Minutes of meetings between Groenewald Preller Architects and stakeholders dated 17 October 2011 and 17 November 2011.

## ANNEXURE A



2011-10-12

THE MANAGER: BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPES  
THE MANAGER: ARCHAEOLOGY, PALAEOLOGY AND METEORITES  
SOUTH AFRICAN HERITAGE RESOURCES AGENCY [SAHRA]  
111 Harrington Street  
Cape Town  
8001

Attention: Ms Sonja Warnich-Stemmett and Collette Scheermayer

### **ROBBEN ISLAND MUSEUM: CONVERSION OF OLD POWER STATION AS REPOSITORY FOR ARTEFACTS.**

I thank you for our discussions on 29 September 2011.

In our desk top study certain features are indicated on maps and architectural drawings. These features are no longer visible. The particular feature that is of most concern and would be impacted on with conversion of the Old Power Station is the under ground remains of the cooling pond that served the Power Station from 1941 to ca 1967. Please refer to copy of architects drawing Fig.2.

On an ortho photo from April 2010, a green square of vegetation is clearly visible in the position where the cooling pond is expected to be. Please refer to Fig. 1.

The sub surface remains do not qualify as archaeological in the legal definition of the National Heritage Resources Act [NHRA], 25 of 1999. A permit for excavation would not be appropriate in terms of section 35 of the NHRA.

Our application would be in terms of section 27 of the NHRA for the alterations to the built environment on a National Heritage [Grade I] site. Section 27 also, however, includes excavation.

In terms of section 48 of the NHRA, SAHRA, may prescribe the manner in which an application is made for a permit in terms of section 27.

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Ad Astra Festina, ron viney, 071 141 6005, [ron@srms.co.za](mailto:ron@srms.co.za) , 12 October 2011

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## ANNEXURE B



### SOUTH AFRICAN HERITAGE RESOURCES AGENCY

111 HARRINGTON STREET, CAPE TOWN, 8001  
PO BOX 4637, CAPE TOWN, 8000  
TEL: (021) 462 4569 FAX: (021) 462 4565

DATE: 22 November 2011  
ENQUIRIES: Mrs Colette Scheemayer  
OUR REF: 9/2/016/4

Mr Ron Viney  
Ad Astra Festina

E mail: [ron@srms.co.za](mailto:ron@srms.co.za)

#### RE: ROBBER ISLAND MUSEUM: CONVERSION OF OLD POWER STATION AS REPOSITORY FOR ARTEFACTS

Thank you for your letter received 12 October 2011, wherein you detail the findings of your desk top study for the above-mentioned project. Considering our discussion on 29 September and your letter, the SAHRA requests the following.

- A Phase 1 archaeological survey must be undertaken by a professional qualified archaeologist prior to any work being carried out.
- Following receipt of a Phase 1 archaeological assessment report, SAHRA APM will advise further, taking into consideration the to the recommendations of the archaeologist.

It is advised that the above documentation be included in the Section 27 of the NHRA permit application as supporting documentation, to be reviewed by the SAHRA Built Environmental and Cultural Landscape Permit Committee (BELCom). The Built Environment and APM units will liaise directly in order to ensure a streamlined process in this regard.

Should you have any questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Colette Scheemayer  
Manager: SAHRA Archaeology, Palaeontology and Meteorites Unit

Mrs Sonja Warnich-Stemmer  
Acting Manager: SAHRA Built Environment

For CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
SOUTH AFRICAN HERITAGE RESOURCES AGENCY