

RIM BLUE STONE QUARRY IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF PREVIOUS STUDIES AND SAHRA DECISIONS

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The purpose of this assessment is to inform the design proposal as to what is and is not acceptable to the World Heritage Centre in Paris and to SAHRA as the permitting agency.

1. The significance of the quarry lies in its intangible aspects, notably the memories of ex political prisoners [EPP's]. The opinions of the EPP's regarding the rehabilitation must be presented to SAHRA with the permit application.
2. The preferred design proposal is the placement of a mass concrete wall integrated with the present wall.
3. At a meeting of the SAHRA ad hoc permit committee held on 4 November 2005 a similar design proposal to integrate mass concrete with the old stone wall was rejected. Inter alia it was felt that the hard mass concrete would not be compatible with the softer materials of the wall.
4. The committee decided that any intervention should be done through the ceremonial repacking of the stones by ex-political prisoners or their descendents and not by permanent stabilization techniques.
5. The committee was emphatic that no rebuilding or any other rehabilitation should take place other than as a ceremonial act.
6. At a meeting of the SAHRA Built Environment and Landscape Committee [BELCom] held on 14 April 2009 a conclusion was reached that the applicant [RIM and DPW] wished to revisit the previous SAHRA decision to repack the wall. The engineering proposals put forward were also questioned as it was felt that a series of underwater wave energy breakers should be considered in contrast to the more visual and intrusive elements proposed.

ASSESSMENT.

1. The decision of the Committee in 2005 followed international best practice for World Heritage Sites. No firm decision was made by SAHRA in 2009 but the discussion in the minutes of the meeting raised the same concerns about a more permanent solution. Certain best practices are part of the RIM ICMP for 2007-2012 submitted to the World Heritage Centre in Paris. Best practice relates inter alia to the following:

- a. The minimalist approach to respect the existing fabric, use, associations and meanings embodied in the maxim ‘do as much as is necessary and as little as possible’. This is the first Principle in Chapter 7 of the RIM ICMP. Hence the repacking of the wall, which even has its detractors as the event of its destruction is part of its historical significance.
- b. Change may be undesirable where it reduces cultural significance but necessary when it enhances that significance. The cultural significance of the wall is: ‘one of the surviving symbols of political punishment with production.’ [Matenga:p.8, 2004] Principle 8 of the ICMP allows for Robben Island to draft a policy listing the factors to consider when assessing the impact of new construction. This policy has not been drafted.
- c. Changes which reduce cultural significance should be reversible. The mass concrete design proposal integrated into the wall would be permanent and difficult to reverse.
- d. Any intervention should not prejudice any future intervention.
- e. The design proposal should not hinder the possibility of later access to all evidence incorporated into the intervention.
- f. Authenticity in materials, workmanship, design and setting need to be respected. Any major permanent intervention could jeopardize the authenticity of the heritage resource. This is enshrined in Principle 2 of the ICMP, which requires an ‘as at 1997’ status quo.
- g. Integrity relates to the state of conservation of the heritage resource. Any intervention would restore the resource to a state to a particular period in its existence.
- h. Historical layering must be respected. Principle 3 of the ICMP.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Certain aspects of the quarry and its surrounds were not taken up or adequately addressed by the SAHRA BELCom; viz.

Shipwrecks

Two wrecks, the Rangatira and the Tantallon Castle, are situated close to the quarry underwater. Wrecks and other archaeology is adjudicated by another committee and is not the jurisdiction of

the SAHRA BELCom. The Archaeology, Palaeontology and Meteorites committee was not part of the decision making process as they must be.

Additional features

A concrete base made from sea sand, shells and Portland cement is on the inside of the inner wall of the quarry and will need careful consideration in mitigation.

The outline of the original quarry area and foundations of buildings can clearly be seen on aerial photo's.

CONCLUSION

In their letter of 20 April 2009, SAHRA, stated that the application at that stage lacked adequate information. Any future application must place the additional and other considerations mentioned above on the table. The associated landscape must also be described for its heritage significance.

Both SAHRA and the World Heritage Centre place emphasis on the importance of the ICMP and following it. The World Heritage Commission report in February 2011 stressed that the Blue Stone quarry must not remain unresolved. They were critical of the approach whereby structures were brought to an 'as new' standard as an asset rather than conserving evidence of its heritage values and history. The practice is seen as inappropriate and will cumulatively erode evidence and values of the site, especially in the absence of 'as found' documentation.

The Commission was also critical about the following:

Although the ICMP provides clear processes and philosophical approaches to conservation works, they do not appear to be either fundamentally understood or put into practice by contractors/staff responsible for conservation works (eg Cement render Garrison Church). These problems may be due to lack of experience, poor supervision, changing management, inconsistent approach to, or lack of basic understanding of, guiding philosophy. There currently appears to be no regular maintenance or preventative maintenance programme in place.

The design proposal must therefore fit into the ICMP submitted to the World Heritage Centre in Paris, as well as satisfy the permitting requirements set by SAHRA. SAHRA would also not go contrary to the ICMP and the operational guidelines set by the World Heritage Centre.