

MEMORANDUM

TO: ACTING CEO (MR DUMISANI SIBAYI)

FROM: HERITAGE OBJECTS UNIT (REGINA ISAACS)

MOTIVATION FOR TWO HOU STAFF MEMBERS TO ATTEND MEETING AT WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY, UMTHATA

BACKGROUND

During 1999 the then National Monuments Council (NMC) (subsequently superseded by SAHRA), identified the Broster Bead Collection (the Collection) as a significant Collection that should be declared as a Specifically Declared Collection. The Collection, currently housed in the Africana Library, is associated with the Qebe community and include exhibits that show aspects of indigenous knowledge systems, aesthetics, religion, traditional medicine, economic activity and social life in general. The current location of the Collection is not a conducive environment for the conservation of the Collection and the staff are not trained to conserve the Collection according to best practice nor do they have access to resources towards this end.

Following discussions with Dr Lamla (responsible for the Collection) at what was then known as the University of Transkei (Unitra) after a visit to the institution, it became apparent that the Collection was at risk. It was haphazardly stored and displayed in a room that did not have climate control and was not conducive for the conservation and curation of the Collection to ensure that it is preserved for future generations. Under such conditions, Declaration of the Collection could not be considered. Therefore, with the approval of Permit Committee, I facilitated a conservation assessment of the Collection as well as recommendations as to how to conserve the Collection.

Subsequent to realising that the conservation recommendations were not implemented, SAHRA arranged for conservation and curatorial guidance from East London Museum who indicated that they would do so once the Collection is housed in a suitable repository at Walter Sisulu University.

At the Permit Committee meeting held on 13 October 2011, it was decided to address a letter to the Vice Chancellor of WSU to inform him of the concerns. The Vice Chancellor referred the matter to the Office of the Chief Operations Officer who confirmed that there were processes underway to deal with this matter.

It became apparent that progress was not being made on the conservation of the Collection and Permit Committee then agreed to approach WSU Chairperson of the Council, Dr Somadoda Fikeni so that he may intervene to ensure that the Collection is budgeted for and proper storage space allocated so that the declaration process would commence. It was subsequently established that Dr Fikeni had resigned and that WSU was under administration.

*Approved as this is part of SAHRA Strategic
goal of protect and promote heritage resources which
were previously ignored and marginalised.
P1 Plegyi 12/09/12*

In 2012 the SAHRA Inventory Unit started the process of inventorising the collection which was by then housed in the WSU Library and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the two institutions.

After a visit to WSU on 20 April 2012 forming part of the inventory process, the National Inventory Unit forwarded a report to the Heritage Objects unit which stipulated that the Broster Bead Collection was not being looked after and as a result is deteriorating on a daily basis, leaving some of the objects damaged and others destroyed. We know that the staff responsible for the collection are doing their best but given their lack of resources including training and proper storage facilities, their interventions have their limitations.

The declaration of the Broster Bead Collection forms part of SAHRA's strategic objectives to improve management and conservation of heritage resources and was budgeted for to enable both Nolitha and I to attend the meeting. I have facilitated the conservation assessment and recommendations to conserve the Collection to lay the basis for declaration. Following the employment of Nolitha Ncgai as Declaration's Officer, she is responsible for putting the mechanisms in place to declare the Collection and to oversee the unfolding of the processes. However, nomination and related procedures can only take place when there is commitment from WSU that they are going to make the resources available to conserve the Collection. The purpose of the meeting arranged for 17 September is three-fold:

1. To meet with East London Museum who have offered to assist WSU with conserving the Collection. At this meeting, Nolitha is going to be introduced as the SAHRA staff member who is going to liaise with ELM concerning the practicalities and co-ordination of their assistance.
2. Viewing the collection in order to assess the condition thereof. The WSU Executive Management and relevant staff would be viewing the Collection with us so that we can emphasise the importance of the WSU identifying a repository for the Collection. I have to lead the discussion in this regard on the agenda.
3. At the meeting (see Agenda attached) procedures to be followed to nominate the Collection for Declaration would be lead by Nolitha in her capacity as Declarations Officer and she is going to facilitate and co-ordinate the processes.

I strongly urge you to approve that both myself and Nolitha attend the meeting as it is a budgeted item and the HOU does not have a reputation for unnecessary travel. Through both Nolitha and my efforts, it is the first time that the WSU Executive Managers and relevant staff will attend a meeting to discuss the future of the Broster Bead Collection. If only one of us is allowed to attend, we are not going to be able to make the impact on WSU regarding their role and responsibility which will put the Collection at further risk of deterioration.

**ITENERARY FOR A MEETING AT EAST LONDON MUSEUM AND WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY
(MTHATHA CAMPUS)**

DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY
19 September 2012	11H05	Depart from Cape Town Airport
19 September 2012	13H00	Arrive in East London Airport Get a hired vehicle
19 September 2012	13H15	Hold a meeting at East London Museum with the Acting Manager
19 September 2012	14H45	Depart to Umtata for a sleep over
20 September 2012	08H30	Hold meeting with Walter Sisulu Administrator and relevant staff members, view the collection
20 September 2012	12H00	Drive back to East London airport and drop the hired vehicle
20 September 2012	16H00	Depart to Cape Town