



APPLICATION FOR AN EXHUMATION AND REBURIAL PERMIT UNDER SECTION 35 OF THE NHRA, MAPUNGUBWE NATIONAL PARK

Introduction

As noted in the 2020 annual inspection report from South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA), a previously unknown grave was discovered within one of the staff compounds inside the Mapungubwe National Park. This burial has become exposed probably due to erosion caused by wind and water. There is no information that can help describe the grave. However, what is not disputable is that the burial is that of a young person. Some people had initially indicated that the person buried within this discovered grave could be a 14-year old daughter of one of the European farmers who lived within the vicinity in the 1930s. However, this information has been challenged by one of the informants who was born in the area – arguing that the farmer who lived on site did not have young children when he arrived with his family. What this says, therefore, is that it has not been possible to establish the identity of the individual buried within the discovered grave. The said grave was not disturbed during the construction phase of the staff compound, and was missed by only a few metres.

Due to the current location of the grave, in front of two of two residential areas (Figs 1, 2, and 3) and with young children playing around the area, it is not ideally located. To give respect to the individual buried on site, the grave is currently covered with a portion of a drum. The fragment of the skull and the two molar teeth were clearly visible during the 2020 inspection but have now been partially covered by soil that has been blown over the grave. SANParks aims to exhume the grave, with no studies undertaken. Instead, the buried individual will be reburied just outside the staff compound and closer to the old shop – which is about 100 metres from the current location of the grave.



Fig. 1: The grave discovered in 2020 inside the staff compound at the Mapungubwe National Park.



Fig. 2: The drum currently covering the identified grave, for its protection and decency to staff.



Fig. 3: The grave in the context of staff quarters nearby.

Social consultation

Following discussions between the SAHRA and SANParks representatives, it was decided that the latter should secure a permit to exhume and rebury the grave under Section 36 of the NHRA if the grave was to be under 60 years. Even though the age of the individual buried within the grave has not been determined, indications are that it is probably older than 60 years. Following further engagement with SAHRA officials, we were advised to apply for the permit under Section 35 of the NHRA. The existing regulations for Section 35 do not require social consultation – but we still decided to have the process done.

The SANParks conducted social consultation even though the permit was to be applied for under Section 35 of the NHRA (Annexure A). The period for social consultation was 30-days and not the 60-day period as specified in the regulations of Section 36 of the NHRA. This said consultation process, respecting the sensitivity around human bones in general, was undertaken during the month of September. Notices were placed at various localities around the protected area and at the two nearby towns of Musina and Alldays. At the former, the notice was placed by the Municipal Office and at two localities at the latter – Super Spar Complex and the Information Centre which is inside the Municipal Office (Figs 4, 5, and 6). One notice was hand-delivered to the Sematla

Clan at Den Staat near the Mapungubwe National Park while the other was placed by the reception area of the protected area (Fig. 7).

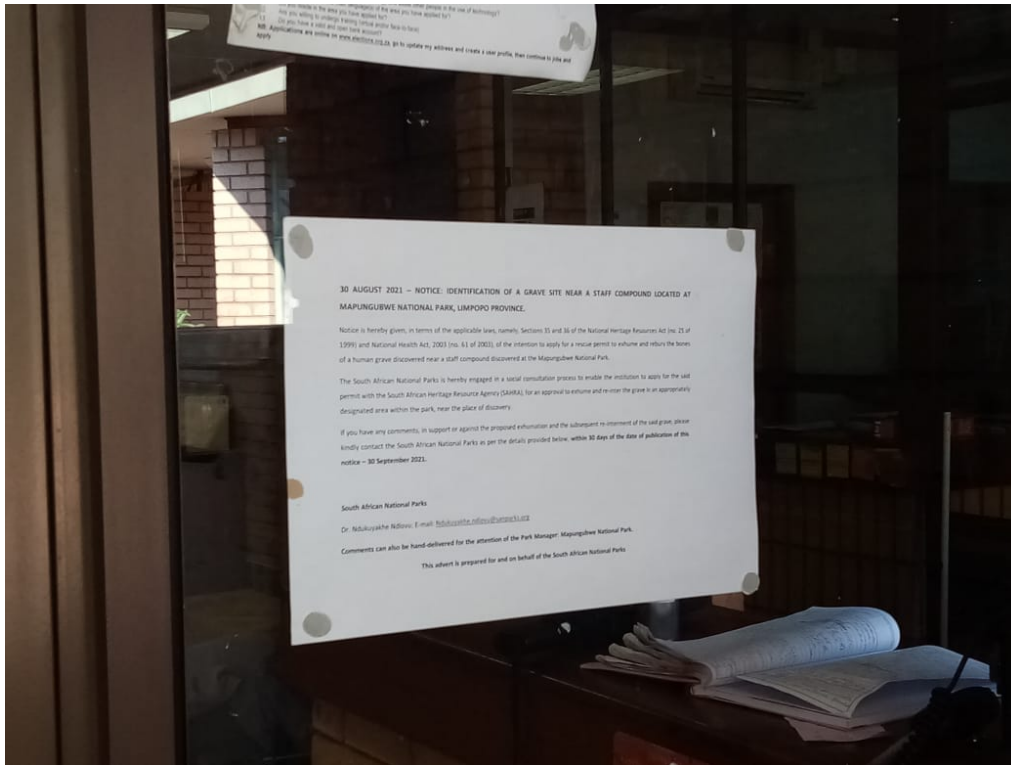


Fig. 4: Notice placed by the Musina Municipal Office.



Fig. 5: Notice placed by the Alldays Super Spar Complex.

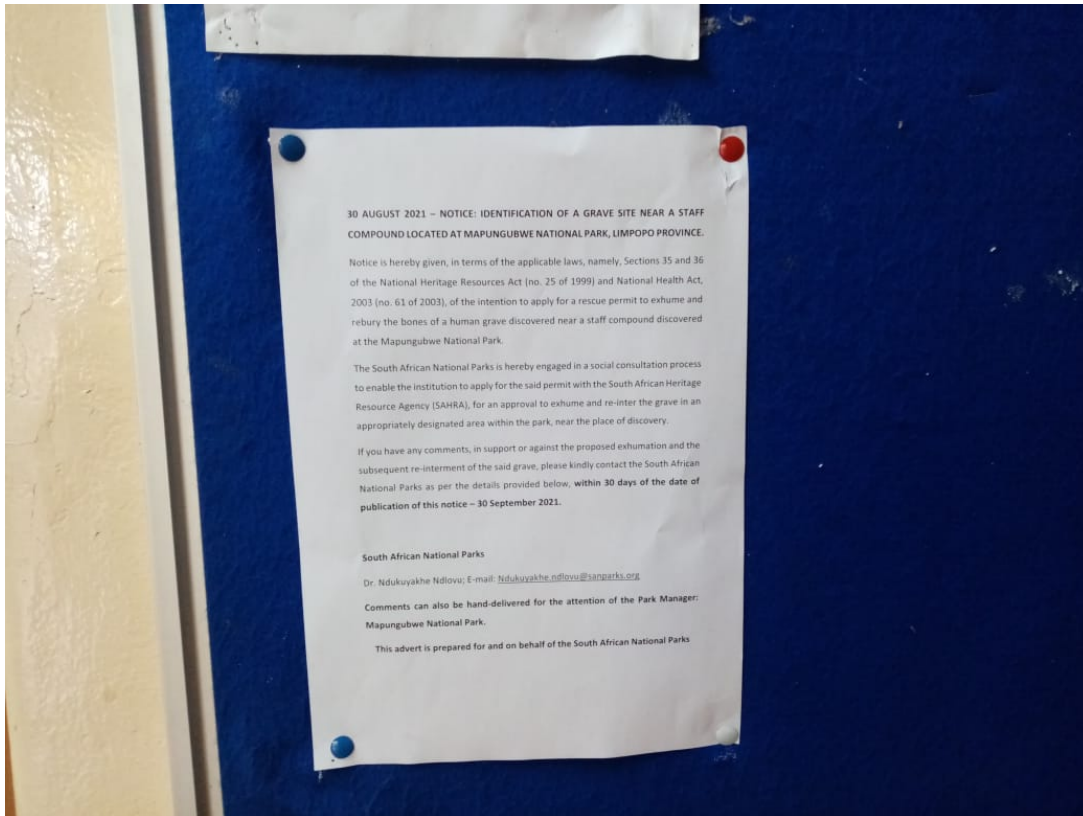


Fig. 6: Notice placed by the Alldays Municipal Office.

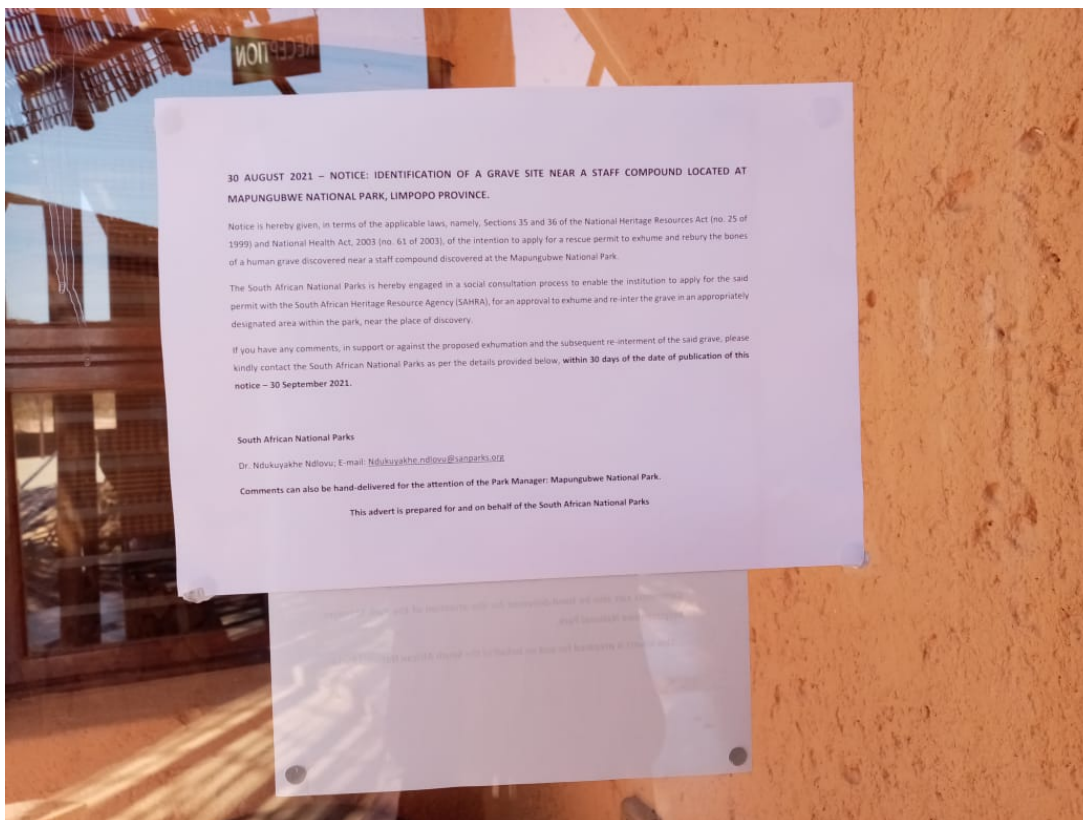


Fig. 7: Notice placed by the Mapungubwe Reception area.

There was one official response received during this process – through a letter received from a representative of the Sematla clan who have graves within Mapungubwe National Park (Annexure B). Following their official response to the social consultation process, they were engaged and an agreement reached that chosen clan members must be granted with an opportunity to visit the burial. This site visit was undertaken on 13 October 2021 during which it was confirmed by the elder that the grave has no connection with their clan. As a result, Mr Sematla had no objection to the proposal made by the SANParks to exhume and rebury the particular individual at a chosen location within a short distance from the current location (Annexure C). The SANParks Guidelines for Burials, Scattering of Cremated Ashes, Erecting of Memorials, Placing of Plaques and Access to Gravesites in National Parks shall be adhered to and the new grave location will be appropriately marked so that its existence is not easily lost in memory.

Exhumation and reburial

The grave, if SAHRA were to grant the necessary permit under Section 35 of the NHRA, will be exhumed by a team of qualified archaeologists with a collective experience of over 40 years. If the permit application were to be approved by SAHRA, the permit holder shall be Dr Ndukuyakhe Ndlovu. As the Principal Investigator, Dr Ndlovu is employed as the Manager for Archaeology within the SANParks – and has over 20 years' experience in archaeology. Dr Ndlovu shall be ably assisted by Dr Ndivhuwo Mathoho, an archaeologist working for the University of Venda and two archaeology students from the same academic institution.

In terms of methodology, appropriate archaeological techniques and the necessary tools will be used accordingly. The proposed action has been approved by the Park Manager.

Conclusion

SANParks is aiming to have the exhumation and relocation undertaken within the next month to not have the grave exposed for much longer and to give the buried individual a more respectful place of final rest. This shall also be more ideal for the staff members living at the compound, in particular, those who have entrance doors right by the grave.

ANNEXURE A – SOCIAL CONSULTATION NOTICE

30 AUGUST 2021 – NOTICE: IDENTIFICATION OF A GRAVE SITE NEAR A STAFF COMPOUND LOCATED AT MAPUNGUBWE NATIONAL PARK, LIMPOPO PROVINCE.

Notice is hereby given, in terms of the applicable laws, namely, Sections 35 and 36 of the National Heritage Resources Act (no. 25 of 1999) and National Health Act, 2003 (no. 61 of 2003), of the intention to apply for a rescue permit to exhume and rebury the bones of a human grave discovered near a staff compound discovered at the Mapungubwe National Park.

The South African National Parks is hereby engaged in a social consultation process to enable the institution to apply for the said permit with the South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA), for an approval to exhume and re-inter the grave in an appropriately designated area within the park, near the place of discovery.

If you have any comments, in support or against the proposed exhumation and the subsequent re-interment of the said grave, please kindly contact the South African National Parks as per the details provided below, **within 30 days of the date of publication of this notice – 30 September 2021.**

South African National Parks

Dr. Ndukuyakhe Ndlovu; E-mail: Ndukuyakhe.ndlovu@sanparks.org

[Comments can also be hand-delivered for the attention of the Park Manager: Mapungubwe National Park.](#)

This advert is prepared for and on behalf of the South African National Parks

ANNEXURE B – LETTER FROM THE SEMATLA CLAN

30 September 2021

RE: NOTICE: IDENTIFICATION OF A GRAVE SITE NEAR A STAFF COMPOUND LOCATED AT MAPUNGUBWE NATIONAL PARK, LIMPOPO PROVINCE.

Good day DR. Ndukuyakhe Ndlovu/SANPs,

I am writing this letter in response to the letter dated 30 August 2021 with the heading: **NOTICE: IDENTIFICATION OF A GRAVE SITE NEAR A STAFF COMPOUND LOCATED AT MAPUNGUBWE NATIONAL PARK, LIMPOPO PROVINCE**, delivered at the DEN STAAT FARM to the Community.

With the Powers invested in me to address and respond to SANPs proposition, please accept this as the first formal response to be **against** the proposed exhumation and intended the re-interment of the said grave.

As the community we feel the need to first identify the site, consult internally with all stakeholders and follow all cultural procedures and process before any grave can be exhumed, moved, or changed in any form or the other.

In conclusion, we really appreciate the consultation process that you have initiated, and such actions reveal to us that you have the community's interest at best heart.

I look forward to your response.

Regards,

HL Sematla

+27723411846

hsematla@gmail.com

ANNEXURE C – THE SEMATLA CLAN SUPPORTING EXHUMATION

Inbox - Ndukuyakhe.Ndlovu@sanparks.org - Outlook

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Quick Steps: To Manager, Done, Delete, Create New

Move, Rules, OneNote, Unread/Read, Categorize, Follow Up, Tags, Search People, Address Book, Filter Email, Find, Store, Add-ins

Reply, Reply All, Forward, IM



Thu 14/10/2021 07:08 PM

HL Sematla <hsematla@gmail.com>

Re: NOTICE: IDENTIFICATION OF A GRAVE SITE NEAR A STAFF COMPOUND LOCATED AT MAPUNGUBWE NATIONAL PARK, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

To: Ndukuyakhe Ndlovu

You replied to this message on 14/10/2021 07:11 PM.

If there are problems with how this message is displayed, click here to view it in a web browser.

Click here to download pictures. To help protect your privacy, Outlook prevented automatic download of some pictures in this message.

Good day Dr. Ndlovu,

I trust this email finds you well. I received feedback on the site visit you arranged for the knowledgeable old man. I thank you for that. He has also asked me to make it official to you that you may proceed with the proposed exhumation to the recommended area He pointed out. I also understand that He mentioned to you our plans of arranging a tombstone for another grave of my great, great Grandfather "Moseri" which is located near the confluence side.

I think once you are done with the current project, we would appreciate your assistance in guiding us on how to go about it.

Thank you.

HL Sematla



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Re: NOTICE: IDENTIFICATION OF A GRAVE SITE NEAR A STAFF COMPOUND LOCATED AT MAPUNGUBWE NATIONAL PARK, LIMPOPO PROVINCE 6 days ago 06:16

System tray: UPDATING Inbox. CONNECTED TO: MICROSOFT EXCHANGE. 23°C Sunny. 20:05 14/10/2021. 10 notifications.