

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

### Introduction

South African National Parks was informed by Mr Sinthumule from the Department of Arts and Culture in Northern Cape about a grave discovered at the Richtersveld National Park in 2014. This grave was found at the foot of a mountain where it is easily exposed to erosion (Figure 1). The bones were exposed following flush downpour that resulted from heavy rainfall. Following consultation with the then Park Manager, Mr Whittington, we decided to have a month-long social consultation process – to ensure that community members have been given an opportunity to come forward if they have any role they wish to play.

Adverts were placed, by community representatives, in the four Richtersveld areas, namely, Eksteenfontein (Figure 2), Kuboes (Figure 3), Lekkersing (Figure 4), and Sandrift (Figure 5). Some of adverts were translated by Park staff to Afrikaans considering that communities are more conversant in this language. Community members were given 30 days to contact me if they had any interest in the proposed exhumation and reburial.

On the final day of the social consultation phase, SANParks received a letter from Mr Abe Koopman, the Manager of the World Heritage Site (Appendix A). Mr Koopman demanded that the grave should not be exhumed – but that DNA scientific studies be done to ascertain the identity of the person buried. It was confusing how the proposed scientific study was to be undertaken without exhumation of the grave. He further did not indicate the population group which would be sampled for a comparative study and the basis for doing so. I did indicate to Mr Koopman that while SANParks has no interest to study the bones, we would not object to his demand, provided that his entity allocates funds for the proposed study. While SANParks agreed to give an extension to Mr Koopman for the matter to be discussed at the Board meeting, he never returned to SANParks with further feedback. He also failed to respond to communication from SANParks in this regard.

addo elephant  
agulhas  
IAi-IAis / richtersveld  
augrabies  
bontebok  
camdeboo  
garden route  
golden gate highlands  
groenkloof  
karoo  
kgalagadi transfrontier  
kruger  
mapungubwe  
marakele  
mokala  
mountain zebra  
namaqua  
table mountain  
tankwa karoo  
west coast

I did indicate to Mr Koopman, in further communication, that SANParks intended to apply for a Section 35 permit from the South African Heritage Resources Agency, for the human bones to be archaeologically exhumed and reburied within the Richtersveld National Park as per the notice calling for comments. He never responded to our intentions to bring finality to the matter of a grave that has been exposed as a result of natural factors.



Figure 1: The geographical context of the grave.

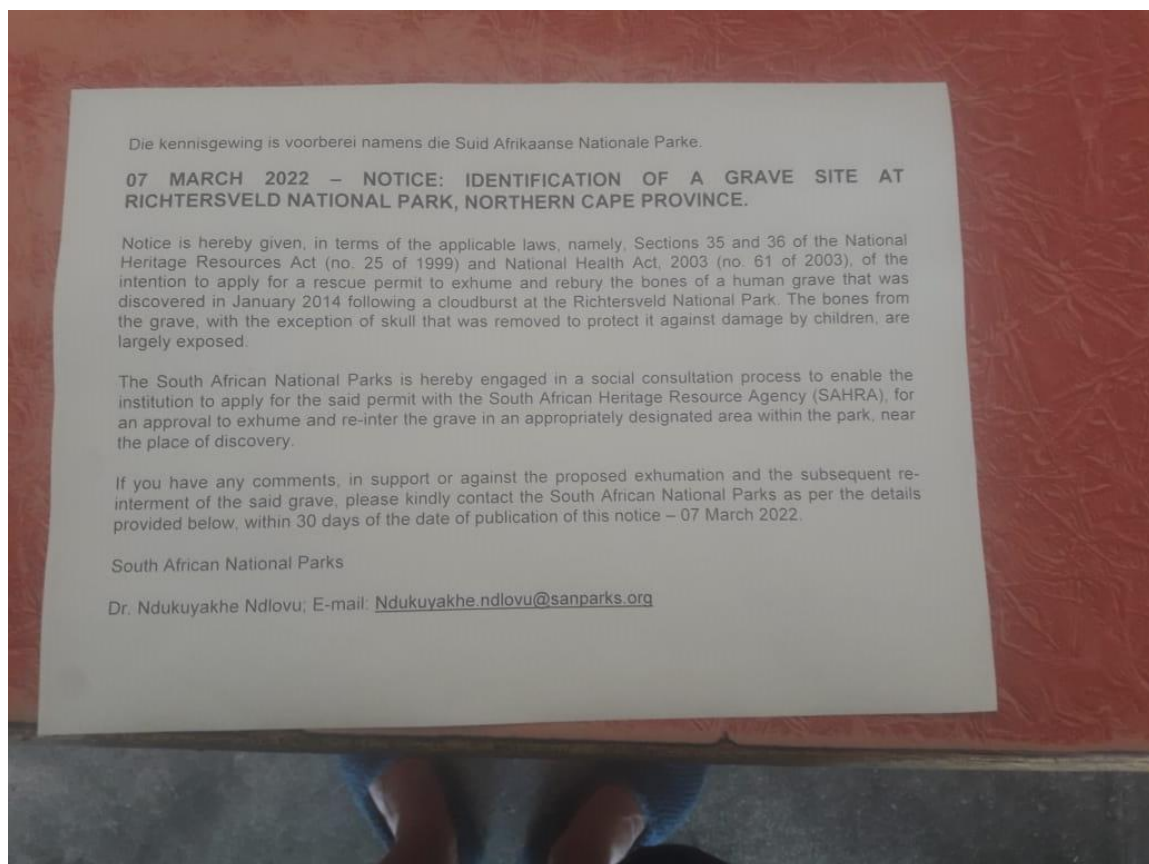


Figure 2: Evidence for social consultation – notice at Eksteenfontein.

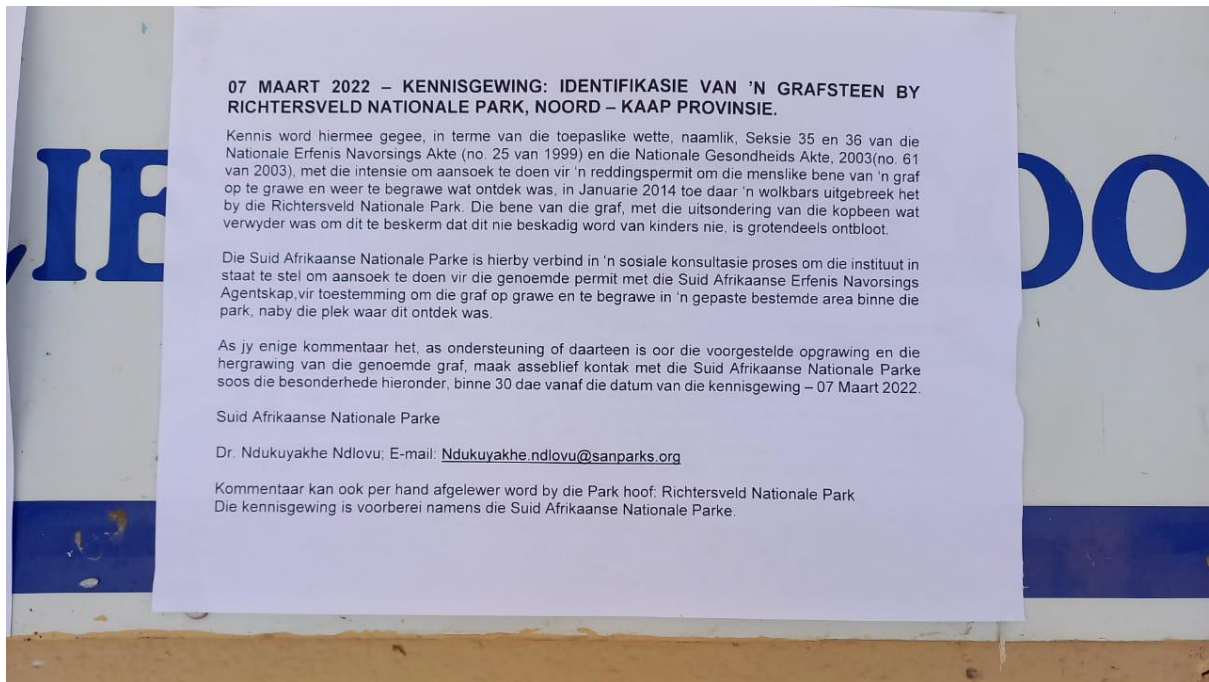


Figure 3: Evidence for social consultation – notice at Kuboes.

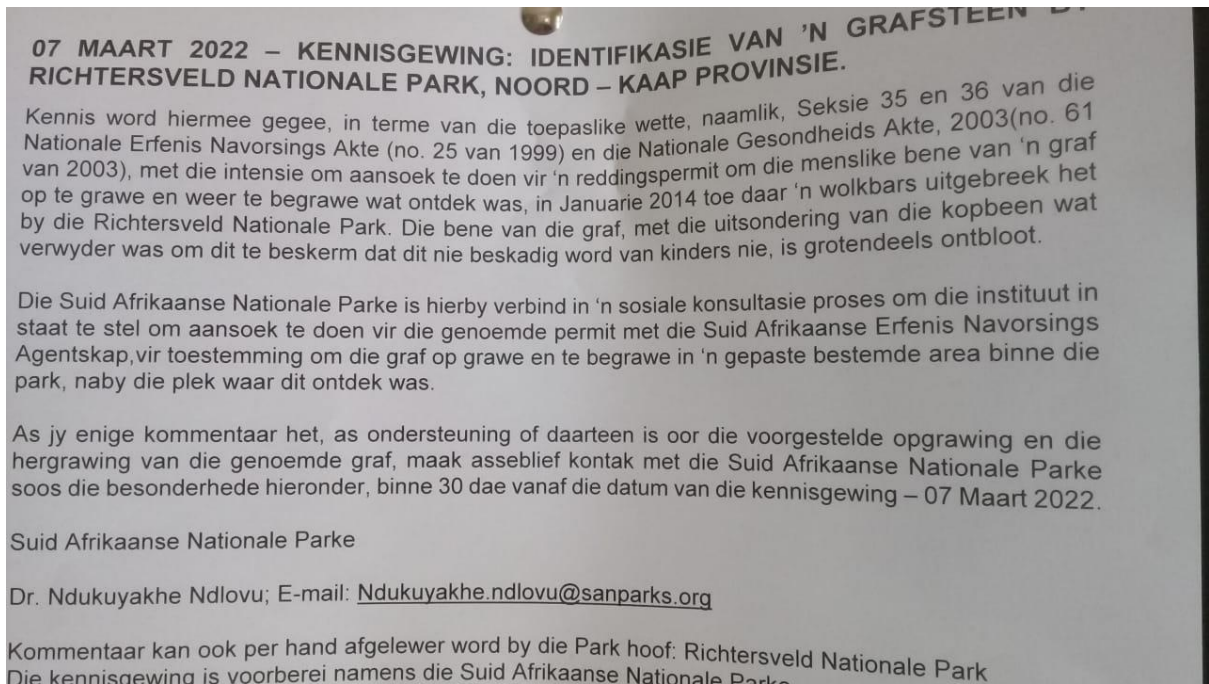


Figure 4: Evidence for social consultation – notice at Lekkersing.



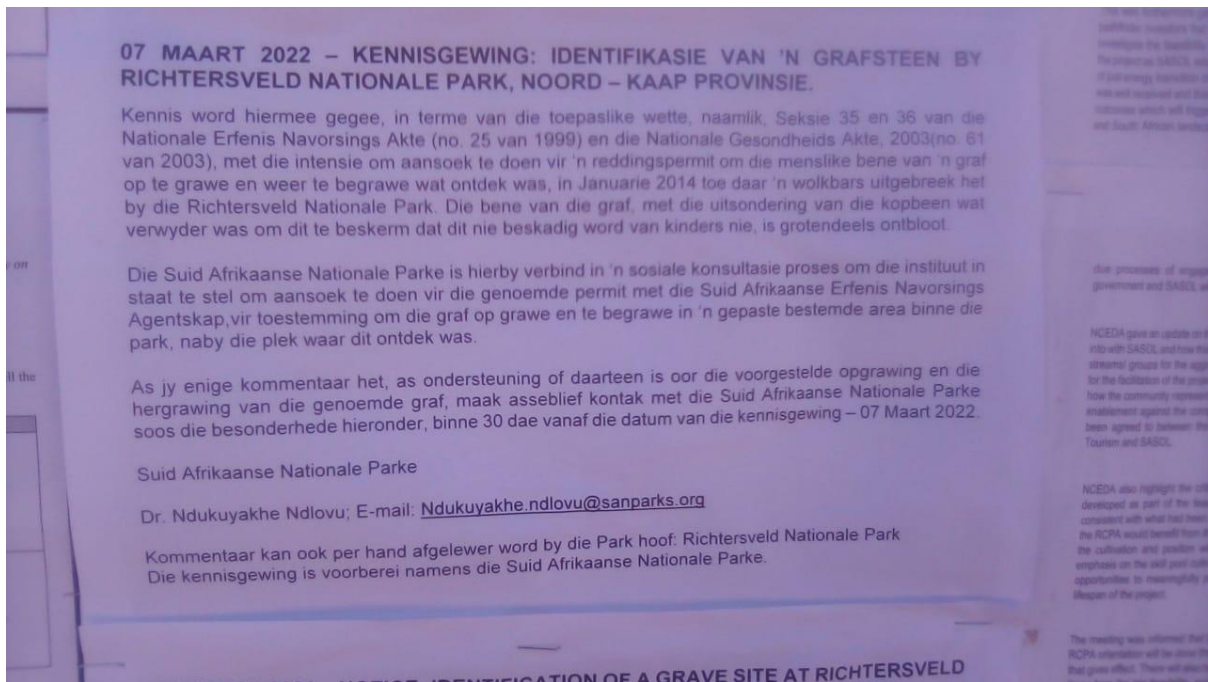


Figure 5: Evidence for social consultation – notice at Sandrift.

### **Exhumation and reburial**

The grave will be exhumed by a qualified archaeologist with over 20 years' experience. The permit holder shall be Dr Ndukuyakhe Ndlovu. As the Principal Investigator, Dr Ndlovu is employed as the Manager for Archaeology within the SANParks. Dr Ndlovu shall be ably assisted by colleagues within the Cultural Heritage Unit. There shall be strict adherence to appropriate archaeological techniques and the use of necessary tools.

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.

### **Conclusion**

SANParks aims to have the exhumation and relocation undertaken as soon as possible, to ensure that the grave is not further exposed to soil erosion threats.

ANNEXURE A – OBJECTION FROM THE RICHTERSVELD WORLD HERITAGE SITE



WORLD HERITAGE CENTER

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[www.Goingwhere.co.za](http://www.Goingwhere.co.za) view and download your daily weather information around Eksteenfontein and the Vander Stel Mountain from:  
<http://www.sasscalweathermet.org>

14 April 2022

South African National Parks  
Pretoria

For attention: Dr. Ndukuyakhe Ndlovu

**Identification of a Grave Site at Richtersveld National Park**

The above matter refers and various emails exchange between us.

U can regards the Richtersveld Cultural and Botanical Landscape (better known as the Richtersveld World Heritage Site) comments as an objection.

Unfortunately is it impossible for the Board to meet on short notice. However some Directors will on 20 April be in Springbok for a meeting with DENC and they will then further discuss this issue.

Heritage Regards.

ABE KOOPMAN  
SITE MANAGER  
RWHS