



an agency of the
Department of Arts and Culture

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South African Heritage Resources Agency - Pretoria Office | 432 Paul Kruger Street | Pretoria

SITE INSPECTION REPORT: SHARPEVILLE MASSCRE MEMORIAL SITE

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HERITAGE INSPECTORATE UNIT

07 March 2016



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Table of Content	Page
Introduction	
Purpose of the site visit	
Background	
Assessment and findings	
Recommendations and resolution	
Conclusion	



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Introduction

Sections 50 of National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) 25 of 1999 give provision for the designation of the heritage inspectors. Section 50(7) state that the heritage inspectors, may at all reasonable time enter upon any land or premises for the purpose of inspecting any heritage resources protected in terms of the provision of the NHRA, or any other property in respect of which the heritage resources authority is exercising its functions in terms of the Act. As a result, heritage inspectors are involved in the management of diverse heritage resources in South Africa in order to ensure that the objective of NHRA are realised and reached. The provisions of section 50 enable heritage inspectors to respond to any issue that relate to the heritage resources management. It is the mandate of SAHRA in terms of NHRA to manage and conserve the heritage resources in South Africa in cooperation with the three spheres of the government and the community.

Background

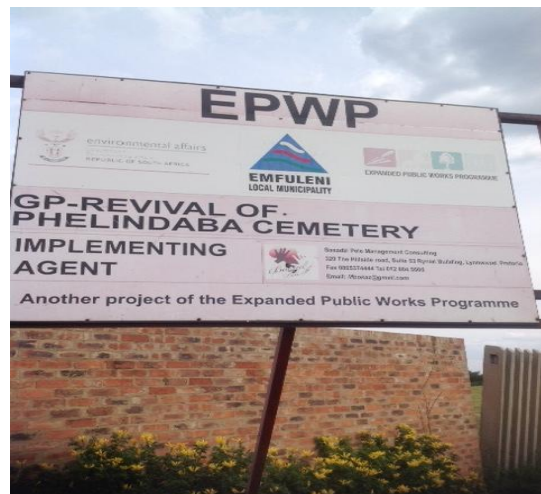
On the 7th of March 2016, SAHRA officials visited Sharpeville Memorial site to conduct site inspection. This was in line with the mandate of SAHRA in conserving and managing heritage resources in the country. Sharpeville massacre site is well known for events of 21st March 1960 whereby free marchers were killed by the oppressive government police. On the 21st March 1960, Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) organised a peaceful protest in the Sharpeville Township. The protesters burnt pass books to voice their frustrations over the laws that restricted them from entering certain areas. Apartheid police force opened fire and killed 69 people after feeling threaten by the protesters. This event marked first of many resistance movements against policies and laws against apartheid government. In order to commemorate the 21st March 1960 events and remember those who lost their lives in order to achieve democratic sate we see today, a memorial garden was built in 2009.



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Sharpeville Memorial Garden is located in Phelindaba cemetery in Sharpeville Township. The memorial garden is a prime location, other locations that form part of the Sharpeville Heritage Precinct includes, old police station, graves of the 69 lives lost during massacre and protest route. These highlight areas of important cultural and significance in South African politics evolution.



Picture 1: Phelindaba Cemetery

Purpose of the site inspection

Every year on the 21st of March, South Africa celebrate human rights day. Sharpeville massacre is used as a symbol of great atrocity that violates human rights. The day is further used to remember those injured and those who lost lives during the 21st March 1960 protest. SAHRA as custodian of heritage resources in cooperation with the Emfuleni municipality and Sedibeng district has since earmarked the Sharpeville Heritage Precinct as a potential National heritage site in terms of section 27(1) read in conjunction with section 3(2) and section 6 of NHRA. As such, site inspection was conducted to ascertain and make further assessment on the physical needs of the site. This will ensure that the site is conserved and properly managed for the purpose of its everlasting legacy. Assessment of the site will enable SAHRA to make resources available for maintenance where necessary and possible.



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Assessment and findings

The design of the memorial park was meant to be as simple as possible to avoid further high maintenance cost. The memorial park is located in an existing cemetery which might have impacted on the design of the memorial garden. The protest route is not well marked and there is an ongoing debate on the exact protest route on the day of 21st March 1960. The old police station has been used as a craft centre warehouse, to stimulate the fading economy of the Sharpeville Township.



Picture2: The Old Sharpeville Police station

In compiling final assessment report, all this factors need to be assessed independently and valued against each other in order to ensure proper conservation and management of Sharpeville Heritage Precinct.

The memorial park contains the memorial wall, gathering area, peripheral areas and poles. The top of the memorial wall contain a planter with flowers. The design of the planter on top of the wall should have considered the dripping of water to the wall. This dripping water damages the memorial wall which was not designed to be permeable.



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Picture 3: The Memorial Wall

Algae is already covering the wall and creating unpleasant view of the wall. The amphitheatre still intact and it only requires grass cutting.



Picture 3: The Memorial wall showing water damage



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One will assume that because of the existing adjacent graves, careful consideration was taken when designing the head stones. Some of the family members have replaced SAHRA's head stones with their own head stones.



Picture 4: The Memorial Graves

Some of the head stones have since cracked and the surrounding lentils have fallen apart. On each head stone, there is a red badge indicating that the graves are National heritage resources. In terms of section 36, the graves fall under general protection. It is not even clear whether the site was ever been graded.





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Picture 5: The Memorial grave site



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1. SAHRA must redo the grave walls
2. The grass at the site must be cut at least three times a year
3. The memorial wall must be painted to prevent water

Conclusion