

Simon's Town Museum

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29th June 2017

Mr Michael Janse van Rensburg
Deputy Director for Affiliated Museums
3rd Floor
Protea Assurance Building
Greenmarket Square
Cape Town
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Dear Mr Janse van Rensburg

RE: DISPOSAL OF THE CABLE SHIP *CABLE RESTORER*

Documents pertaining to the disposal of the CS Cable Restorer are attached – see Annexures 1 and 2.

At a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Simon's Town Museum held on the 14th June 2016, the urgent matter of the disposal of the CS *Cable Restorer* was once again raised. (See Annexure 1 attached).

During said meeting, the Board agreed **unanimously** that the ship must be disposed of **urgently**. The factors that they considered were as follows:

1. Though the *Cable Restorer* was not accessioned by the then manager of the Museum (on the advice of the Museum Service in 1993) and is not therefore part of the collection of the Simon's Town Museum, the Board of Trustees have been the registered owners since 1993.
2. With the harsh weather conditions that we experience in Simon's Town, which is impacted by gale-force winds and significant wave action during both winter and summer, berthing a ship of this size requires constant monitoring and timeous action which the Board does not have the capacity to manage.

3. This is a minor problem when taking into consideration with high cost of maintaining a ship of this size – nevermind a lack of experienced personnel. For this reason, Mr LHM (Harry) Dilley, who is a seasoned mariner and has operated from Simon’s Town (all around the coast from Angola to Mauritius), was awarded a “bare-boat charter” by the Board. Accordingly, all maintenance of the vessel has been carried out by Mr Dilley, since 1993.
4. The trustees are greatly concerned that should the *Cable Restorer* spring a leak, or break loose from her moorings, or cause a problem/damage where she is currently lying (which is not impossible), the Board could be liable for hundreds of millions of rands-worth of damage to yachts and/or naval vessels and/or any other craft lying in the vicinity.
5. If the ship were to sink at her moorings, the cost of salvaging and cleaning up the environment, would again amount to many millions of rands – a liability which would render the Simon’s Town Museum insolvent.
6. Alternative options would be to scrap the vessel which would incur huge costs (again many millions) in towing her to a scrapping facility (which would more than likely be in the Asia). The Museum would not come close to recovering these fees by any scrap value obtained.
7. The Charterer has the right to be compensated for his expenditure pertaining to the maintenance of the ship (dating back to 1993). There is no possibility of the Board repaying the immense amount that Mr Dilley has spent on the ship.
8. Donating the ship to the South African Navy as a target is not an option either as she is full of asbestos and other toxic chemicals, which would once again incur very high costs to remove (if she were to join other scuttled naval vessels and become part of the artificial reef lying off Smitswinkel Bay).
9. Should the ship sink at her moorings (which is not impossible) there would be a major problem with pollution on account of the asbestos, fuel and other substances within her. It would be an extremely hazardous situation for both the public and the environment.
10. The SA Navy remains anxious to get her off the Dockyard wall and their stringent security measures make it very difficult for anybody to visit the ship even with an approved escort.

When the submarine, *SAS Assegaai*, was moored just in front of the CS *Cable Restorer* and was open to the public, access to the ship was much easier. Now that the submarine has been closed to the public and removed, it has become virtually impossible for any visitors or groups to enter the East Dockyard.

11. The ship is alongside a naval wharf, which is part of the East Dockyard of Naval Base Simon's Town. We are dependent on the SA Navy (and more recently on Armscor) for mooring, sewage, water and lights - a situation that could cease at any time. Mr Dilley has to date, paid any costs incurred by berthing the vessel on the outer wall of the East Dockyard.
12. Should the Board be instructed to put the *Cable Restorer* out to tender, there would be another challenge for the Board, in that there is a clause in the charter that says the Charterer has first option to purchase her.
13. Any new owner other than Mr Dilley, would have to be an experienced seaman and have sufficient funding and resources to move to a new location and then to maintain her for the foreseeable future.
14. Mr Dilley, has offered to take the ship off the Board's hands, because as previously mentioned, he has spent a huge amount of money on maintaining her. He is prepared to take the vessel over *voetstoets*, thereby relieving the Board (and the Museum) of any risk connected to the ship.
15. Lastly, the Board has sought the advice of senior officers of the South African Navy, who are experts in maritime matters. In their report, they too have highlighted the potential risk arising from ownership of the CS *Cable Restorer*. (See Annexure 2 attached).

CONCLUSION:

On account of the **high risk** associated with ownership of the vessel, the Board of Trustees of the Simon's Town Museum hereby urgently request permission from the Minister of Cultural Affairs and Sport, Western Cape Government, to dispose of the CS *Cable Restorer* as speedily as possible.

Thank you.

Yours Sincerely

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CDR E.N. WESSELO
CHAIRPERSON
THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SIMON'S TOWN MUSEUM