

Submission of Concern

Pietermaritzburg

City Hall



To

The President: His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa
The Premier of Kwazulu-Natal
KZN MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
The Mayor, Msunduzi Municipality
National Department of Public Works
South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA)
Amafa / Heritage KwaZulu Natali (AMAFA)

Compiled by MARRC and concerned residents and friends of the
Pietermaritzburg City Hall

MARRC: Msunduzi Association of Residents, Ratepayers and Civics



“Our rich and varied cultural heritage has a profound power to build our nation”

Nelson Mandela



Executive Summary

The protection, preservation and celebration of ALL heritage in South Africa is enshrined in our Constitution and legislation. Historical buildings, cultural events, traditions, artefacts etc all play a role in unifying us as a nation. Organs of State and local government have a duty and responsibility to uphold the Constitution of SA and the relevant legislation pertaining to safeguarding our heritage. Unique buildings and elements of our capital city must be protected and preserved but they should also form part of a sustainable economy generating multiple income streams in a responsible manner and within the law. Unfortunately this is where Msunduzi Municipality, AMAFA and delinquent property owners are failing dismally.

This document will highlight the sad state of the City Hall as an immediate focus as well as touching on the general apathy and lack of vision around maximising the heritage gems that are part of the grubby and disappearing crown jewels of our unique capital city.

Examine the condition of the South African flag (flying at half-mast and in tatters) at the Pietermaritzburg City Hall on Friday, 1 October 2021. We believe that it accurately depicts the sorry state of this national monument and the poor stewardship of this valuable and historic resource.

In this document, MARRC and a group of concerned residents will outline the devastating plight of the Pietermaritzburg City Hall in order to bring it to the attention of a number of relevant authorities and insist that immediate action be taken in order to preserve this significant heritage site.

Continued...

Important questions raised by the media, MARRC, residents and ratepayers through various media posts:

- 1. *What are the Pietermaritzburg City Council and AMAFA doing about the City Hall roof repair?*** A member of AMAFA said that it had been repaired with zincalume which is similar to chromo deck. Examination of recent photographic evidence indicates that this has NOT been done!
- 2. *Given the above contradiction, residents would like to know the following:***
Was the job paid for but never done?
Was the theft covered by insurance and was it paid out?
When will the job be completed?
- 3. *How can the City Hall, and its irreplaceable vaulted ceiling etc, be URGENTLY and temporarily protected?*** Over a year has passed since the original theft was reported and we are entering the second rainy season since the original theft occurred
- 4. *Why are AMAFA not holding Msunduzi Municipality accountable to maintain the historic sites of Pietermaritzburg and the greater Municipal area?*** Why is there no legal action? The city clearly has money with the release of sponsorship of R27 million for a soccer club and allegedly R90 million unspent funds returned to Province!
- 5. *What is the City Council going to do about securing important heritage sites?*** Is there a plan and vision which incorporates reviving tourism?

Continued...

6. ***How did the thief gain access to the roof without alerting the City Hall security?***
7. ***What has happened with the case after the arrest of the thief in October 2020?***
8. ***Who is buying all the copper roofing from a number of buildings in addition to the City Hall and is this being investigated?*** The copper is purported to be worth millions of Rands
9. ***There are reports that the old Deeds Office roof in Church Street has also been stolen. Is this true?***
10. ***Why is looting being allowed to happen at the Voortrekker graveyard?*** It is reported that the Museum in Loop Street is also struggling with issues of vandalism



Theft of priceless heritage!

Looting and gross negligence at the Pietermaritzburg City Hall

This building is OUR unique collective cultural heritage and we as civil society and local government are its guardians – we therefore have an obligation and responsibility to preserve it for future generations.

Then and now...

- It is the largest red brick building of the Victorian Era in the Southern Hemisphere
- It is the current headquarters for the City Council
- It is recognised internationally as the start of the Comrades Marathon and Amashova Cycle Race to Durban which are major boosts to the tourism economy of Pietermaritzburg
- It used to be a popular venue for numerous concerts featuring the KZNPO, KZN Youth Choir Events,
- It used to host various community events, weddings, prizegiving's and conferences
- Pietermaritzburg once claimed international status as the "City of Peace" because a number of Nobel Prize Laureate recipients have given speeches in our City Hall including Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Chief Albert Luthuli









How to steal a roof!

Satellite photographs of our City Hall reveals the theft of the roof over the course of a year. It was reported in “The Witness” on **15 October 2020** that the thief had been caught. And yet the theft appears to continue?

We were told that AMAFA had arranged for a temporary repair with Zincalume roof. Where is that? Was it ordered and paid for? When it rains, our City Hall is very vulnerable. What is being done? Surely this is urgent?

Photos from GOOGLE EARTH

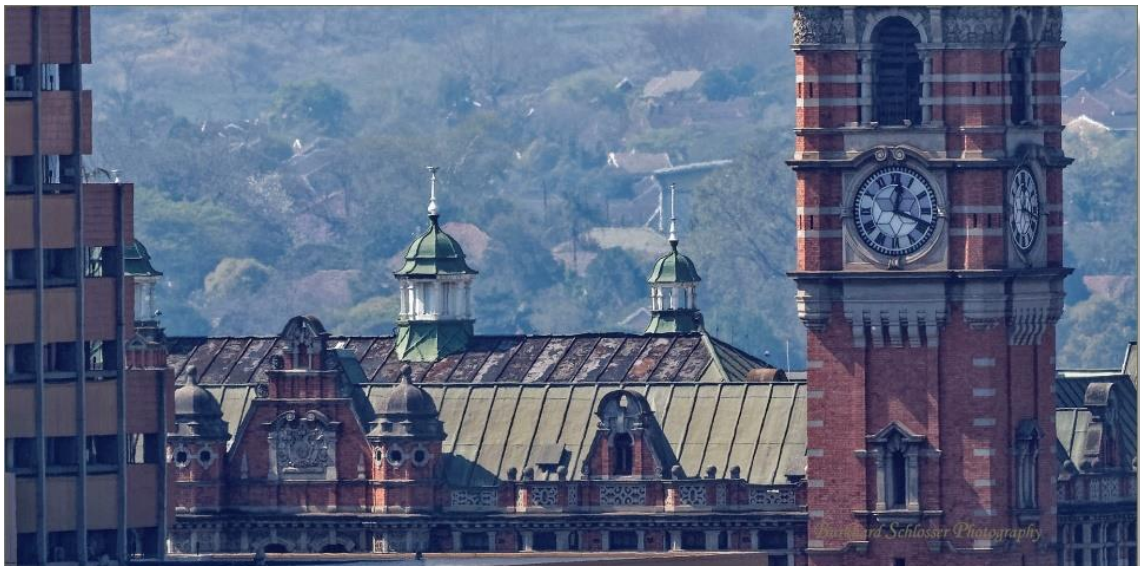


February 2020: Roof is intact



July 2020: Half the copper roof has been stolen

December 2020: $\frac{3}{4}$ of the copper roof has been stolen!





This is OUR “City of Choice”

Selective highlights of neglect, failure & non-compliance

Pietermaritzburg, A City Looted

“Our Heritage is being looted and vandalised in front of our eyes. These are significant heritage and tourism sites that are used to attract tourists and generate income for our city from tourism.”

This house belongs to the **Department of Public Works**. We call it the ‘Tree House’ as it has an Oak Tree growing right through its roof.

This house, in the same street where both Project Gateway and ESSA have restored and maintained Victorian buildings, best sums up the complete decay, neglect and lack of stewardship of buildings by the government.



Burkhard Schlosser Photography



Alexandra Swimming Pool



The Voortrekker Graveyard in Commercial Road



Grime and neglect in the streets of Pietermaritzburg showing visible signs of a breakdown of service delivery, maintenance and enforcement of by-laws







Showcasing Excellence & Compliance

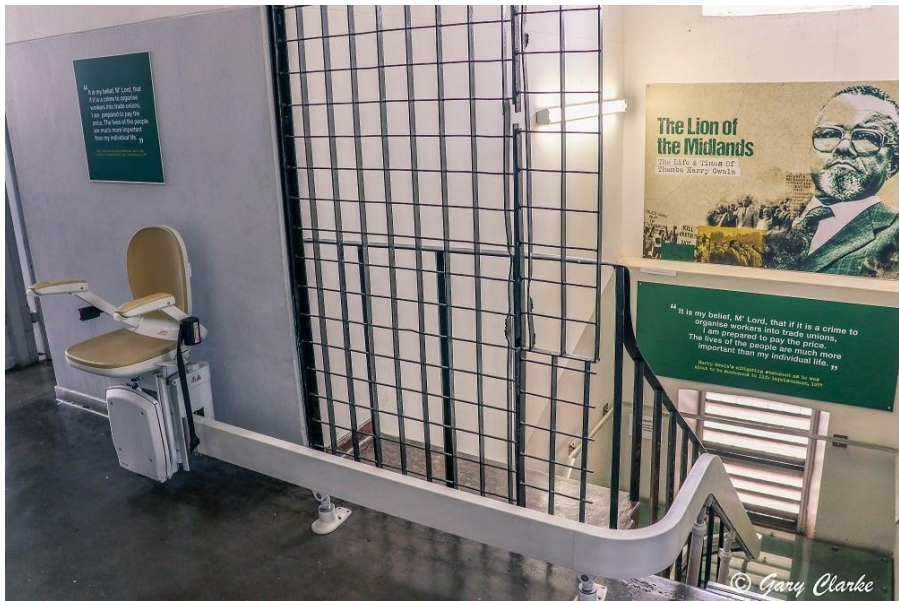
The **Evangelical Seminary of Southern Africa (ESSA)** has proved to be an excellent steward of the Victorian houses and the old Lutheran church on Pine Street. They are also a wonderful model of restoration as they have purchased one house at a time and practically renovated the entire road in compliance with AMAFA standards. The seminary mainly serves students from SA and throughout the African continent.

Project Gateway is also a very good example of restoration as their state of the art museum records the devastating atrocities committed in the **Old Prison** (Mandela and Gandhi were imprisoned there briefly). It now houses a Christian NGO, primary school and School of Fashion Design.

These are surely the models and examples we need to follow to restore our city's heritage and for the next generation to truly inherit and utilise these most valuable resources.







**Civil Society demands accountability,
compliance and immediate action!**
***Msunduzi Municipality and AMAFA should
take note of the following:***

The National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999

The National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999 intends:

- to introduce an integrated and interactive system for the management of the national heritage resources;
- to promote good government at all levels, and empower civil society to nurture and conserve their heritage resources so that they may be bequeathed to future generations;
- to lay down general principles for governing heritage resources management throughout the Republic;
- to introduce an integrated system for the identification, assessment and management of the heritage resources of South Africa;
- to establish the South African Heritage Resources Agency together with its Council to co-ordinate and promote the management of heritage resources at national level;
- to set norms and maintain essential national standards for the management of heritage resources in the Republic and to protect heritage resources of national significance;
- to control the export of nationally significant heritage objects and the import into the Republic of cultural property illegally exported from foreign countries;
- to enable the provinces to establish heritage authorities which must adopt powers to protect and manage certain categories of heritage resources;
- to provide for the protection and management of conservation-worthy places and areas by local authorities; and
- to provide for matters connected therewith.

<https://www.gov.za/documents/national-heritage-resources-act>

Tourism must be leveraged to grow South Africa's economy

<https://mg.co.za/article/2020-03-04-tourism-must-be-leveraged-to-grow-south-africas-economy/>

Tourism is one of those low-hanging fruits that South Africa should leverage and harness — not just as part of how we achieve our national priorities but to also showcase our country, our story, our people and our culture to the world. For South Africans it is sometimes also important to be reminded of the splendour and diversity of our country.

The World Bank in its report “[Tourism in Africa: Harnessing Tourism for Growth and Improved Livelihoods](#)” describes tourism’s main comparative advantage over other sectors by noting that “visitor expenditures [domestic and international] have a ‘flow-through’ or catalytic effect across the economy in terms of production and employment creation.” This means that the sector is able to create jobs and development at every stage.

Importantly, the economic growth created by the sector impacts positively on the lives of ordinary people who are simultaneously beneficiaries and co-creators. Tourism has, the world over, been shown to be a sector in which people can simultaneously participate, and co-create their economic growth and development stories. It is a sector where our innate entrepreneurship skills can come to life. Many experiences that are currently popular in South Africa, like bicycling tours through [Soweto](#), started from a life experience that someone was bold enough to build into a business.

In recognising the role of tourism in growing our economy and creating jobs we know that government, business and civil society must begin to work together to conceptualise and, more importantly, implement the frameworks we agree on. The minister of tourism has established a multi-sectoral stakeholder team which is called upon to discuss and come up with meaningful solutions.

"Our rich and varied cultural heritage has a profound power to build our nation"

Nelson Mandela

"If we stand tall it is because we stand on the shoulders of many ancestors"

African Proverb

"A nation that forgets its past has no future"

Winston Churchill

"A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots"

Marcus Garvey

"A concerted effort to preserve our heritage is a vital link to our cultural, educational, aesthetic, inspirational and economic legacies"

Steve Berry

ADDENDUMS

A record of media reactions, posts and communication by civil society through MARRC and citizens of Msunduzi

OCTOBER 2021: THEFT OF CITY HALL ROOF

A resident alerted MARRC (via a post on our Facebook page) to the theft of the copper roof on Pietermaritzburg's City Hall. A photo from Google Earth was supplied as evidence.

MARRC posted in response and called for members of the public to verify this. The public responded with information which confirmed that the theft had actually taken place a year earlier. "The Witness" reported on 15 October 2020, that the thief had been arrested. See link to article below:
<https://www.news24.com/witness/news/pietermaritzburg/copper-thief-caught-stealing-roof-sheeting-off-pietermaritzburgs-city-hall-20201015>

Concerned resident and photographer, Burkhard Schlosser, sent us a photograph taken of the City Hall from Cordwalles Road. It appeared to confirm that a large section of the roof was indeed missing.

Lara Edmonds, Vice-Chair of Athlone RRA and part of MARRC's marketing team, then contacted a Durban architect who had previously expressed concern at the sorry state of Pietermaritzburg's heritage buildings. He was appalled by the photographs and immediately messaged his contact at AMAFA. It is understood that this organization has a mandate to protect heritage sites. See their website:
<https://amafainstitute.org.za/about-us/>

The message came back from AMAFA via WhatsApp that the local council was bankrupt and that the town hall roof had had a temporary repair done using zincalume to replace the copper roof that had been stolen. MARRC and members of the public were most perplexed by this message as photographic evidence appeared to completely contradict that statement.

The photographs of the exposed Pietermaritzburg City Hall roof went viral on social media and made the front pages of local KwaZulu-Natal newspapers.

<https://www.iol.co.za/mercury/news/pietermaritzburg-city-hall-stripped-by-copper-thieves-despite-24-hour-security-says-msunduzi-mayor-mzimkhulu-thebolla-48295387-80d3-438f-9282-17aba10eed0f>

At about the same time, the Pietermaritzburg City Council announced that they had approved the sponsorship of a private soccer club, Maritzburg United, to the tune of R27 million over the course of three years.

<https://www.iol.co.za/mercury/news/maritzburg-united-football-club-nets-r27m-msunduzi-municipality-deal-in-spite-of-objections-88658405-7935-4da8-ae99-c182d9dd8dc1>

This announcement caused an outcry from city residents who were struggling with daily water and electricity outages. Schools even had to temporarily close due to the water crisis. The general sentiment expressed by residents on numerous social media posts, was that the funds could be better spent on the city's crumbling infrastructure and/or maintenance of existing public sporting facilities such as the historic Alexandra Swimming Baths.

Pietermaritzburg ratepayers' body slams City's proposal to fund Maritzburg United

<https://www.news24.com/witness/news/pietermaritzburg/pietermaritzburg-ratepayers-body-slams-citys-proposal-to-fund-maritzburg-united-20210824>

Broke city finds R27m to pay PSL club

KZN capital can't fix roads but it votes to subsidise soccer team

<https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/news/2021-08-29-broke-city-finds-r27m-to-pay-psl-club/>

Msunduzi Msunduzi applies to have R96 million in unspent grants rolled over

<https://www.news24.com/witness/news/pietermaritzburg/msunduzi-msunduzi-applies-to-have-r96-million-in-unspent-grants-rolled-over-20210913>

OCTOBER 2021: PROTEST ACTION

Residents from RRAs in Imbali, Edendale, Woodlands, Montrose, Athlon, Wembley, Hayfields, Cleland and Lincoln Meade etc. stood united against the corruption and mismanagement of our city by our City Council. The mess, decay and tatty South African flag flying half-mast at the Pietermaritzburg City Hall bore testimony to the state of our city in 2021.

https://www.iol.co.za/sunday-tribune/news/msunduzi-residents-protest-over-r27-million-given-to-maritzburg-united-48d86353-dc3a-46a1-84a3-df43150617fe?fbclid=IwAR2jY6qxVrzoIUv6z7_eOwdVE3tD4E94bthGcC5Kr4A0qkfcrY4hb0urK6g

SEPTEMBER 2021: COMMUNICATION WITH AMAFA

We reached out to AMAFA via telephone and email several times, asking them to attend and/or host a Heritage Tour and to share their challenges with us as representatives of residents and ratepayers in Pietermaritzburg. They did not acknowledge or respond to the invitation below.

Sent: Monday, 20 September 2021 2:19 PM

To: ros.devereux@amafainstitute.org.za;

celeste.rossouw@amafainstitute.org.za

Cc: siyamtanda.capa@witness.co.za; Anthony Waldhausen; 'Ruth Croeser';

Gary Clarke; Burkhard Schlosser; 'Ursuhla'; 'Kantha';

agardensuite@mweb.co.za

Subject: Invitation: Upper West Street Heritage Tour

Dear Ros

We are delighted to report that we have made contact with Dr. Bill Houston, and we have arranged a Photographic and Historical Tour of Upper West Street with himself and a couple of other interested parties. He suggested you may be able to help us gain access/and tell us about Governor's House (now UNISA) and the station.

We look forward to hearing from you – please let us know whether any other AMAFA members would like to attend. Unfortunately, we are limited to 25 places and some are already booked.

Best wishes

Lara Edmonds

(0845870880)

SEPTEMBER 2021: COMMUNICATION WITH AMAFA

From: agardensuite@mweb.co.za [mailto:agardensuite@mweb.co.za]

Sent: Thursday, 16 September 2021 9:41 AM

To: 'Ros Devereux'

Cc: thilogren.pillay@amafainstitute.org.za;

celeste.rossouw@amafainstitute.org.za; Anthony Waldhausen; 'Kantha';

agardensuite@mweb.co.za; Burkhard Schlosser; Gary Clarke;

siyamtanda.capa@witness.co.za; lee.rondganger@inl.co.za;

news3@capitalmedia.co.za; Dave Ryder - Ward 25 PMB; 'Ruth Croeser'

Subject: URGENT HERITAGE SITE CONCERNS - CITY HALL ROOF

Importance: High

Dear Ros

Thank you for the email. The 'Photographic Tour' was a rather spontaneous event and so we apologise for the short notice. It arose when MARRC received a tip-off from a member of the public that the City Hall roof was once again stolen. We also received reports that the Voortrekker Graveyard was looted. Please view the attached photographs by Burkhard Schlosser – they were taken this last week and we have many more we can send to you. Please feel free to use them as evidence and in any correspondence or publication – please credit the photographer.

Our investigations were also fuelled by the council's decision to sponsor a private soccer club to the tune of R27 million (minimum over three years) and then the news that R90 000 000 was to be returned to Province unspent. This was the straw that broke the proverbial camel's back, and there was an outcry from residents. So we first decided to try and have a close-up look at the City Hall roof and then track the condition of our sporting facilities as we wanted to prove that the R27 million could be better spent. We then received Burkhard's photos and were devastated to discover the extent of the 'heritage looting.'

We have all been asleep - trapped in lockdown and quite unaware of the decay of some of our most precious heritage sites. But Pietermaritzburg is 'waking up' as Burkhard's photographs and our posts are going viral on social media.

A number of journalists have also contacted us to follow the story, and I am sure you are aware of the article featured on the front page of “The Witness” recently.

As part of our ‘tour yesterday, we gained access to the City Hall’s main auditorium (I have sent photos via WhatsApp to Khanyi as I do not have them on email yet but will send them to you). **Our ‘amateur’ observations are: the auditorium smelled damp, and several walls and areas of the ceiling have water damage. It is heart breaking. We have also been informed by members of the public who have had access to the City Hall that other areas are filthy, paintings are missing, and there are serious electrical issues with plugs.**

Naturally, we are VERY concerned about the state of this most significant heritage site. The rainy season is here, and it is imperative that the roof be covered immediately to protect the hall. We would also like to urgently meet with AMAFA to see what assistance we can offer – perhaps the photos, public and media support, even fundraising will be able to help you achieve your mandate as guardians of our heritage in Pietermaritzburg?

Would you please confirm a suitable time to meet? It would be wonderful if AMAFA could take interested MARRC members on a tour of Heritage sites in Loop Street and also share the challenges you face as an organization.

Sincerely

Lara Edmonds

Please note

We did receive a response on the 17 September 2021 from Ros Devereux (Principal Heritage Officer). She mentioned some actions that she was going to take. Unfortunately, the AMAFA legal terms and conditions prevent us from publishing the email here.

SEPTEMBER 2021: PHOTOGRAPHIC TOURS OF THE CITY HALL AND INNER CITY

With the media and social media coverage on Pietermaritzburg's plight gaining momentum in Heritage Month, and with the public's interest and concern mounting, MARRC arranged a photographic tour and invited AMAFA to join them on a walk-about in and around City Hall and Church Street. Unfortunately, AMAFA was unable to attend at such short notice.

Social Media Post: Pietermaritzburg is bleeding!

Once lauded as a world-class city of immense historical and architectural importance, attracting tourists from all over the world, it has now gained an infamous reputation of corruption, greed, party-politics, arrogance and gross incompetence. The rot of a failed ruling party has well and truly set in and the tragedy of a crumbling capital city is becoming more evident, the sights and sounds clear for all to see.

The very jewels that were at the heart of a thriving tourism industry supporting a vibrant local economy have been plundered and left to decay and rot. Critical services and infrastructure supporting residents and livelihoods, and which form the very core of what makes a city attractive for tourism and investment, have been neglected and crippled by years of corruption and useless management!

The inner city, once a thriving economic hub frequented by middle-class shoppers before the advent of western malls is abuzz with entrepreneurs, shop owners and vendors surrounded by hundreds of adverts indiscriminately plastered over every surface promoting abortions, loans, beauty treatments and one-stop services for all of life's ailments and challenges.

The energy and vibe is contagious and sometimes overpowering, but not as overpowering as the filth-littered streets and alleys with raw waste and sewerage in some places flowing between pedestrians and stalls! There is clearly no visible evidence of enforcement of by-laws or even heritage laws as once magnificent old buildings, forming part of the heritage of our capital, have simply been allowed to be defaced and scarred by many derelict property owners.

Vendors and shop owners in these seedy streets decry the absence of middle-class shoppers and tourists but in all honesty, while I would far prefer shopping in the buzz and energy of downtown Pietermaritzburg compared to the soulless and sterile claustrophobic confines of one of our malls, the golden goose of heritage tours and tourist dollars has long since been stolen. The guts has simply been ripped out of tourism and the sole responsibility for this lies squarely at the feet of local govt, certain property owners (including the Dept of Public Works!) and toothless govt departments whose mandate it is to conserve and protect the “heritage” of ALL peoples and cultures in South Africa.

Groups of concerned residents, NGO’s and responsible property owners are now at the frontline of a battle to hold Msunduzi Municipality accountable to deliver on their mandate of governing responsibly and efficiently in the interests of all residents. The economic future of our city, from the inner city to the suburbs, needs a collective and unified voice which demands good governance and leadership backed up by real actions and transparency. If the heart of our city is rotten...if the legacy of all cultural groups who shaped our city is eroded and forgotten...if we cannot respect each other...how then will we grow and thrive?

Can we dare to hope for a vibrant African city where the dreams and aspirations of all are accommodated and encouraged within an atmosphere of cultural respect supported by visionary selfless local govt leaders??

Let the following images speak for themselves...the good, the bad and the ugly!

<https://www.gov.za/heritage-day>

Heritage Day on 24 September recognises and celebrates the cultural wealth of our nation. South Africans celebrate the day by remembering the cultural heritage of the many cultures that make up the population of South Africa. Various events are staged throughout the country to commemorate this day.

What is a heritage property?

Any structure older than 60 years is protected by the National Heritage Resources Act. Heritage properties are managed and graded by Heritage Western Cape (HWC), local authorities who have the necessary competencies and the South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA).

<https://www.sahra.org.za/legislation/>

South Africa has a rich cultural heritage which is largely unprotected, unknown, and undiscovered. Furthermore, many communities residing in those areas that have declared National Heritage Sites are unaware of the intrinsic value of those sites or how to manage and protect them.

South African Heritage Resources Agency has been given a mandate by the National Heritage Resources Act, Act No. 25 of 1999, to protect, monitor and, manage the country's heritage resources, while also providing, guidance to the communities who are reside in those area where there are National Heritage Sites. Where there are contraventions of the act the inspectors will investigate, issue contraventions and, prohibition notices, issue penalties where necessary and refer cases to court for prosecution.

Posted by Gary Clarke

Social Media Post: The heart, the soul and the capital city stronghold – A heritage looted

We casually walked into [Pietermaritzburg City Hall](#) this morning. The security was lax, neither temperature checks nor signatures were required. We were relieved to get access so easily, as we were on a mission! We needed to investigate any damage that may have occurred as a result of the stolen copper roof.

First impressions as we entered the auditorium - it smelled damp, was dusty and sad.

Our hearts sank when we viewed the damage, "It is just the beginning of the rainy season! It is going to get worse! We have to do something!"

Our voices echoed in that hollow space as we took it in turns to point out the damage. We shared memories of school prize givings, choir evenings, weddings and evenings with the orchestra.

And as I write this post this evening, the soft rain falls on our roof and I know 24 mm of rain is expected tomorrow. I wonder what it will do to our once beautiful town hall? And I wonder what we are going to do about it?

Posted by Lara Edmonds

The
Witness

TWO DRAMATIC KZN HEISTS

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Photographic credits: Burkhard Schlosser and Gary Clarke