



Registration Number: K2023720922



07 August 2024

To whom it may concern:

We, as a concerned heritage NPC in Bethelsdorp Village, are writing to you to formally lodge a complaint concerning the destruction of the historic Bethelsdorp graveyard, which dates back to the 1800s.

This incident occurred on Friday, August 2, 2024. The contractor, appointed by the Municipality to clear the area for the repair of leaking sewerage pipes, carried out the destruction.

The matter was reported to CIIR Moodley on Saturday, August 3, 2024. She arrived on-site shortly thereafter. Upon her arrival, the TLB operator promptly left the site, despite indications that work would resume on Sunday, August 4, 2024. However, no further work was carried out.

It is our belief that CIIR Moodley's actions constitute complicity in a criminal offense by failing to clearly instruct the TLB operator to take precautions against damaging this historical graveyard. This negligence contravenes the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) legislation, specifically section 36 of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA).

The following outlines the significant historical context for our complaint, which will lead to a criminal case being registered to compel the Municipality and responsible parties to take remedial action and hold the Municipality accountable for failing to protect the heritage of Bethelsdorp. The officially recorded history of this site began in 1801.

- 1801: The Governor of the Cape instructed Landdros Bresler of Graaff Reinet to select a suitable piece of land in Algoa Bay for a temporary Hottentot settlement.
- 1803: Governor Janssens approved a plan to allocate 6,700 morgen (approximately 5,583 hectares) of land to Van der Kemp and the Hottentots.

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- 1806: Under British rule, Bethelsdorp was granted an additional piece of land.
- 1876: This year is considered one of the most significant in the history of Bethelsdorp. The Cape Government granted the residents title to the land they were living on, and the remaining property was designated as commonage for grazing and gardening.
- 1921: This year marked the resolution of certain disputes in Bethelsdorp between the London Missionary Society and its successors, the Congregational Union Church Aid and Missionary Society of South Africa, and the Bethelsdorp Board of Supervisors.

Under the Bethelsdorp Congregational Church, the old graveyard was maintained under the Church's control. All previous Reverends sent to South Africa under the auspices of the London Missionary Society were interred here, including Rev. James Kitchingham, who passed away and was buried in the old graveyard in 1848. Additionally, Reverend Aldin Grout and his wife, missionaries from the American Missionary to Port Natal, were buried there in 1836.

Included are some pictures of the burial sites prior to the destruction.





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Now some pictures of the burial sites after the destruction.



← This shows the destruction of the old “Kosters”, Reverends and other early inhabitants buried in this area.

→ This TLB that was used for the works. CIIR Moodley has the exact details of the company that performed the work on behalf of the Municipality. After she was informed by members of the community the work was stopped.





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Further proof of the extend of the damaged caused.

Conclusion.

In accordance with section 36 of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) as governed by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA), this incident constitutes a criminal offense.

The relevant parties that must be notified immediately include:

- SAHRA
- United Congregational Church of South Africa
- Bethelsdorp Congregational Church
- Local Municipality – Mayoral Office
- Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Commission

Furthermore, a case must be opened under the legislation, as this violation is a criminal offense.

We urge you to address this issue promptly and take appropriate measures to prevent further destruction of our heritage sites.

Sincerely,

Brandon Finnis
Chairperson
Bethelsdorp Village Development Agency

