

Business day

R12m to be spent on refurbishing the president's official Durban residence

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More than R12m will be ploughed into refurbishing the official presidential residence in Durban.

The Department of Public Works announced on Thursday that it is "currently undertaking major renovations of the Dr John L Dube House" presidential residence to address storm damage as well as a wood borer infestation.

The residence — which will be occupied by President Cyril Ramaphosa during his visits to the city — is a heritage building, which was first occupied in 1904 and has seven buildings within its grounds.

The department spokesperson Thami Mchunu said renovations to the historic residence began last month.

"These have been necessitated by the storms that ravaged Durban in 2016. Comprehensive investigations and feasibility studies had to be done for the project to be registered. Also, to ensure the heritage aspect of the facility was not compromised, the heritage council in KwaZulu-Natal, Amafa, was approached for input and approval of the proposed repairs," he said.

"The investigation also found that extensive repairs needed to be carried out. Wood borer infestation was also found and had to be addressed."

The renovations include roof repairs to the main house, upgrading of security installations including cameras and a scanner, repairs to the housekeeper's flat, repairs and renovations to the guest house and the property manager's quarters. The work is expected to take eight months to complete at a cost of R12.7m.

Said Mchunu: "It must be noted that Dr John L Dube House is a heritage site, boasting well over 100 years of rich history. Therefore, whatever is renovated or replaced will have to be restored to its original state by a competent specialist contractor with proven experience in heritage facilities."