

# Sarah Baartman Remembrance Centre project at standstill

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The completion of the Sarah Baartman Remembrance Centre in Hankey, Eastern Cape, estimated to cost R165 million, has been delayed for more than four years.

The aim of the centre is to boost the local economy, create jobs and honour the late Sarah Baartman. But so far, it has only angered the town's people who says they have been left out of the legacy project.

It's being built by the national Department of Public Works on behalf of the national Department of Arts and Culture.

The legacy project was expected to create nearly 1 000 jobs for skilled and semi-skilled workers during the construction phase and 134 permanent jobs. A change of contractors and labour action due to non-payment created several delays.

"We were promised that the site will be completed in May 2019. As you can see behind, me it's very unlikely that it will be completed. The other downside of this project is that it was promised that a thousand jobs would be created while the project is ongoing," says Malcolm Figg, leader in the DA Tsitisi-Kouga Municipality.

Opposite the centre overlooking the Gamtoos Valley is Sarah Baartman's modest gravesite. Despite it being a National Heritage Site, it's been vandalised numerous times.

"We are disappointed that her gravesite is not a proper burial site where South Africans can come and learn about South Africa's history; learn about her experience. We are very disappointed that it's not given the proper prominence that it should have," says Phumzile van Damme, DA Spokesperson.

The labour unrest at this site relates to wages. The workers claim they are underpaid and are also hit with late payments.

They want to fall under civil construction and not general construction and earn R250 a day instead of R150 to R180.

"There were so many promises that we were going to get paid a lot of money but today it's a different language that they are talking. We are out of the gates. Some of us were inside in the premises we have."

"I was proud during the time I was working inside there and I was doing it for my children and those buildings were for the Hankey people."

The *South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC)* has been unable to secure a reply from the Departments of Arts and Culture and Public Works or the contractor on site with regards to the current situation despite numerous attempts during the past week. The Democratic Alliance (DA) will also raise the matter in Parliament.