

■ RESTORATION

# Historic court revamp stalled

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IT REMAINS unclear when the gutted Pretoria Magistrate's Court will be recognised as the historic monument that it is.

This is despite a promise by Public Works Minister Patricia de Lille to clean up the department and get the magistrate's courts up to scratch.

Those who use Pretorius Street would be familiar with wire fence covered with green mesh at the boarded-up site.

A small, wooden hut stands at the gate, with one security guard on duty to protect the rubble and wooden planks.

The building caught alight on October 2010. The fire, which was believed to have been caused by an electrical fault in one of the ceilings, left the upper floor of the building completely gutted.

According to reports at the time, the blaze broke out shortly before 2pm and caused the roof to cave in.

The adjacent court building, currently being used as the main magistrate's court, was unaffected.

Restoration plans to bring the building to its former glory were necessitated after it was declared a historic landmark in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act. Most of the structure would remain as it was, including the granite floors in certain areas.

The plan included internal services

reticulation, roof structure, IT and audiovisual installation features.

However, the restoration has stalled, with the building still empty and its windows completely removed.

A few weeks ago, De Lille indicated that her department had started working on getting the revamp of old magistrate's court under way.

Her spokesperson, Zara Nicholson, said the current contractor was under financial duress, and the department was trying to assist by assigning the project to another service provider.

Nicholson said the contractor had vacated the site and they were still working on the contract termination process.

"Once the termination has been completed, this will allow for the procurement process to begin, with a new project plan to be developed to complete the work needed," Nicholson said.

However, her statement was similar to the department's stance in November.

The department indicated that construction had been halted due to a problem with the asbestos and black mould on-site.

This was followed by the contractor indicating it had experienced cash-flow problems and would look for another company to complete the job.

The process, according to the department, required several procedures to be conducted before the transfer could take place.