

■ INVESTIGATION

R131m Zulu cultural centre still unfinished

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AN AMOUNT of R131 million was spent on the creation of a cultural centre for maidens at Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini's Enyokeni palace in Nongoma, but five years later it is still incomplete.

And now the public protector has confirmed an investigation into the matter, after a complaint was laid by Ubumbano Lokuthula Organisation (ULO), an NGO sympathetic to the king.

ULO chairperson Dr Andile Hlatshwayo said they were convinced corrupt activities took place after the money was released. The NGO wants an investigation into how the national Public Works Department and national and provincial Arts and Culture departments handled the project and where the money has

gone, as the centre is still not complete.

"The cost of the existing unfinished structure doesn't match the money released. This is a shame and disgrace to our king and all who observe and embrace Zulu cultural activities like umkhosi womhlanga (reed dance). Work on the project started in 2014, but the site has been abandoned. We want this to be investigated and whoever is found to be in the wrong to be prosecuted."

The cultural centre, requested by the king and the Zulu royal house in 2013, was built for maidens who arrive from around the country for the reed dance, and to host other cultural activities.

In February 2018, it was reported that there was no business plan to guide the implementation of the project. The idea was to build an amphitheatre, playground, museum and dormitory, mak-

ing it suitable to host cultural activities.

It was reported that a roof covering and ablution facilities were still outstanding due to inadequate funds.

In 2016, then Arts and Culture minister Nathi Mthethwa reportedly halted the project following allegations of wrongdoing. A company was appointed to investigate how the project was run.

The national Department of Public Works referred the Daily News to Phasha Makgolane of the Independent Development Trust (IDT), which was subcontracted to oversee the project.

Makgolane said: "In 2016 the department terminated the contract with the IDT. We aren't aware that the public protector is investigating the matter. We welcome such an investigation."

The department is yet to respond to questions on the matter sent last week.