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Author: Athandile.siyu

HISTORY

Plan to upgrade Robben Island infrastructure

ATHANDILE SIYO
athandile.siyu@inl.co.za

IT WOULD cost a quarter of a billion rand to renovate dilapidated infrastructure at the Robben Island Museum.

This was announced by the chairperson of the Robben Island Museum, Professor Saths Cooper, yesterday.

Cooper was answering questions from the media during a tour of the island, hosted by Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) Minister Sihle Zikalala, together with management at the island.

Zikalala's tour included viewing the progress made to refurbish the power plant on the island, the water desalination plant as well as the infrastructure.

He said the work being done on the Island was led by the government to refurbish the site.

"We want to thank the Robben Island Museum for their work and for giving an overall preservation of this area.

"There are a number of projects that are continuing especially on oper-

ation and maintenance.

"We have a plant here that generates electricity, we also have a desalination plant for water that we are upgrading to ensure the provision of water as well as boreholes that are being installed, amongst others.

"This is part of our efforts to ensure that the legacy of the area is preserved.

"We will also work to ensure that the harbour is developed. Today was just to inspect the progress of the work."

Last month DPWI Deputy Minister Bernice Swarts together with the Deputy Minister of Sports, Arts and Culture, Nocawe Mafu, said more than R150 million has been budgeted to fix derelict buildings on the Island.

Cooper said the Robben Island Museum welcomed the government's coming to the party to assist.

"In this last year, 55% of our revenue was through people coming into the Island. Robben Island can be sub-sustainable, but it requires some refurbishments, replacements and repairs to keep to the origi-

nal feel and heritage nature of the Island because we have a national heritage and a UNESCO world heritage status which requires minimum criteria.

"Once those are met and we trust that those will be met within the next year, we believe that Robben Island will be fit for purpose as the true beacon of the life of this country."

Meanwhile, Robben Island Museum chief executive Abigail Thulare said the co-operation between the museum and the different departments was proving fruitful.

"Partnerships with responsible departments, including the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment, are proving to be progressive.

Through these partnerships, we were also able to secure surveillance to curb the incidents of poaching.

"Since then the incidents have decreased and we are pleased with that as well because it also speaks to security that affects the workers on the Island."