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PARLIAMENT

# RIM wants mandate to be devolved

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THE Robben Island Museum (RIM) has expressed its frustration to Parliament over delays in tackling some challenges due to the lack of participation of departments, and has now called for the devolution of powers in terms of maintenance.

RIM top brass briefed the portfolio committee on public works and infrastructure yesterday over the implementation of recommendations to deal with challenges that were identified during an oversight visit in May.

The problems included water availability, progress on partnerships with other state entities to address unfunded mandates and expected outcomes and a maintenance backlog.

Chief executive Abigail Thulare, providing a progress report, said with the current interim management

arrangement, they logged calls to the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI). They had made 708 calls for building maintenance, plumbing and other issues, including electrical.

Of the 708 incidents, 95 jobs for maintenance were still outstanding.

"Also, not all calls are approved for maintenance due to budget constraints. To speed up service delivery on the island, RIM has proposed that the DPWI relinquish its maintenance mandate together with the allocated funding to RIM to officiate the works as its implementing agent. DPWI will still have the overarching oversight responsibility as the custodian of the site. This proposed restructured model is legally allowed for in the GIAMA Act (the Government Immovable Asset Management Act 19 of 2007).

"As a World Heritage Site, Robben Island has to maintain its outstanding

universal value as a site of humanity. Its integrity and authenticity must remain. For this to happen, maintenance of the site is sacrosanct. The DPWI has allocated a maintenance budget of R152 million over three years," said Thulare.

Earlier this year, the DPWI commissioned an asbestos removal scoping and financial feasibility exercise of which the outcome has still not been shared with the RIM and the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC). "In the past two months, the RIM has completed and disposed of asbestos debris from the island. Maintenance and upkeep of the island's built and natural environment is a huge undertaking and RIM needs full participation from all the stakeholders to implement what is within their remit," she said.

EFF MP Mathapelo Siwisa noted with concern the lack of communica-

tion and correlation between departments when it came to maintenance and the status of properties.

"One department says this and the other will tell you something different. This has been a pattern. They need to find themselves in one place and discuss the issues at hand. Also what is worrying is that interventions are made only after there was an oversight. It simply means to me the DPWI is just a reactive department instead of being proactive because all of this including the budget was based on what the committee saw.

"There should be a day-to-day budget so that if there is something urgent that needs to be fixed they don't wait for the department as has been the case.

"Even with the restaurant, they only want to start it now. At this rate of how things are done we are going to find another heritage site that is

going to go to waste irrespective of the money the site is making. It will either be closed or the private sector will have to take over," said Siwisa.

DA MP Sello Seitlholo said the DPWI was supposed to be at the forefront of co-ordinating with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment and DSAC on maintenance and other assets.

"The RIM is not the first entity to come before the committee to highlight that they want to take over the responsibility of managing and running the day-to-day operations." Acting director-general advocate Richard Sizani said he listened carefully and took note of concerns.

"The devolution of facility management and other certain things is something that the minister (Sihle Zikalala) has also asked the department to look at. We have to deal with a policy issue."