

Pearson Conservatory in decay despite upgrade

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Six years after the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality spent R5.5m renovating the Pearson Conservatory at St George's Park, the historical building is falling apart, with paint peeling and window frames broken.



Pearson Conservatory. Image source: www.sa-venues.com

First opened in September 1882 and named after Henry Pearson, the man who established St George's Park, the Victorian-style conservatory comprises a 7.6m by 15.2m central building that sports a central skylight and two wings.

In 2010, the municipality undertook major structural renovations, which included replacing all the glass and window frames, all the woodwork, and rebuilding using steel.

Architectural firm The Matrix CC Urban Designers and Architects was hired to oversee the ambitious renovations. Work started in April 2010 and was completed by July 2011. Maintenance of the building and its contents has since been supervised by the parks department.

Questioned about the state of the building, municipal spokesman Mthubanzi Mniki said the department was using the

“workforce” that was in place – that is, a handyman to do minor repairs. “The department has a maintenance plan that will look at repairs as and when required,” he said.

As the Pearson Conservatory was classified a heritage building, any repairs done would need to be kept as close to the original as possible, Mniki said. “Only experts in this field can be appointed to do the work.”

The municipality had been working with a service provider specialising in such structures, along with the municipal architects, to ensure a complete repair plan. “The plan includes [the] possibility of permanent security for the structure,” he said.

Supply chain processes had been completed and work would start as soon as an allocation was confirmed from the municipality’s operational budget.

Mniki also appealed to the public to take care of the facility and protect it against vagrants. “If the community works closely with the municipality, facilities of this nature can be preserved,” he said.

Source: Herald

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