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CEOs MESSAGE

Dr Thabo Manetsi, Chief Executive Officer, National Heritage Council of South Africa



Dear Stakeholders and Partners

As we welcome the New Year, we pause to reflect on a year that reaffirmed the National Heritage Council's (NHC) mandate to preserve, protect, and promote South Africa's rich and diverse heritage. Our work in 2025 demonstrated, once again, that heritage is not only about the past, but also a living, dynamic force that shapes our national identity and inspires future generations.

One of the highlights of the year was the conclusion of nationwide visits to Resistance and Liberation Heritage Sites, confirming our commitment to remembering the struggles that shaped our democracy. Through initiatives such as the NHC-funded project on Preserving Living Heritage and Strengthening Community Identity, we continued to place communities at the centre of heritage preservation. In January, we also paid tribute to the Heroes of Liberation, honouring their sacrifices and ensuring that their stories remain part of our collective memory.

We were equally proud to celebrate excellence beyond our programmes, including recognising a Heritage Education Schools Outreach Programme's (HESOP) alumna among the nation's top achievers, evidence of the long-term impact of our investment in heritage education.

As we strengthen our institutional capacity, we are pleased to welcome new talent to the NHC family. The appointment of Mr Oliver Pillay will enhance HR governance and organisational performance, while Ms Mayile's arrival as a World Heritage Specialist reinforces our focus on building world-class heritage expertise. We also look forward to the contributions of Ms Gugu Hlatshwayo, who previously served as the Programme Support Officer and recently appointed as Education and Advocacy Coordinator to strengthen Advocacy and awareness programmes and Mr Robert Lesiba Mokwena, appointed as an Accountant within the Finance unit to support sound financial management and accountability.

As we move forward, guided by our heritage and inspired by our people, we remain committed to fostering social cohesion, preserving living heritage, and building an inclusive future grounded in the values of our past. I thank our partners, stakeholders, and dedicated team for their continued support and wish you a meaningful and successful year ahead.

Warm regards,
Dr. Thabo Manetsi
Chief Executive Officer, National Heritage
Council of South Africa



NHC CONCLUDES 2025 WITH NATIONWIDE VISITS TO RESISTANCE AND LIBERATION HERITAGE SITES

The National Heritage Council of South Africa (NHC) has concluded 2025 with an intensive four-week programme of visits to Resistance and Liberation Heritage Sites (RLHS) across five provinces, reinforcing efforts to advance the country's Resistance and Liberation Heritage Route (RLHR).

The visits formed part of the NHC's monitoring, evaluation, and support campaign, aimed at assisting provinces in moving beyond feasibility planning towards the sustainable implementation of heritage initiatives linked to South Africa's liberation history.

"The purpose of these visits was to get first hand understanding of the innovations provinces were proposing for implementing the resistance and liberation heritage initiatives in an integrated and innovative way.

It was also to ensure that provinces are not left at the level of planning alone, but are supported to move towards viable, sustainable implementation that delivers real value to communities. Liberation heritage must be a living heritage that contributes to social cohesion, healing of memories, education, and economic participation," said Mr Khwezi Mpumlwana, the incoming NHC RLHR programme manager.

The delegation included representatives from the National Department of Sport, Arts and Culture's (DSAC) Heritage Promotion and Protection Unit, the NHC executive responsible for core business, the Programme Manager for the Resistance and Liberation Heritage Route, as well as representatives from facilities management and the NHC support team.

Mr Mpumlwana acknowledged the support provided by Leadership in the host provinces; provincial RLHR project leaders; Ms Nangamso Mbeki, Ms Corne van Huyssten the Supply Chain Management team and the broader NHC staff in ensuring the success of the programme.

The Resistance and Liberation Heritage Route is South Africa's contribution to the continent-wide African Roads to Independence programme, which seeks to honour Africa's diverse struggles against colonial domination." This programme recognises that the history of resistance and liberation is not only national heritage, but part of the shared heritage of humanity. It provides valuable lessons and resources for addressing the opportunities and challenges facing post-colonial societies." Said Dr Miriam Tawane.

During the visits, the delegation engaged with a range of sites reflecting the breadth of South Africa's resistance and liberation history. These included the Langeberg Resistance War site in the Northern Cape, Saul Mkhize Site; Lowveld Massacre Site; Mahatma Gandhi's prison cell in Volksrust, the Mme Ruth Mompoti House, Rre Abraham Tiro Site, Rre Moses Kotane Site, in North-West, Tshitangadzimeni Battle Site; Tjate Memorial Site; University of Limpopo and the Charlotte Maxeke House in Gauteng.

The sites vary in their levels of development and readiness, with prior stakeholder engagement playing a key role in enhancing community awareness and participation.

"These sites tell powerful stories of both early anti-colonial resistance and the modern liberation struggle. They honour those who sacrificed for freedom, acknowledge historical injustices, and create spaces for dialogue, learning, development, and healing." Mr Mpumlwana shared.



A consistent entry point for engagement in each province was the Office of the Head of Department for Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation, which serves as a signatory to the NHC's provincial agreements on the implementation of the RLHR.

According to Mr Mpumlwana, the visits highlighted the strategic importance of strengthening intergovernmental collaboration. "Closer coordination with provincial departments and local government (especially education, tourism & economic planning) is essential if these heritage interventions are to be fully integrated into planning, local economic development and tourism strategies," he added.

As the national implementing agent for South Africa's chapter of the African Roads to Independence, the NHC supports seven workstreams across all nine provinces, covering 24 provincial heritage sites, 12 Inter-Ministerial Committee departments, and relevant municipalities. This includes providing technical guidance on memorialisation, strengthening governance and accountability, and supporting post-funding sustainability.

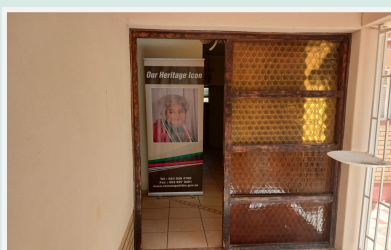
Key observations from the visits included the need for provinces to finalise land tenure and ownership arrangements, strengthen maintenance planning, and clarify institutional and operational models to ensure long-term viability.

The NHC also noted the potential to expand digital heritage content, develop souvenirs linked to liberation history, and integrate some sites with multi-purpose outdoor sporting facilities.

“

Cultural heritage is one of the few renewable and reusable resources available to society. With the platforms emerging in the fifth industrial revolution, there are significant opportunities to expand access, impact, and economic participation linked to our liberation heritage." Mr Mpumlwana expressed.

Mr Mpumlwana concluded by confirming that the RLHR unit responds to the preamble of the Constitution (recognise the injustices of the past; honour those who sacrificed; respect those who worked to build; heal divisions of the past; build a society with opportunities for all); the TRC call for symbolic reparations and NHC mandate to co-ordinate and transform South Africa's heritage landscape with a special focus on living heritage, liberation heritage, end of and impact of enslavement; policy advice.



Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati House

It also responds to the DSAC guidance on the need to leverage the potential of heritage as a re-imagined driver and innovator for social cohesion, citizen participation, dignity, and inclusive socio-economic growth.

End.....

Congratulations!

Senamile

our national
TOP
ACHER



NHC CELEBRATES HERITAGE EDUCATION SCHOOLS OUTREACH PROGRAMME (HESOP) ALUMNA

The National Heritage Council of South Africa (NHC) celebrates the outstanding achievement of Senamile Tabete, Class of 2025, following her exceptional performance in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations. Senamile has been ranked among the top 40 learners nationally, earning her a place among South Africa's top academic achievers.

Tabete took part in the Heritage Education Schools Outreach Programme (HESOP) in 2023, one of the NHC's flagship initiatives aimed at promoting heritage awareness, strengthening identity, and supporting educational development among learners nationwide. Her success underscores the long-term value of heritage education in shaping confident, motivated, and high-performing learners.

Born and raised in a community where resources are limited but aspirations are boundless, Tabete's journey reflects resilience, determination, and perseverance.

She hails from Mathubeszwe Senior Secondary School, a rural public school that may previously have been little known beyond its immediate area. Through her success, Senamile has brought national recognition to her school and community, proving that excellence knows no geographical boundaries.

The NHC praises Senamile not only for her academic excellence but also for serving as an inspiration to learners from similar backgrounds. Her story highlights the critical role of investing in young people and using heritage as a foundation for education, identity formation, and national pride.

The NHC wishes Senamile continued success as she embarks on the next chapter of her academic and personal journey. End...



PRESERVING LIVING HERITAGE AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY IDENTITY

As South Africa continues to advance the protection of its diverse cultural heritage, the Boloka Setso Heritage Celebration stands as an example of a community-driven heritage preservation event aligned with the National Heritage Council of South Africa's (NHC) strategic objectives of safeguarding living heritage, promoting social cohesion, and empowering communities.

The initiative, led by cultural practitioner Keitumetse Mangate, emerged from an urgent need to protect the endangered knowledge of the BagaMothlware community.

"Our elders are living libraries of wisdom, and they are ageing. With them, priceless knowledge risks fading away. This project was born from a strong calling to bridge the gap between generations before it is too late." Mangate explains.

Modernisation and migration have increasingly disrupted intergenerational knowledge transfer. In response, Boloka Setso focused on documenting and revitalising oral traditions, rituals, music, and dances that form the backbone of BagaMothlware identity, ensuring cultural continuity while restoring pride and belonging.

The NHC's funding and institutional support played a decisive role in the project's success, directly advancing its mandate to document, conserve, and promote indigenous knowledge systems.



The NHC did more than fund the project; it ignited a cultural revival," says Mangate.

With this support, the project reached four villages, trained 25 young data collectors, and facilitated respectful engagements with elders and cultural practitioners. Oral traditions were transformed into a living archive that strengthens national heritage resources while remaining rooted in community ownership.

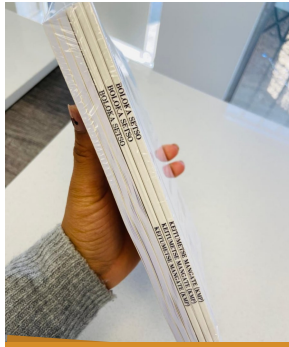


KEITUMETSE MANGATE
EST.2024 PRODUCTION

The research documented key cultural expressions, including traditional dances such as Setapa, Kumure, and Tsutsube, performed during weddings, initiation rites, and rainmaking ceremonies. Sacred rituals like go raya lelapa (communicating with ancestors before major decisions) and go tlhaphisiwa sehihi (cleansing after misfortune) were also recorded, alongside initiation schools (Bogwera and Bojale) that instil moral values, discipline, and respect.

Elders and traditional healers ensured the authenticity of the work.

“They made sure every word carried truth, respect, and spiritual integrity,” Mangate notes.



Book Title: BOLOKO SETSO

In line with the NHC’s strategic focus on youth development and social cohesion, young people were actively involved as researchers and cultural learners.

“They realised that heritage is not old-fashioned, it is a source of pride and identity,” Mangate says.

Traditional leadership further strengthened the project.

Kgosi Kgolo Pelonomi Toto and Kgosi Itumeleng provided cultural authority, ensured adherence to protocol, and united the villages around a shared heritage vision, demonstrating heritage as a collective responsibility.

Beyond documentation, Boloka Setso has revitalised community pride and participation in cultural life. Elders feel honoured, youth feel connected, and heritage practices are being revived in everyday community spaces.



Heritage is life. Protect it before it disappears. When elders teach, and youth learn, heritage thrives.” Mangate concluded. End...

REMEMBERING THE HEROES OF LIBERATION



Chris Hani

January presents an important opportunity to honour and reflect on the lives and legacies of South Africa’s liberation heroes whose contributions laid the foundation for our democratic society.

Among those remembered are iconic heroes of liberation who played a role in preserving South Africa’s living heritage.

Every January, South Africans are called to reflect on the courage, sacrifice, and enduring legacy of the nation’s liberation heroes. Figures such as Oliver Reginald Tambo, the visionary strategist of the liberation movement, and Chris Hani, a symbol of resolve and social justice, continue to inspire our collective commitment to a free and democratic society. Their contributions are deeply ingrained in the very fabric of South Africa’s heritage.

Honouring these heroes aligns closely with the National Heritage Council (NHC)’s strategic objectives of heritage preservation, education, and social cohesion. By commemorating their lives, the NHC ensures that the stories of resilience and the values of freedom, equality, and human dignity are not only remembered but actively integrated into contemporary nation-building initiatives.



Oliver Reginald Kaizana Tambo

The NHC recognises that remembering liberation heroes goes beyond ceremonial commemoration; it is an act of safeguarding living heritage. Liberation history is preserved through oral traditions, archival collections, community narratives, and memorial sites.

Each of these elements strengthens the nation's historical consciousness and connects younger generations to the struggles that shaped the present.

Through strategic programmes such as the Liberation Heritage Route to research, documentation, and monument preservation, the NHC promotes heritage as a tool for education and social cohesion. By embedding liberation history into schools, community projects, and public discourse, the Council reinforces the value of heritage in fostering unity and resilience.

Commemorating our heroes is not the responsibility of institutions alone. Communities, families, and individuals are vital custodians of these legacies.

The NHC encourages active public participation in heritage initiatives, ensuring that the sacrifices of Tambo, Hani, and countless others remain a living source of inspiration.

As we mark this January, focusing on the heroes of liberation, we are reminded that heritage is a living dialogue between the past and the present. By preserving their memory and protecting our shared heritage, we honour their sacrifices and empower future generations to carry the torch of freedom forward.

Remembering liberation heroes is not only an act of commemoration but also a vital aspect of heritage preservation.

Their stories, values, and sacrifices form part of South Africa's living heritage, passed down through oral histories, memorial sites, archives, and community narratives.

Preserving this history ensures that future generations understand the struggles that shaped the present and appreciate the hard-won freedoms they enjoy today.

The NHC continues to support initiatives that document, protect, and promote liberation heritage, including monuments, memorialisation projects, research, and educational programmes. By linking liberation history to contemporary heritage preservation, the Council reinforces the role of heritage as a tool for nation-building, reflection, and social cohesion.

As we remember our heroes this January, we are reminded that safeguarding their legacy is a shared responsibility, one that helps keep the spirit of freedom alive in our collective consciousness.

End...



NHC STRENGTHENS CAPACITY THROUGH STRATEGIC APPOINTMENTS

Introduction to Mr Oliver Pillay

The National Heritage Council (NHC) of South Africa recently appointed Mr Oliver Pillay as its new Human Resources and Facilities Manager, a strategic move aimed at strengthening governance, organisational performance, and employee support as the Council advances its mandate to protect and promote South Africa's heritage for sustainable development.

Mr Pillay brings extensive experience in end-to-end human resource management, organisational development, and employee relations, positioning him to play a critical role in aligning people management with the Council's long-term strategic objectives.

He holds an undergraduate bachelor's degree in arts and a postgraduate Honours degree in Psychology, and has completed numerous professional courses in labour relations, organisational behaviour, and people management. He is also actively involved in professional HR networks at a national level, ensuring the Council benefits from modern, compliant, and forward-looking HR practices.

Speaking on his appointment, Mr Pillay said his passion for Human Resources has always been rooted in its ability to balance organisational performance with employee wellbeing.

I was initially drawn to Human Resources because it sits at the intersection of people, strategy, and culture.

I saw firsthand how thoughtful HR practices could directly impact employee engagement, performance, and retention," he said.

He added that the opportunity to join the NHC was driven by the organisation's values and mandate.

"What specifically attracted me to the HR and Facilities Manager role at NHC is the Council's commitment to quality care, Ubuntu, and its legislative responsibility to protect heritage for future generations. Joining NHC represents a chance to make a meaningful impact in an organisation that values integrity, compassion, and excellence."

A key focus of Mr Pillay's role will be the establishment of strong HR supportive structures to enhance operational efficiency and accountability.

These include the development of a fit-for-purpose HR governance and policy framework, structured workforce planning, a performance management system, and learning and development programmes aimed at building internal capacity.

According to Mr Pillay,

"The effective delivery of NHC's mandate depends on putting in place foundational HR structures that ensure compliance, consistency, performance accountability, and staff sustainability. HR must enable stability while also driving a high-performance culture."

Central to this approach is the alignment of HR initiatives with the Council's strategic plan. Mr Pillay explained that HR will be embedded into strategic planning processes to ensure people capabilities directly support organisational priorities.

"Every HR objective must be clearly linked to a strategic outcome. This ensures that HR is not operating in isolation, but as a strategic partner that enables delivery."

One of the most significant changes planned under his leadership is the implementation of an integrated digital Human Resource Information System (HRIS).

"By automating routine HR processes and introducing employee self-service, we can move HR from being largely transactional to more strategic and people-focused," he concluded.



HERITAGE ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION ARE IN GOOD HANDS

~Gugu Hlatshwayo~

The National Heritage Council of South Africa (NHC) has appointed Ms Gugu Hlatshwayo as its new Education and Advocacy Coordinator, a strategic position aimed at strengthening the promotion of heritage education and awareness as an approach to advocate for the preservation and sustainable use of Living Heritage in support of national development and social cohesion.

Hlatshwayo brings a strong academic foundation and a growing professional commitment to heritage development. She holds an undergraduate degree in Political Science, a postgraduate qualification in Public Policy, all obtained from the University of Johannesburg. Her academic background provides her with a solid understanding of policy, governance, and public-sector processes relevant to the functions of public entities.

Her entry into the heritage sector began through an internship at the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC) within the Heritage Directorate. The experience exposed her to the heritage landscape and strengthened her appreciation of the role heritage plays in shaping identity, strengthening communities, and contributing to nation-building.

“Heritage has shaped who I am. It helped me understand cultural frameworks, connect with people through shared values and traditions, and preserve aspects of heritage that I want to pass on to future generations,” she reflects.

In her new role, Hlatshwayo aims to reposition heritage as a living and dynamic resource, rather than static history. She advocates for recognising Living Heritage as a contributor to economic development, community livelihoods, and sustainable growth.

A key focus of her portfolio will be to strengthen the role of Living Heritage in education, with specific emphasis on advocating for its integration into the school curriculum. This includes promoting innovative approaches that link STEM subjects with indigenous and traditional knowledge systems to ensure relevance and alignment with contemporary learning needs.

To enhance accessibility and public engagement, Hlatshwayo indicated that she will prioritise real-world learning approaches that translate complex heritage concepts into relatable, everyday contexts. This approach aims to make heritage education more inclusive and impactful, particularly for young people and communities.

According to Hlatshwayo, success will not only be measured through programme outputs, but through inspired action, such as increased community ownership and growing interest among young people to use and cherish their heritage.

She emphasised that empowering communities to manage, protect, and benefit from their heritage is central to sustainability.

“By educating communities to take ownership of their heritage, we ensure that knowledge is preserved without compromising its value for future generations.”
—Says Hlatshwayo.

Through this appointment, the NHC looks forward to a renewed, inclusive, and forward-looking approach to education and advocacy, one that positions Living Heritage as a cornerstone of identity, social cohesion, and sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION TO MS MAYILE WHO JOINS NHC AS WORLD HERITAGE SPECIALIST



The National Heritage Council (NHC) is delighted to welcome Ms.

Grace Nomkhoze Mayile as the newly appointed World Heritage Specialist within the Resistance and Liberation Heritage Route (RLHR) Unit.

Ms. Mayile holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of the Free State and is currently completing a Postgraduate Diploma in Public Management at the University of Pretoria. Her academic background is complemented by a wide range of professional short courses, including Presentation Skills, Environmental Economics, Project and People Management, Environmental and Heritage Impact Assessments, the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (PAJA), as well as State Protocol and Official Etiquette. With over 14 years of experience across the environment,

climate change, and heritage sectors, Ms. Mayile brings a wealth of knowledge and practical experience to the NHC. Before joining the NHC, she served as Deputy Director at the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE), where she played a key role in overseeing the management of South Africa's cultural and natural World Heritage Sites.

Ms Mayile has experience in applying both national and international heritage and environmental legislation, including the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), National Environmental Management Biodiversity Act (NEMBA), National Environmental Management Protected Areas Act (NEMPAA), National Environmental Management Biodiversity Act (NEMBA), National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA),

the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Additionally, she has extensive knowledge on various monitoring and reporting systems including, amongst others, the National Biodiversity Assessment (NBA), Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), UNESCO Enhancing our Heritage (EOH) Tool Kit, and UNESCO Periodic Reporting.

Her experience places her in a position where she can effectively support the protection, sustainable management, and promotion of South Africa's World Heritage assets.

The NHC extends a warm welcome to Ms. Mayile and looks forward to her valuable contribution to the work of the RLHR Unit.



INTRODUCTION TO MR ROBERT LESIBA MOKWENA

HANDLING THE FINANCES

The National Heritage Council welcomes Mr Robert Lesiba Mokwena as an Accountant within the Finance unit.

Mr Mokwena is a seasoned finance professional with over 15 years of experience across the public and private sectors. His expertise includes financial management, auditing, taxation, cost and management accounting, budgeting, internal controls, and GRAP/IFRS-compliant financial reporting.

He is an Associate General Accountant (AGA) registered with SAICA, an ACCA Part-Qualified member, and a SARS-registered Tax Practitioner.

His academic qualifications include a Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting (CTA), an Advanced Diploma in Accounting Sciences, and a BTech in Cost

and Management Accounting. He is currently completing his ACCA Strategic Level and an MBA.

Mr Mokwena has held senior roles in both consultancy and public entities, including MNB Chartered Accountants, Chapu Chartered Accountants, Onderstepoort Biological Products SOC, and the Auditor-General of South Africa. He is recognised for strengthening audit outcomes, financial governance, and strategic decision-making.

The Council looks forward to his contribution to strengthening financial excellence and governance.



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