



28 October 2020

South African Heritage Resources Agency

111 Harrington Street
CAPE TOWN
8001

For the attention of: SAHRA CEO, SAHRA Council & Chairperson

Dear SAHRA,

URGENT APPLICATION: HOLE IN THE WALL – NATIONAL HERITAGE SITE

Hole in the Wall is one of the most uniquely beautiful locations on earth and yet, while it is unquestionably an undeclared World Heritage Site of “Outstanding Universal Value”, it has unfortunately not yet even been accoladed with National Heritage Site status.



And it is not just the unique natural arch rock formation that is so special, but the peaceful surrounds comprising rolling green hills, indigenous milkwood forest, river valley grasslands and the Mpako River itself, which all contribute to its Sense of Place.

The local municipality’s Integrated Development Plan for 2017 – 2022 mentions no fewer than 7 times that Hole in the Wall is indeed a Heritage Site, but that it is not yet so declared. And it warns of the danger of uncontrolled developments, and goes further to state that it must be declared a Heritage Site.

Unfortunately the Sense of Place is about to be *severely and permanently* impacted by the inappropriate imposition of a tarred roadway, widened and extended to the edge of the hillside overlooking the attraction, in such a way that vehicles peer over the edge and into

the river valley, and are visibly imposed into the setting. Though not yet tarred, this is already especially severe at certain times of the day when the sun's reflection glares off the windscreens.



Besides the glare, the overwhelming feeling from the vicinity of the Hole in the Wall itself, the nearby beaches and river valley, is of jarring intrusion into what should be a secluded, peaceful and free natural environment, as Nature intended.

Furthermore, the Dept. of Economic Development, Environment &

Tourism (DEDEAT) has approved an ill devised notion to situate picnic tables on the grassy area over-looking Hole in the Wall. This is such a terrible idea, as besides further imposition into the setting and degrading the Sense of Place, the hillside is in very close proximity to the river and directly exposed to the prevailing North-East wind, which will cause litter to be blown straight into the river and washed out to sea, and pollute the river valley and cliff forest on either side of the river.

Despite numerous pleas to DEDEAT going back over two years, and a hand-delivered letter from the community to the road contractor's community liaison officer some two weeks ago, the Department of Transport (DOT) who are carrying out the contract, have ignored the community's request to meet onsite to discuss the simple mitigation measure of curtailing the roadway, turning circle and parking area by some two hundred metres at the watercourse before the last hillside, and using a far more appropriate, attractive and sheltered location for the picnic site. They stubbornly refuse to hear our pleas, and are hell-bent on their course of senseless destruction.



From this location, which is unquestionably the optimal location for the picnic site, they have raised the roadway by some 4 metres and totally impacted the views from all angles. The road should end before the culvert pipes.

This goes beyond even the aesthetic impact, and will also have a hugely negative socio-economic impact by cheapening and commoditizing the attraction solely for day-tripper busloads and vehicles, which would provide zero to very negligible economic benefit to the community, while at the same time paving the way for further inappropriate developments.

Whereas, if the attraction and surrounds are declared a National Heritage Site, and fenced and curated appropriately as a Nature Reserve, with (possibly) a nominal entrance fee (reduced or waived for SA citizens), demarcated nature trails and kayak hire, it will create

long-term sustainable benefits for the local community and also minimise as far as possible the inevitable damage to the indigenous forest and surrounds.

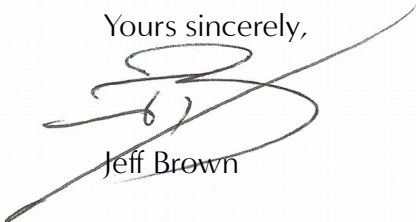
As I wrote to the department recently, “the devastating impact can **easily be mitigated**, while at the same time **saving money** and providing an invaluable opportunity for **creating local employment**, whilst also **preserving the allure** of the attraction’s Sense of Place, seclusion, privacy and freedom.”

In closing I would like to stress that this is a very urgent situation as DOT are planning to complete tarring, and thereby sealing the fate of our beautiful Heritage Site, before the end of the year.

Please let me know if you have any further questions I may answer.

Trusting in your understanding and looking forward to your most urgent response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jeff Brown', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Jeff Brown

Mthonjana A/A

Site 6, Hole in the Wall
Coffee Bay, 5082
Wild Coast
South Africa