



## PROPERTIES AND SERVICES

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A motivation in terms of paragraph 8 of the University's application to "*DESTROY, DAMAGE, DEFACE, EXCAVATE, ALTER OR REMOVE FROM ITS ORIGINAL POSITION, SUBDIVIDE OR CHANGE THE PLANNING STATUS OF A PROVINCIAL HERITAGE SITE, OR A PROVISIONALLY PROTECTED PLACE, OR ALTER OR DEMOLISH ANY STRUCTURE OR PART OF A STRUCTURE OLDER THAN 60 YEARS PROTECTED IN TERMS OF THE NATIONAL HERITAGE RESOURCES ACT (ACT 25 OF 1999)*"

A version of the motivation below, dated 28 August 2015, was included in the draft heritage statement circulated for public comment. The motivation has been amended after consideration by the University of submissions made during the consultation period.

### The Statue

Marion Walgate's bronze statue of Cecil John Rhodes is owned by the University of Cape Town (UCT), where it has been housed on the Upper Campus since 1934 prior to its temporary removal on 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2015. The statue is situated in a proclaimed provincial heritage site, but is not integral to this site as it was not conceived as part of the original assembly of buildings and spaces; but was superimposed on it after completion of the Solomon plan as developed by the architectural firm that took over the commission.

The Upper Campus forms part of the section of the Groote Schuur estate that Rhodes assigned in his will for the purposes of a national university.

The decision to commission the statue was an accident of history. The Rhodes National South African Committee, which was first constituted in 1902 to oversee the building of the Rhodes Memorial, paid for it from remaining funds left over after the memorial had been completed. The 1934 Walgate statue of Rhodes was originally placed below the rugby fields, before being relocated to the Upper Campus following the widening of De Waal Drive in the early 1960s.

Since the statue has limited cultural significance in its own right, UCT does not consider it to be a public monument or memorial as provided for in Section 37 of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999). It is an uninspired work that was derived directly from Rodin's highly acclaimed "*Thinker*". It therefore not only lacks originality, but also has very limited aesthetic merit. More importantly, although it commemorates someone who had a substantial impact on the history of South Africa, many local and international constituencies (and the overwhelming number of the staff and students of the University), now regard Rhodes' legacy as highly problematic. While already a controversial figure in his own lifetime, contemporary detractors drew attention to the fact that he was racist. It is clear that he played an active role in preparing the way for apartheid by working to alter laws on voting and land ownership.

The controversy surrounding the Rhodes statue is for these reasons comparable to recent debates in the USA regarding the continued display of the Confederacy flag on public buildings and public sites.

Increasingly recognised as a symbol of racism, i.e. during 2015 various states have passed bills to ban the display of the flag, and its uses on state license plates. In some states, it has also become an offence to sell the flag, or any other images of it.

### **The Application**

This application is for the permanent removal of the statue and the demolition of the plinth on which it stood. This will allow the uninterrupted view of the Upper Campus assemblage of buildings that have been partly obscured since the statue was sited there in the early 1960s.

UCT has undertaken a wide canvassing of its own constituencies on the possible removal of the statue following student protests claiming that it is an offensive symbol of colonialism that should be permanently removed from the university's campuses. Taking into account submissions from, amongst others, its alumni, the Senior Leadership Group, academic and administrative staffing unions, students, and debates at meetings of Senate on 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2015 and Council, on 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, UCT is of the opinion that the statue should not be housed anywhere on any of the university's campuses, and that it is likely to be targeted and vandalised if placed in the public domain in South Africa.

At the 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2015 meeting of Senate, the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Max Price, pointed out that while Rhodes was a philanthropist, successful businessman, and Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, his values (especially pertaining to his views on race, imperial conquest, and the legislation he passed that was greatly detrimental to the lives of indigenous peoples) were not representative of what the University stands for; that his obituary, published in "*The Guardian*" newspaper in 1902,<sup>1</sup> highlighted that a number of his contemporaries viewed his actions as being extreme even for the time; that the statue's physical location and prominence gave the erroneous impression that Rhodes was a man whom the University held in high regard, who represented the values of the University, and who should serve as a role model to the students of the University; and that a request should be lodged with Heritage Western Cape that it be removed from its current location.

In the ensuing debate, members of the Students' Representative Council (SRC) argued for the permanent removal of the statue from UCT's campuses on the grounds that it was not the location that was a problem, but rather that the statue itself represented a particular set of values which were at odds with those of the University and which were particularly offensive to black students and members of staff. The SRC did not agree with the Vice-Chancellor's suggestion that the statue be contextualised and used for educational purposes, arguing that an understanding of Rhodes' tainted legacy did not depend on its presence on any of UCT's campuses. After lengthy deliberations, Senate approved with 181 members in favour, 1 member against and 4 members abstaining that Council be asked to consider requesting the permanent removal of the statue.

In the follow up meeting of Council on 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2015 the documents tabled for consideration included:

- a) The proposed process of consultation and engagement for considering the demand that the Rhodes Statue be removed as set out in the Vice-Chancellor's letter to the Chair of Council, dated 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2015.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/century/1899-1909/Story/0,,126334,00.html?redirection=century>

- b) A memorandum from the Students' Representative Council outlining transformation issues the SRC wished Council to address.
- c) A brief report on the Special General Meeting of the Convocation, held in 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2015.
- d) A summary of responses received by the University's Communication and Marketing Department in response to its "Transform UCT - Have your Say" campaign.
- e) Extracts from the Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) governing proclaimed heritage sites, and
- f) A copy of the permit issued by Heritage Western Cape (HWC), which allowed for the temporary removal of the Walgate statue of Rhodes in order to protect it from possible damage.

The Vice-Chancellor told Council that he was satisfied that the views expressed in a wide range of constituencies were overwhelmingly in support of removing the statue, and doing so permanently. He had been swayed by the SRC's and Senate's views on the need to make a clean break, noting that a permit had already been obtained from HWC for the *temporary* removal of the statue for safekeeping.

After taking note of the proposals of staff, of students (the Student Assembly, the Student Parliament, the SRC, and the Rhodes Must Fall campaign), of alumni and of Convocation in a special general meeting, the advice of the Institutional Forum, and the recommendation of the Senate, the Council resolved to:

- a) Apply to HWC for the permanent removal of the statue, (urging the importance of this for creating the necessary institutional climate and for the functioning of the University), and
- b) Authorise the administration to arrange for the temporary removal of the statue in terms of the authority granted by HWC in terms of Section 27(18) of the Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999).

The Council made it clear that the decision to propose the *permanent* removal of the statue was a symbol of the Council's renewed commitment to the process of transformation at UCT.

### **Future of the Statue**

UCT is of the view that it would be deeply offensive to various constituencies both on, and off campus if the Rhodes statue were to be returned to the Upper Campus, or relocated elsewhere on this or any of its other campuses. We therefore propose that the plinth on which it was placed be demolished an alternative location be further investigated. In its current place UCT proposes to reinstate the granite steps leading and installing a plaque or story board with information about the removal. This is in line with the HWC's recent "*Guidelines for Public Monuments and Memorials*", clauses 6.1.3 and 6.1.4.

The University has received four offers for the relocation of the statue, one from the Crow Foundation in Texas (USA) for an initial period of twenty years, for safe keeping in a sculpture garden that is dedicated to the preservation of monuments (of fallen heroes), another from the owner of a series of properties adjacent to the Cheetah Foundation at Paardevlei in Somerset West, a third from Nooitgedacht Estate near Stellenbosch, and a fourth from the South African Institute for

Heritage Science and Conservation located at Twee Riviere, Langkloof, midway between Port Elizabeth and George.

### **1. The Crow Foundation**

The Crow Foundation is willing to pay for the relocation of the statue to a sculpture garden in Texas that includes works of Winston Churchill and Vladimir Lenin on condition that the Foundation would become the owner of the statue. If requested to do so, the Crow Foundation would return the statue to UCT (or South Africa) in perpetuity, but after twenty years has elapsed. All costs incurred to remove, transport, and return the statue would be that of the Foundation, which is also willing to provide UCT with the necessary funds to reinstate the granite steps leading and installing a plaque or story board with information about the removal. The Foundation will also restore the statue to the condition it was before the protests as well as assume the stewardship and future maintenance.

Having made the argument for the removal of the Rhodes statue, UCT is sensitive to the notion that the statue is now being relocated to another country and that despite overwhelming support from its constituencies, relocation to the USA may court further controversy. Thus, UCT has also wishes to consider other options.

### **2. Baker Square at Paardevlei, Somerset West**

The properties, known as “Baker Square” are the old offices and guest house of De Beers explosives factory, also known as the former AECI property. The heritage buildings on this site were designed by Sir Herbert Baker and built around 1900. The building known as “The Clubhouse” has two old rooms known as “The De Beers Room” and “The Rhodes Room”. The buildings are laid out in a square around a manicured heritage garden with a number of mature trees and hedge lined path ways. Tourists regularly visit this historical precinct and the Cheetah Foundation. If housed at this location, the statue could be reinterpreted through an appropriate plaque and would remain accessible to local visitors.

### **3. Nooitgedacht Farm**

The Wirth family bought Nooitgedacht Estate in 1923 from the Cecil John Rhodes Estate. Fritz Otto Wirth was a friend of Mr Rhodes and also had business dealings with him while he was consul general in Mozambique. The Wirth family owns Nooitgedacht Village, which is next to the estate and which houses the Bronze Foundry: Bronz Editions, well known for the casting of the work of acclaimed local artists like Dylan Lewis and Herman Van Nazareth. The maintenance of the Rhodes statue would be overseen by Bronz Editions, which will also make a separate proposal to run an initiative in conjunction with UCT aimed at commissioning additional sculptures reflecting the creativity of local artist.

### **4. The South African Institute for Heritage Science and Conservation**

The South African Institute for Heritage Science and Conservation is a private college that conducts its research and training programme from a 15-hectare campus in rural Twee Riviere, Langkloof, midway between Port Elizabeth and George.

The Institute has proposed the relocation of the Marion Walgate bronze to its campus of, where it may serve the purposes of education and research.

It suggests that relocation to the Institute would simultaneously resolve the question of the skilled reinstatement and stabilization of the statue's bronze surfaces in order to reverse the current, vandalized condition.

Besides the offers listed above, where owners have made offers to house the statue, the public consultation process has resulted in other possible locations being suggested. The latter are however locations in the public domain such as museums, Rhodes Memorial, Groote Schuur Estate and so forth, where both the desirability of the locations and the attitude of the owners remain untested. UCT is however in agreement with suggestions that the possible placement of the statue at the Groote Schuur homestead should be investigated.

UCT wishes to consider the long-term permanent location of the statue, through further engagement with the respective owners, before a formal submission is made to Heritage Western Cape in that regard.

Other proposals for dealing with the statue that were considered have included that it be sold to raise funds for student bursaries. It seems unlikely that efforts of this kind would be successful given that it was produced by a relatively unknown, minor sculptress whose works would have limited aesthetic appeal for contemporary collectors.

We conclude this motivation by:

- Arguing that the statue has no intrinsic merit, limited cultural importance and limited historical significance, i.e. the contrast between it and the nearby Rhodes Memorial (part of the Table Mountain National Park) simply serves to underline this point, and
- Placing it on record that if HWC grants the permit, UCT will be guided by HWC in exploring the aforementioned proposals further in terms of clauses 6.1.3 and 6.1.4. of the *“Guidelines for Public Monuments and Memorials”*.