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Institution Development and Coordination Minute: 0002/2021

To: District Officials, Departmental Heads, Principals, Members of governing bodies and Educators

Subject: Invitation to schools to apply for blue heritage plaques in 2021

1. General information on the Blue Plaque Schools Project 2021

1.1 The Blue Plaque Schools Project was initiated by the Centre for Conservation Education and the Simon van der Stel Foundation in 2015. Since then, 36 schools in the Western Cape have received blue heritage plaques.

1.2 Many schools have a long history and a proud heritage of providing education to their communities. Some of these schools are household names, their excellence having reached the public's attention in several ways. Yet many others have remained unnoticed in the shadows due to our country's inequitable past. This is particularly true of the many mission schools that developed into fine institutions in underprivileged communities. The Western Cape Education Department's belief is that every school counts and that all schools deserve recognition for their contributions.

1.3 In 2020 an unusually high number of schools received blue plaques as it was felt that schools needed affirmation during the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Bloemhof Hoër Meisieskool, Stellenbosch (for the age of the school: est. 1875)
- De la Bat Skool vir Dowes, Worcester (for the age of the school: est. 1881)
- Die Bron Primêre Skool, Stanford (for the age of the school: est. 1865)
- Laerskool Hendrik Louw, Strand (for the age of the school: est. 1880)
- Nederburg Primêre Skool, Drakenstein (for a famous past pupil: Chester Williams)
- Paarl Boys' High (for the age of the school: est. 1868)
- Paarl Girls' High (for the age of the school: est. 1876)
- Pieter Langeveld Primêre Skool, Cloetesville (for the age of the school: est. 1830)
- Rhenish Girls' High School, Stellenbosch (for the age of the school: est. 1860)
- Rustenburg Girls' Junior School, Rondebosch (for an architecturally significant building: Rustenburg House)

- Simond Private School, Drakenstein (for the age of the school: est. 1852)
- Somerset-Wes Metodiste Primêre Skool (for the age of the school: est. 1834)

1.4 Blue plaques are an internationally recognised symbol of buildings and places that have an important significance in the history and heritage of a local area. The Heritage Association of South Africa (HASA) (formerly the Simon van der Stel Foundation) has run a Blue Plaque Project for the last 50 years.

1.5 This project means that historically interesting and valuable buildings and sites are given recognition and status through the awarding of a blue plaque. For more information and to see images of blue plaques awarded go to www.simonvdstel.org or www.heritagesa.org.

1.6 Schools have largely been overlooked and under-represented in the awarding of blue plaques. The Centre for Conservation Education (hereafter referred to as "the Centre") and the HASA would like to make schools aware of the project and encourage those schools that feel they qualify for a blue plaque to apply by paying careful attention to the categories listed in paragraph 4.

1.7 Until recently, blue plaques could not be awarded to schools outside the metropolitan areas of Cape Town. This has, however, changed since the HASA has given its support to the project. The support of local heritage foundations has also been solicited and some of these have pledged to sponsor blue plaques for deserving schools that are unable to pay for it themselves:

- a) Cape Town area: Simon van der Stel Heritage Foundation (one free plaque/year)
- b) Paarl area: Drakenstein Heritage Foundation (one free plaque/year)
- c) Stellenbosch area: Stellenbosch Heritage Foundation (one free plaque/year)
- d) Schools in other areas can still apply but must be prepared to pay for their blue plaques themselves.

1.8 This project is thus open to all schools in the Western Cape. However, numbers will be limited due to the administration involved.

2. **Benefits for schools**

2.1 Receiving a blue plaque can have the following benefits for schools:

- a) Blue plaques are internationally recognised as symbols of the heritage status of a building or site.
- b) Blue plaques are prestigious and only a limited number will be awarded every year depending on the available resources and administration involved.
- c) Blue plaques are affixed to the front of the school as a permanent historical marker to commemorate a link between the school and an activity, event or person. They are prominently displayed so that learners, parents and visitors can see them.

- d) Through being awarded a blue plaque, a school receives recognition for the contribution it has made to the education of its community and education in general.
- e) Blue plaques are a source of community pride and achievement.
- f) The blue plaques are tastefully designed and made of durable materials.
- g) Schools decide on the language and wording on the plaques themselves, with input and approval from a panel appointed by the HASA and/or its affiliates.
- h) Schools that receive blue plaques will be listed on the HASA and local heritage foundations' websites.

2.2 The application process has been kept simple so that schools are not required to spend unnecessary time making lengthy and elaborate proposals.

3. **How the Blue Plaque Schools Project works**

3.1 The plaques are expensive to manufacture. For 2021, the HASA, through its affiliates (the heritage foundations listed in paragraph 1.7), will award **blue plaques to three deserving schools** within the areas covered by these foundations **at no cost to the schools**, other than to collect the plaque and mount it. Schools that feel they fit the criteria and are within those areas are invited to apply.

3.2 However, schools that are in a position to pay for the blue plaque themselves are also invited to apply. **Four** schools can be considered under this option in 2021, as there are already a number of applications that could not be accommodated in 2020.

3.3 The cost of a blue plaque, excluding installation, may vary between R1 800 and R3 000 depending on which supplier the heritage foundation (see paragraph 1.7) uses and the materials used. Successful applicant schools that will carry the costs themselves will be invoiced for 100% of the costs before the plaque is ordered.

3.4 Every application will be considered on merit by a panel of adjudicators representing the HASA, the various heritage foundations and the Centre. Schools need only meet **one of the six criteria** listed in paragraph 4. Schools must motivate their application (listing sources so that information can be verified), must declare themselves willing to display the blue plaque on the front of their building and must submit their application by the due date. An application form (Annexure A) is attached. **Schools are reminded that submitting an application does not automatically guarantee success.**

3.5 Schools will be notified via email and telephone whether they have been awarded a blue plaque or not. This is entirely at the discretion of the panel. Schools that meet the criteria but cannot be accommodated due to a large number of applications will be asked to re-submit the following year.

3.6 Schools that receive blue plaques should **inform their learners, parents, governing bodies and school communities** of this recognition. Learners, in particular, should be made aware of the plaque's symbolism and value.

3.7 Schools that receive blue plaques should **organise an official handing over and unveiling ceremony** themselves at a date and time that suit the school and the organisers, and also taking the current Covid-19 situation into account. It should, if possible, be **within the same calendar year as the award** and **learners should preferably be involved**. A representative from the HASA, the heritage foundation concerned, or the Centre will be present if invited. The blue plaque should be affixed to the wall a few days before the event.

4. **Categories**

4.1 The categories are as follows:

- a) The age of the school (must be older than 125 years to qualify)
- b) An architecturally significant building (e.g. well-known architect, building style, etc.)
- c) The school's particular **exceptional service** to the community (e.g. first school in the community, oldest independent school, contribution to special education, upliftment of the community, etc.)
- d) The school's survival under difficult circumstances (e.g. the South African War, forced removals, role in the struggle for democracy, natural disaster, etc.)
- e) A past learner or educator who has distinguished themselves (must be mentioned by name and deceased for at least 20 years)
- f) Schools that have been closed, but nevertheless played a significant role in education.

4.2 Schools may find that they qualify for more than one category, but they need to choose the ONE that best indicates what they are most proud of. A school can only be awarded ONE blue plaque, so the choice of category should be considered carefully.

5. **Applications for 2021**

5.1 The closing date for submissions is **21 May 2021**.

5.2 Applications should be made electronically, via email, by using the application form provided (Annexure A) and submitting it to principal@centreforconservation.co.za.

5.3 Hand-delivered and postal applications will also be accepted, as long as they are received before the closing date. These applications should be addressed or delivered to: **The Principal, Centre for Conservation Education, 9 Aliwal Road, Wynberg, 7800**.

6. For more information, contact the principal of the Centre, Mr Anton Fortuin, on tel. no. **021 762 1622.**
7. Kindly bring the contents of this minute to the attention of all schools in your district.

SIGNED: HA LEWIS

DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL: INSTITUTION DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION

DATE: 2021-03-26