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Institution Development and Coordination Minute: 0002/2022

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

Subject: Invitation to schools to apply for blue heritage plaques in 2022

1. General information on the Blue Plaque Schools Project

- 1.1 The Blue Plaque Schools Project was initiated by the Centre for Conservation Education and the Cape Town Heritage Foundation (an affiliate of the Heritage Association of South Africa (HASA)) in 2015. Since then, 47 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 attracted 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 matters and that all schools deserve recognition for their contributions.
- 1.3 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 HASA has run the Blue Plaque Project for the last 55 years.
- 1.4 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.

- 1.5 Schools have largely been overlooked and under-represented in the awarding of blue plaques. The Centre for Conservation Education 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 point 4.
- 1.6 Wherever possible, the support of local heritage foundations is solicited and some of these have pledged to sponsor blue plaques for deserving schools that are unable to pay for them themselves:
- a) **Cape Town area:** Cape Town Heritage Foundation (two free plaques/year)
 - b) **Paarl area:** Drakenstein Heritage Foundation (one free plaque/year)
 - c) **Stellenbosch area:** Stellenbosch Heritage Foundation (one free plaque/year)
 - d) **Swellendam/Southern Cape area:** Swellendam Heritage Association (as funds allow)
- 1.7 Although most heritage organisations do not have the funds to sponsor blue plaques, they serve on the adjudication committee.
- 1.8 Most schools will have to be prepared to pay for their blue plaques themselves but are encouraged to approach sponsors in their communities.
- 1.9 This project is open to all schools in the Western Cape. However, only a limited number of blue plaques will be awarded every year 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 a symbol 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 to 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, with input and approval from a panel nominated 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 Schools that feel they fit the criteria in point 4 are invited to apply.
- 3.2 The cost of a blue plaque, excluding installation, may vary between R1 800,00 and R3 000,00 depending on which supplier the heritage foundation uses, the materials used and the availability of materials (compromised due to the COVID-19 pandemic). Successful applicant schools that will carry the costs themselves will be invoiced for 100% of the costs before the plaque is ordered.
- 3.3 Every application will be considered on merit by a panel of adjudicators representing the HASA, the various affiliated heritage bodies and the Centre for Conservation Education. Schools need only meet **one of the six criteria** listed in point 4. Schools must motivate their application (listing sources so that information can be verified), they 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.**
- 3.4 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 adjudication panel. Schools that meet the criteria but that cannot be accommodated due to a large number of applications will be asked to re-submit the following year.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 Schools that receive blue plaques must **organise an official handover and unveiling ceremony** at a date and time that suits both the school and the organisers, whilst also taking current COVID-19 measures into account. It should, if possible, occur **within the same calendar year as the award** and **learners should preferably be involved**. A representative from the HASA, the local heritage body or the Centre for Conservation Education 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:
- The age of the school (must be older than 125 years to qualify).
 - An architecturally significant building (e.g. well-known architect, building style, etc.).
 - The school's survival under difficult circumstances (e.g. the South African War, forced removals, role in the struggle for democracy, natural disaster, etc.).
 - A past learner or educator who has distinguished themselves (must be mentioned by name and no longer be alive).

- e) The school's particularly **exceptional service** to the community (e.g. first school in the community, oldest independent school, contribution to special education, upliftment of the community, etc.). **(Not easily awarded.)**
 - f) A school that has closed, but nevertheless played a significant role in education.
- 4.2 Schools may find that they qualify in more than one category, but they should 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 2022**
- 5.1 The closing date for submissions is **31 May 2022**.
- 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.
6. For more information the principal of the Centre for Conservation Education, Mr Anton Fortuin, can be contacted on tel. no. **021 762 1622**.

SIGNED: HA LEWIS

DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL: INSTITUTION DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION

DATE: 2022-04-21