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Human skeleton exhumed to make way for parking

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Ongoing talks have culminated in the exhumation of the 1 000 year old human skeleton in Cobern Street, which has delayed the construction of the non-motorised transport (NMT) lanes in Green Point.

Adrian Mackay of Arcus Gibb Consulting Engineers, which manages the construction of the NMT lanes, said during a public meeting on Wednesday October 27 that the skeleton was removed on Friday October 22.

"The authorities have given us a permit to remove the skeleton," he said.

Mr Mackay and archaeologist Mary Patrick attended a series of meetings with South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) to discuss what processes need to be followed to remove the skeleton ("Skeletons rattle building plans", Atlantic Sun, Thursday September 16).

Contractors Civils 2000 were surprised when they accidentally dug up human remains three months ago, which brought construction of parking bays to a halt until the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) made a decision about what to do.

Two skeletons were found crammed into a trench, which were dug out, while, a third found in a wooden coffin, which was left buried.

Mr Mackay said the bones were found in a shallow grave of about 40cm deep.



Historically Green Point and the De Waterkant area were burial sites, for various denominations, but were shut down in the 1830s when they reached capacity.

Ms Patrick said profiling the skeleton in the grave was limited but she had deduced that the individual was between the ages of 13 and 20 years old – she could not confirm the gender – and the person was from mid-19th century.

Ms Patrick said an analysis will be done to profile the individual and a report will be compiled, which will be presented to SAHRA and Heritage Western Cape.

After being examined, the skeleton will be interred in the Green Point ossuary, she said.

Since the exhumation, construction has resumed.

Mr Mackay said that after the Cobern and Liddle street couplet is complete, construction at Napier Street will start.

The parking bays in Cobern Street were created to replace the parking lost on Main Road because of the painted red lines.

But City official Paul Booth said the parking bays were not there to introduce kerbside parking. He said they will ask Traffic Services to put up a sign that restricts the parking period to one or two hours to ensure that motorists do not park there for the whole day.

Following complaints about loading bays in Main Road, Mr Mackay said that businesses can only use the loading bays during off-peak times to ensure that there was no congestion during peak times.

Mr Mackay said the paving on the mountain side of Main Road, between Varney and Glengariff roads, was well under way.

He said work in the overflow parking area was complete, except for the section immediately next to the contractor's site.

Mr Mackay said work at Gallows Hill was complete, while remedial work to the median edge next to Western Boulevard has started and the Varney Road off-street parking construction has also begun.

The crossing at Beach Road and Three Anchor Bay road is complete, while the bump-out at the intersection of Main and Three Anchor Bay roads will start soon. Construction of the crossing at Ebenezer and Main roads has started.

Mr Mackay said when the irrigation pipeline, which was installed in a 150m long trench, was complete from Ebenezer to Old Vlei roads, minor work will be done on Main Road, next to the carriageway access to the median parking area.

Napier, Cobern and Liddle streets were closed, so Alfred Street will become a one-way road, Mr Mackay said.

More CCTV cameras are also being installed until Ebenezer Road, said Mr Mackay.

The 24-month soft landscaping maintenance has also started, he



■ The 1 000-year old human skeleton that was exhumed from Cobern Street in Green Point.

said.

Residents at the meeting asked why the weeds, which were growing through the paving, were not being removed. Mr Mackay said that perhaps the contractors were not keeping up with the pace at which the weeds grow.

A resident suggested the weeds be dosed with boiling water but Mr Mackay said that that was not logistically doable.

John White of De Waterkant

suggested that an organic-based herbicide be used to remove the weeds. Mr Mackay said he will pass on the suggestions to the contractor.

"We don't want to promote the use of herbicides because of the knock-on effect. That same water will run into the stormwater pipes and into the ocean," he said.

In the meantime, ideally more people should walk around the facility, which will help control the growth of weeds, Mr Mackay said.

