



Renovations on hold

DA councillors and government officials walk past waist high weeds outside the house after inspecting the interior of the premier's official residence yesterday.
PHOTOS: IAN CARBUTT

Premier orders probe into upgrade, DA visits his Parkside residence



KZN DA leader Zwakele Mncwango (left), councillors and members of the media arrive at Parkside for a site visit of the premier's residence.

**NOMPILO KUNENE
and CLIVE NDOU**

KWAZULU-NATAL Premier Willie Mchunu has halted all renovations at his official residence Parkside and ordered an investigation into upgrades there.

This follows public outrage over government's plans to splurge R32 million on renovations to the property.

"The investigation will determine whether work done was necessary and whether proper tender processes were followed in the awarding of contracts for this purpose.

"It will further seek to determine whether value for money was achieved in the performance of the contract," Mchunu said in a statement issued by the provincial Public Works Department.

Mchunu's decision follows a news article in *The Witness* outlining the provincial government's plans to undertake a number of renovations at the residence to the tune of R32 million over the next seven years.

The Witness established that renovations at the residence had begun, with R540 000 already spent on refurbishing three bathrooms.

Mchunu had confirmed the figures in his replies to parliamentary questions submitted by Democratic Alliance public works spokesperson Sizwe Mchunu.

The public reacted with outrage about the massive spending, with some readers describing the project as Pietermaritzburg's "little Nkandla".

Mchunu ordered a stop to all renovations at the residence pending the outcome of the probe.

"In the meantime, no further work will be proceeded with as we want to take into account the sentiments expressed by all concerned," he said.

Yesterday DA provincial leader Zwakele Mncwango led the party's delegation on a tour of the residence.

Mncwango was received at the residence by the premier department's director-general Northlanhla Mkhize — who told DA members as well as journalists who accompanied Mncwango,

that the premier did not reside at the property but stayed at his private house in Durban.

In his replies to the DA's questions, the premier had disclosed that maintenance costs at the property included R15 000 per month on gardening services.

However, the DA delegation found that the pool, which had a puddle of murky water at the bottom, had been neglected.

The pool fence was falling apart while grass in the yard reached knee height.

There were about 10 vehicles parked on the property that appeared to have been abandoned.

"As much as they say it is an estimate, when you go around you don't see where this R30 million will be spent," said Mncwango.



ABOVE: Brown sludge and leaves in the neglected pool.

LEFT: A car graveyard in the gardens of the premier's Parkside residence.



Mncwango said it was difficult to understand why more money should be spent on the existing swimming pool.

"The pool is already there, all you need is water so it makes no sense why you would spend more than a million rand on the pool," he said.

In its original story *The Witness* put the amount already spent on renovations at the residence at R1,7 million.

However, the Public Works Department had disputed the figure, saying only R821 000 had been spent.

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