

Site chosen for Prestwich bones

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HUNDREDS of human skeletons unearthed from Prestwich Street are likely to be reinterred at a memorial park to be established on the corner of Somerset Road and Buitengracht Street.

The SA Heritage Resources Agency (Sahra) said in a statement yesterday the site had been identified after a meeting yesterday of "interested parties".

Phakamani Buthelezi, formerly head of Marine and Coastal Management and now the new head of Sahra, said in the statement: "Our ancestors will be afforded the dignity they deserve."

So far about 1 000 skeletons have been unearthed from the excavations at Prestwich Street.

The statement said the site that had been selected was the "gateway to the Green Point area" and was only a few streets away from Prestwich Street where the skeletons were found over a year ago during excavations for a shopping and office complex. As was legally required, excavations were halted and archaeologists from UCT were given a permit by Sahra to exhume the skeletons.

Many members of the public were angry that the skeletons were being removed and launched a campaign, Hands Off Prestwich Place, to have the excavations halted.

The issue was particularly contentious as archaeologists said some of the skeletons unearthed were probably those of slaves. Campaigners appealed to Pallo Jordon, the minister of



FINDING PEACE: The remains of slaves found at a construction site in Prestwich Street are to be moved a few streets away to this site in Green Point. *Picture: ENVER ESSOP*

arts and culture, to have the exhumations halted. A tribunal was set up to consider their appeal, which ruled that the exhumations could go ahead, but added that "a suitable memorial park or garden" should be established in Green Point where the skeletons could be reinterred. The site would be used to reinter any other his-

toric human remains found in Green Point.

The tribunal said the City of Cape Town and Sahra had to establish the memorial park, which "could become the focus of the community's memory and learning about the past".

Buthelezi said the city council, Sahra and Heritage Western Cape were in the planning

stages the project for the memorial park, and were yesterday talking to other people and organisations with an interest in the matter.

He said the three organisations were negotiating a management strategy to deal with the discovery of human remains in future. Archaeologists are unable to say how extensive

these informal graveyards are, but believe they are likely to extend under most of Green Point. This means any redevelopment of the area is likely to unearth human remains.

Buthelezi said a development framework was being devised that would regulate construction in the Green Point area in future.