

PARLIAMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF THE WESTERN CAPE

ANNOUNCEMENTS, TABLINGS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

TUESDAY, 29 MARCH 2016

COMMITTEE REPORT

Report of the Standing Committee on Environmental Affairs and Development Planning on its oversight visit to Vrolijkheid Nature Reserve and Meulwater Water Treatment Works as follows:

Delegation

The delegation consisted of the following members:

Lentit, RB (Chairperson and leader of the delegation)
Beerwinkel, CF
Dijana, TM
Max, LH
Schäfer, BA

Ms SA Niekerk, Committee Co-ordinator, accompanied the delegation.

1. Introduction

Section 114 (2) (b) (i) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, mandates provincial legislatures to provide for mechanisms to maintain oversight over the provincial executive authority in the province, including the implementation of legislation. To this end the Standing Committee on Environmental Affairs and Development Planning undertook an oversight visit to the Vrolijkheid Nature Reserve (hereinafter “the Reserve”) in Robertson and the Meulwater Water Treatment Works in Paarl. The purpose of the visit to the Reserve was to gain an understanding of the biodiversity and conservation issues linked to the Reserve and its impact on economic growth and tourism in the area. The purpose of the visit to the Meulwater Water Treatment Works was to engage with relevant officials at the Drakenstein Municipality

on the link between the Berg River and the Meulwater Water Treatment Works as well as to gain an understanding of the purification process used at the plant.

2. Overview of the visit

The visit was undertaken on 9 and 10 February 2016.

On 9 February, the Committee was welcomed at the Reserve by the Chief Executive Officer of CapeNature, Dr Razeena Omar, and CapeNature officials who provided the Committee with an overview of the Reserve, and information on the current state of affairs. The Committee was also welcomed by the Working on Fire Team. Following the presentation, the Committee undertook a tour of the Reserve and a 2km hike and was able to experience the rich fynbos habitat.

Similarly, the Committee visited the Meulwater Water Treatment Works in Paarl on 10 February 2016 and was welcomed by Councillor Johan Rademeyer and officials from the Drakenstein Municipality who provided the Committee with a brief overview of the plant as well as plans currently underway for the development of a similar plant in the Wellington area. The visit concluded with a tour of the establishment.

3. Findings

3.1 Vrolijkheid Nature Reserve

- 3.1.1 The Vrolijkheid Nature Reserve Complex (hereinafter “Vrolijkheid”) consists of the Reserve and the Riviersonderend State Land.
- 3.1.2 Vrolijkheid is unique to the Robertson Karoo vegetation in the area and it is estimated that there are 7000 species of fynbos of which 80% is endemic to the area.
- 3.1.3 The implementation of the Vrolijkheid Nature Reserve Project was managed by Casidra because of their extensive expertise in promoting economic development in rural areas.
- 3.1.4 In terms of promoting tourism in the area, the Reserve boasts five self-catering 6-sleeper units, two of which have jacuzzis. The self-catering accommodation was launched in May 2015 and has been well received by the public. The tariffs range from R1 000 – R1 200 per unit, per night per and security on the Reserve is stable. CapeNature has had extensive engagements with the Macgregor and Robertson Tourism Boards as there is a need for accommodation in the thriving area.
- 3.1.5 One of the major tourism events in the area is the Whacky Wine Festival and, as a result, accommodation at the Reserve is fully booked up to a year in advance.
- 3.1.6 The Reserve also boasts an Educational Centre that is utilised by learners in grades 7 and 8 to link the school curriculum on biospheres and biodiversity to the practicality of the surroundings.
- 3.1.7 In terms of job creation, the Reserve has a Working on Fire Team consisting of 25 members who are volunteers from the surrounding areas and employs four people in a permanent capacity.

- 3.1.8 CapeNature, together with Casidra, is in the process of implementing Phase 2 of the Expansion Plan of the Reserve that will cater for young families, and will include a recreational area for children and the construction of a swimming pool.

3.2 Meulwater Water Treatment Works

- 3.2.1 The Meulwater plant provides approximately 50% of the water for the Drakenstein area with most of it coming from the Wemmershoek dam.
- 3.2.2 The Water Management Study conducted for the Municipality in 2001 identified the need for the Municipality to secure its own reliable water source. A water treatment works for the Paarl Mountain was proposed as most of the distribution infrastructure was already in place. The Study showed that the Municipality could build and operate the Water Treatment Works at a substantial saving against the alternative of continuing to purchase water from the City of Cape Town.
- 3.2.3 The Municipality has an allowance from the Department of Water Affairs to draw water from the Berg River at certain times of the year. A supplementary scheme to store pumped water from the Berg River in the dams on the Paarl Mountain would only be feasible if there was a treatment facility to treat this water.
- 3.2.4 Telemetry, an automated communications process by which measurements are made and other data collected at remote or inaccessible points and transmitted to receiving equipment for monitoring, connects the controls and surveillance of the plant with the Municipal Engineers in the town.
- 3.2.5 The Water Treatment Process consists of coagulation and flocculation, followed by direct filtration through four deep sand-bed rapid gravity filters using Leopold lateral false floors. Thereafter the water is disinfected with chlorine to kill any pathogens that may be present followed by a stabilisation process with lime to soften the water and make it less corrosive to the distribution infrastructure.

4. Acknowledgements

The Chairperson thanked the officials from the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, CapeNature and the Drakenstein Municipality for availing themselves to address the Committee.