



Wes-Kaapse Provinsiale Parlement Western Cape Provincial Parliament IPalamente yePhondo leNtshona Koloni

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COMMITTEE REPORT

Report of the Standing Committee on Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning on the oversight visit to Stony Point Penguin Sanctuary in Betty's Bay.

The Standing Committee on Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning having conducted an oversight visit to Stony Point Penguin Sanctuary in Betty's Bay, on Tuesday 6 November 2024, reports as follows:

1. Stony Point African Penguin Sanctuary

1.1 Introduction

The Betty's Bay Marine Protected Area (MPA) and Stony Point Colony are integral parts of the Kogelberg Nature Reserve Complex. The MPA were initially proclaimed under the Sea Fisheries Act (1973) and re-proclaimed in December 2000 under the Marine Living Resources Act (No. 18 of 1998) and managed under the National Environmental Protected Areas Act since June 2014.

Stony Point Penguin Sanctuary was established in 1982 to protect the growing colony of African Penguins and is now home to one of the largest breeding colonies of African Penguins in the world. Managed by CapeNature, this sanctuary offers a unique opportunity to observe these endangered birds in their natural habitat.

1.2 Key Features:

1.2.1 African Penguin Colony: The sanctuary hosts a thriving colony of African Penguins, providing visitors with close-up views via a thoughtfully constructed boardwalk that minimizes disturbance to the penguins. Known for their distinctive braying call, these penguins are small, standing about 45 cm tall and weighing around 2.5 kg. They are excellent swimmers and divers, feeding on small fish and squid.

1.2.2 Biodiversity: In addition to penguins, the sanctuary is home to several species of cormorants such as Bank, Cape, Crowned, and White-breasted, Hartlaub's Gulls, Kelp Gulls, and the Rock Hyrax (Dassie).

1.2.3 Historical Significance: The site was previously used as a whaling station known as the Waaygat Whaling Station in the early to mid-1900s, and remnants of this history can still be seen.

1.2.4 Visitor Experience: The sanctuary provides an educational and immersive experience, attracting tourists who contribute to the local economy through entrance fees and spending at nearby facilities.

1.2.5 Economic Value: The total tourism value of penguin colonies, including Stony Point, was estimated to be R613 million in 2023.

1.2.6 Breeding Success: The sanctuary has shown a measurable increase in breeding pairs, contributing to the conservation of the African Penguin.

1.2.7 Public Awareness: Educational programs and visitor engagement help raise awareness about the importance of conserving these endangered birds. Visitors can enjoy a boardwalk that winds through the colony, allowing close-up views of the penguins without disturbing them. Informational boards along the way provide insights into the penguins' breeding cycle, the threats they face, and ongoing conservation efforts.

1.3. Challenges:

It was highlighted that Stony Point Penguin Sanctuary are faced with the following challenges:

1.3.1 Climate Change: Rising temperatures and changing weather patterns are impacting the penguins' habitat and food sources.

1.3.2 Habitat Loss: Coastal development and human activities have diminished the natural breeding grounds for penguins. However, efforts such as providing artificial nests, brush packing, vegetation rehabilitation,

and removing abandoned eggs and chicks for rearing at Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB) are helping to mitigate this issue.

1.3.3 Overfishing: The depletion of fish stocks, particularly sardines and anchovies, which are primary food sources for the penguins, has led to food scarcity.

1.3.4 Pollution: Oil spills and plastic pollution pose significant threats to the health and survival of penguins.

1.3.5 Predation: Natural predators and introduced species, such as domestic dogs and cats, can harm the penguin population.

1.3.6 Marine Predation: Efforts include sending recovered carcasses to SANCCOB for predation confirmation and addressing seal predation behaviour.

1.3.7 Food Shortage: Monitoring data on food shortages and supporting the expansion of fishing exclusion zones.

Despite these challenges, collaborative conservation efforts by organizations like CapeNature, SANCCOB, and World Wildlife Fund-SA (WWF-SA) are making a positive impact through medical care, habitat restoration, and community engagement.

1.4. Site investigations

The Stony Point Colony is currently undergoing a series of site investigations to explore potential expansion opportunities. These investigations are being conducted on properties located to the west and east of the existing fenced colony area. Once the findings from these investigations are compiled, they will be presented to the Stewardship Review Committee. Following this review, discussions with the Overstrand Municipality will take place to address the transfer and management of the land.

The Standing Committee on Local Government, Environmental Affairs, and Development Planning has unanimously agreed in principle to support the expansion of the Stony Point Colony Sanctuary.

2. On the Edge Restaurant

2.1 Introduction

The closure of the Highlands Forest Station marked a significant turning point for many families. As the station shut its doors, the Municipality stepped in to relocate the affected families, leading to the establishment of Mooi Uitsig. This small community, consisting of 42 families, became home to 120 adults and 40 children. The breadwinners in these families found employment as domestic workers, cleaners, gardeners, or municipal workers in nearby towns.

In 2007, the national Department of Tourism (NDT), in partnership with Overstrand Municipality and Casidra, initiated a project to support the community. That same year, commercial rights were granted to the community, laying the groundwork for future development.

The Mooi Uitsig Community Trust was officially established, with its statutes approved by the Master of the High Court on 6 January 2012. The Trust aimed to utilize its resources and property for the social and economic benefit of its beneficiaries, who were the 42 households residing in Mooi Uitsig for over five years at the time of the Trust's establishment.

By December 2014, the community was ready to open its doors to clients. CapeNature took over the management of Stony Point on 1 July 2014, and the restaurant was officially launched and handed over to the community on 10 April 2015. However, the journey was not without its challenges.

The trustees, who were general workers, gardeners, housewives, and domestic workers, had no prior experience in managing a business. The community, eager to see results, grew frustrated as tangible benefits remained elusive seven years after the project's inception.

2.2 Key Changes

In October 2015, CapeNature stepped in and played a crucial role in supporting the Mooi Uitsig community, especially during a challenging period. They aided in various ways:

2.2.1 Community Meetings: CapeNature facilitated regular community meetings to ensure open communication and address concerns. These meetings helped rebuild trust and foster a sense of unity.

- 2.2.2 Election of New Trustees:** They supported the election of new trustees, which brought fresh perspectives and renewed commitment to the Trust's goals.
- 2.2.3 Ground-Truthing:** CapeNature conducted a thorough assessment to identify what was wrong and what needed to be put in place. This "ground-truthing" process was essential for creating an effective action plan.
- 2.2.4 Action Plan Implementation:** They helped develop and implement a comprehensive action plan to address the community's needs and challenges. This plan included specific steps and timelines to achieve tangible results.
- 2.2.5 Capacity Building:** CapeNature focused on building the capacity of the trustees and community members. This involved training and education to help them understand their roles and responsibilities better.
- 2.2.6 Service Level Agreements:** They assisted in establishing service level agreements with all service providers, ensuring that the community met legal and operational standards.
- 2.2.7 Legal Compliance:** CapeNature helped the community achieve legal compliance in various areas, including SARS, HR, health and safety, and financial management. Regular audits were conducted to maintain transparency and accountability.
- 2.2.8 Support for Community Projects:** They provided support for various community projects, including student excursions, vouchers, and assistance for funerals. This support helped improve the overall well-being of the community.

Through these efforts, CapeNature significantly contributed to the stabilization and growth of the Mooi Uitsig community, helping them move towards a more sustainable and prosperous future.

2.3 Achievements

The efforts began to bear fruit. Trustees were capacitated and gained a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Service level agreements were established with all service providers, ensuring legal compliance in areas such as SARS, human resources, health and safety, and financial statements, which were audited regularly. The community's hard work was recognized when they entered the Premier's awards in 2017 and received GIZ Tourism relief funding in 2020.

The Trust supported the community with vouchers, student excursions, and assistance for funerals. Annual general meetings were held, and the community received visits from organizations like WWF-SA, United Nations Development Programme, and various government officials, including Ms T Xasa, the then Minister of Tourism, Mr A Bredell, Minister of Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning and Provincial Treasury.

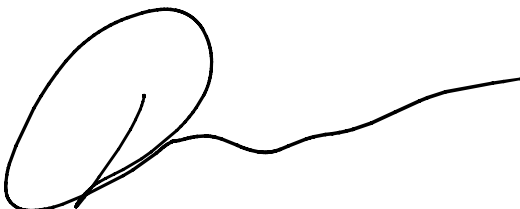
Through perseverance and support, Mooi Uitsig transformed from a community in distress to one that could proudly showcase its achievements and look forward to a brighter future.

3. Resolutions

The Committee RESOLVED to programme a follow up meeting with CapeNature and the Overstrand Municipality on the progress of site investigations to explore potential expansion opportunities and the transfer and management of the land identified.

4. Conclusion

The committee expressed their sincere appreciation for the outstanding support CapeNature provided to the Mooi Uitsig community and noted their dedication and efforts and the significant impact it made. The Committee also wish them all the success with the management of On the Edge Restaurant and may this new venture bring prosperity and joy to the community. Congratulations on this well-deserved achievement!



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