

2013 May

Town of the Year

Congratulations to Trevor White and his team, Donald Goldfain and Marlene Viljoen, for ensuring that Wilderness made it through to the second round of the Kyknet Town of the Year competition. Many others contributed by way of banners (Salinas) and flyers (Cocomos) encouraging residents and visitors to vote for Wilderness. Thank you, too, to all of you who sent in sms votes for this second round – we now wait expectantly for the announcement of the Western Cape finalist on 29 May.

Wilderness Improvement Program

Some concerns have been expressed that with all the planned activities of the Wilderness Improvement Program (WIP), and the TOY competition, there will be a loss of the "Old Wilderness" that we all fell in love with and came to call our home. We share those sentiments, but not the fears of a bigger and busier Wilderness. We aim to IMPROVE, not expand what we have.

We trust you will have experienced the positive effect that the Village Monitors have had on "crime and grime" in the Village. There will now be 2 Monitors on duty every day, equipped with radios, and 3 on Fridays.

Our new refuse bins should be in place soon and the solar lighting for the History Panels on the N2 wall is being installed this week.

Everyone who has passed through Wilderness on the N2 recently will have seen that the planters on the centre island have been replanted and are already making Wilderness look more attractive. This project has been spearheaded by Corrine Roff of The Chelsea Gardener who cleared the original mess and has donated compost, fertiliser, labour and expertise towards the replanting. We must also thank Forest Peat Products for their donation of the much needed mulch. We have previously mentioned the significant financial contribution made by two local benefactors with the balance of the project being funded by WRRRA – something we are very proud to be able to do as another contribution to the Wilderness Improvement Program.

All these small projects contribute to the overall improvement of the Village experience for residents and visitors alike.

Integrated Public Transport Network

The roll-out of this new public transport system to Wilderness is scheduled for early 2014. The project is currently in the preparatory stage in which proposed routes are being demarcated and possible bus stop locations indicated. The plan is that there will be large bus to Wilderness where passengers will step down to smaller midi or mini buses which will then travel the various routes along the N2 as far as Kleinkrantz, to Wilderness Heights and to Hoekwil/Touwsraan.

The consultants are requesting input by way of comments and suggestions as to the proposed routes and stops **before 31 May 2013**. Their information brochure states: "Before the new bus service starts, the position of bus stops needs to be decided. This is where you can help, by making a comment or suggestion to the GIPTN help desk or via the website." [email Claudia: giptn-info@george.org.za ; help desk: 044 801 9493; website: www.giptn.co.za Please note that this website will not be working before Monday 13 May.] If you are sending a comment or suggestion to GIPTN please copy this to WRRRA.

Water Bill

A number of you contacted us with regard to last month's water bill, which reflected a 35 day period, which meant that some of you were pushed into a higher payment bracket. The Municipality explained that this was due to the premature birth of the child of the official in charge, which delayed the reading of the meters. The April reading will reflect a 28 day period, which for most people will cancel out the additional charges. If you are still not happy with the net result, you can claim an individual refund from the Municipality.

Valuation appeals

The Appeals Board has commenced hearings, and Ward 4 should be completed shortly. From the feedback we have received it would appear that those who were well-prepared and could provide comparative valuations in support of their appeal received a fair and reasonable hearing. We await the final outcome of these appeals in about 4 weeks time.

Alien clearing

SANParks has announced the appointment of Herman Jungauer to head an official dedicated alien clearing team for the Garden Route National Park. This team of approximately 20 persons is being 40% funded by Working for Water.

In outlining their plan, Herman made it clear that the task is simply too big for them to handle on their own and they will be looking to partner with communities, schools, etc to achieve a tangible difference. Their initial plan is to focus on 3 aliens namely Madeira Vine, Prickly Pear and Lantana. The first phase will be to get GPS co-ordinates for the major problem areas within Wilderness itself and then start the treatment of the aliens

The enormous change from their previous approach is that they will be doing this on SANParks,

municipal as well as private land. However, where private land is involved, they will charging a small fee which is only reasonable. (If you would like more information on this project, please contact Neville Ewing.)

Please note, however, that the teams responsible for cleaning the beaches will not be operating between now and July, so we would ask you all to be on the lookout and pick up any rubbish or litter that you may find on the beach.

2013/14 Budget

WRRRA put a number of questions to the Municipality regarding aspects of the 2013/14 budget, to which we received the following replies:

- Apparent increase of 9.57% in Councilor's remuneration. ANSWER: The actual increase is 7% as gazetted by National Government, but the appointment of the EMPAC chairman has increased the overall figure.
- Contracted services increase by 77%. ANSWER: These include Housing projects (R40 million), Proclaimed roads (R30 million) and the George Integrated Public Transport Network (R94 million) which are funded from grants received from National and Provincial Treasury.
- "Other expenditure" climbs by 9.6%. ANSWER: Repairs and Maintenance is the major contributor. Council has decided to focus on the maintenance of income-generating infrastructure and networks.
- Is the free 20kWh of electricity only for indigent households? ANSWER: Yes.
 - There appears to be a change to the electricity tariff policy which indicates an introduction of a basic charge, or alternatively residents must use more than 400kWh per month to avoid this charge. ANSWER: The rationale is that if you use less than 400kWh per month and you are not indigent you are not contributing enough to the basic cost of running the electricity service. The criteria is that you must occupy the property for 9 months or longer per year (ie average purchases of at least 400 kWh per month over 9 months). The fact that you purchase more than 400 kWh per month does not remedy the matter.
 - Will the 6kl of "free" water will be retained for all residents? ANSWER: Yes. It should be noted that water is not "free"; accordingly the basic charge is likely to be increased over time and the per kilolitre tariff adjusted accordingly to cover the cost of the "free" water.

The way ahead

With the recent formation and constitution of the Greater Wilderness Business Initiative (GWBI), another important chapter in the future of Wilderness was written. We welcome GWBI as partners in the transformation and restoration of Wilderness. Without their cooperation and active support, it will become increasingly difficult to roll out the WIP as planned. For example, the successful and evolving Village Monitor Project is nearing the end of its trial period, and the future of the program as an integral part of a future Wilderness will require the sanction and adoption of GWBI.

The Town of the Year (TOY) is another project initiated and facilitated by WRRRA with a view to helping promote Wilderness as a destination of choice for residents, visitors and tourists. The future of Wilderness as a preferred tourist destination is not the sole responsibility of WRRRA, but a collective partnership between all stakeholders. These include, but are not limited to, Business (GWBI), Ratepayers & Residents (WRRRA), Local Authority (George) and Eden District Municipality. The GWBI, as the collective voice of the business initiatives throughout the greater Wilderness, is the ideal platform from which to evolve the platform created by TOY into a formal and sustaining Tourism Initiative for Wilderness and surrounds. Individually and collectively, we all have a role to play in creating a better future for our beloved Wilderness.

Breaking News

The alleyway behind the Caltex Garage, leading from the entrance to the Girls Restaurant to Wilderness Hardware, portrays the history of Wilderness on 5 large wall-mounted panels. The next phase in the transformation of the old alleyway was lighting up the history panels at night, by installing a modular solar generated lighting system for each individual panel. This phase of the project was completed during the first week of May, and we invite you to pay a visit to the Wilderness History Wall. This is another example of a joint project between willing partners, each contributing towards creating a better Wilderness - one project at a time. WRRRA (Paul Nicholas - Project Manager), Eden Adventures (Chris and Hugo Leggatt - Artwork and History) and MLT Power (Shaun Harris - Sponsors of the Solar Lighting). We hope to soon announce the start of the next and final project in the transformation of the Alleyway - paving of the unpaved areas of the alleyway. The Village Monitors will now be able to patrol the alleyway to the benefit of residents and visitors.

Safety and Security

Unfortunately crime is on the increase in the greater George area. The following suggestions, emanating from the Police Forum, are aimed at ensuring you aren't a victim:

- When you purchase expensive items such as flat screen TVs, computers, etc. don't put the

boxes on the verge for collection (thus advertising your purchases). Rather cut the boxes up and put them into your black rubbish bags.

- Don't leave laptops and cell phones visible.
- Get to know your neighbours and the regular workers in your area.
- Mark all your assets so that you can identify them if they are stolen and subsequently recovered.
- Don't reply to any emails if you don't recognize the sender.

“Wilderness” of “Wildernis”

Ons het geworstel met die vraag of *Wilderness* ons dorpie se eie en unieke naam is, en of die vertaalde *Wildernis* net so aanvaarbaar is? Verskeie uiteenlopende menings is reeds ontvang. Intussen het ons besluit, om die geproklameerde dorpsnaam *Wilderness* te gebruik. Indien u enige bydrae tot die debat kan bydra, stuur asseblief vir ons n epos na wrra@tiscali.co.za met u siening of mening.

WRRR/WBIV

2013-05-09