

PRESS RELEASE

Knysna Municipality
Immediate Release

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KNYSNA MUNICIPALITY'S R68-MILLION PLAN TO SAVE LAGOON

The Knysna Municipal Section 80 Committee for Planning Development and Infrastructure yesterday (Thursday, 8 November 2012) recommended that its council commits in principle to allocate at least R38,3-million over the next five years towards the permanent reduction of pollution into its most important natural resource, the Knysna Lagoon.

It also recommended that money be found in the draft adjustment budget for 2012-2013 to cover a shortfall of R380 000 for projects worth R29,6 million that have already been implemented or that are planned for immediate implementation.

The report – which expresses confidence that funding can be obtained from various sources, not just Knysna Council – will be submitted to the Knysna Mayoral Committee later this month (preliminary date 22 November) and is expected to go to Council at the end of the month (preliminary date 29 November).

Other recommendations regarding the report include investigation into the possible relocation of the Knysna Waste Water Treatment Works after 2020, a call for proposals for the cleaning of fat traps in the Knysna CBD, and that a mandate be given to the municipal administration to apply for further funding from the national Departments of Human Settlements, Water Affairs and Environmental Affairs as well as the Danish International Development Agency and any other available sources of funding for the lagoon-related projects.

Prepared by the municipal departments Planning and Development and Technical Services following a report by consultants Royale Haskoning DHV (formerly Stuart Scott International), the detailed report is in response to consistently high counts of Escherichia coli (or E.coli) that have been measured during monthly testing over the past year at culverts and places where river systems enter the estuary. While unacceptable and by no means considered to make the situation less serious, up to now the high levels of pollution have not caused irreparable ecological damage to the estuary because of the ocean tides that wash vast amounts of seawater into the lagoon at the Knysna River Mouth, better known as the Knysna Heads, flushing much of the mess out twice a day.

Three main causes of pollution into the estuary have been identified to which **specific infrastructure and monitoring projects** have been attached:

1. Cause: Pollution from the sewer network including the Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW).

Knysna, like most towns on the Garden Route, experienced major population growth since the beginning of the millennium, which placed significant pressure on ageing and inadequate infrastructure that was never designed to handle such large numbers of people and properties. Insufficient funding has at times complicated the employment of sufficient staff and/or buying the relevant materials for sufficient upgrades. Fat from traps at businesses in the CBD are also often not disposed of correctly and lands in the sewer.

Lagoon-related projects that are **already being implemented** to remedy this situation include:

- Mechanical and electrical upgrade of existing sewage works, expected to be complete by December 2012. Cost R11,4-million.
- Sludge dewatering equipment at existing sewage works, expected to be complete in May 2013. Cost R7,68-million.
- Upgrade of three critical pump stations. Commissioned by end November 2012. Cost R 300 000.
- Installing of water and sewerage bulk services in Concordia. Cost R900 000.
- Facilitating useful processing of fat from fat traps. Call for proposal advertised by January 2013.
- Removal of sludge in the eastern wetland at George Rex Drive. Completion expected end November 2012. Cost R30 000 once-off.
- Initial electronic telemetry system for fault monitoring, contract complete in November 2012. Cost R55 000.

Future sewer-related projects within the **five-year plan** include:

- Second phase of sewage works converting the SBR Unit into a 2-megalitre-a-day activated sludge plant that will provide capacity until 2018-2020. If other aspects of sewer flows can be better managed, capacity may be extended for some more years. Cost R9,4-million.
- New, bigger main sewage line across town. Cost R8,7-million.
- New rising main to main sewage. Cost R4,7-million.
- New Salt River or Hedge Street pump station. Cost R4,9-million.
- Main sewerage pump station upgrade. Cost R3-million.
- Remedial work to Old Place, Hornlee, Khayaletu outfall sewers. Cost R2-million.
- Install underground overflow chambers to handle flow when blockage occurs. Cost R660 000.
- Enhance the current electronic telemetry systems to pick up problems more efficiently. Cost R161 600.
- Install portable level sensors and alarms to warn when flow is higher or lower than required. Cost R80 000.
- Condition assessment of sewage network. Cost R500 000.
- Clear and inspect servitudes and sewer lines and check chambers. Cost R33 900.
- Pipeline and route inspections and reporting. Cost R342 000.
- Investigation into relocation of WWTW. Cost R500 000.

Additional long-term project:

- Relocation of WWTW. Cost to be determined.

2. Cause: The river systems are polluted from their sources through the urban areas into the estuary.

Several river systems that feed into the estuary run through informal settlements where unhealthy living conditions such as 'long drop'-toilets and dumping contribute towards pollution.

Projects **already being implemented** to remedy this situation include:

- Communal water-borne toilets in informal areas (at least one toilet per every five households) already underway. Cost R8,68- million paid for by Extended Public Works Programme.
- Improved solid waste collection and removal. Part of weekly operations.
- Monthly cleaning of river banks. Starting 15 November 2012.
- Ongoing, carefully balanced and monitored chlorination of rivers at strategic points. Cost R115 200 per annum.
- Establishment of floating wetlands. In place by February 2013. Cost R50 000 once-off.
- Establishment of mushroom beds, myco-filtration. In place end December 2012. R50 000 once-off.

Future projects within the **five-year plan** include:

- Sanitation facilities in informal areas. Cost R200 000.
- Compile River, Stormwater and River Management Strategy. Cost R180 000.
- Water quality sampling and testing. Cost R34 250.
- Community Environmental Workshops. Cost R100 000.
- Wetland and reedbed investigation. Cost R300 000.
- Regular clean-up programme for all water courses. Cost R342 000.

3. Cause: The stormwater network, which has illegal connections to the sewer network.

Throughout Knysna, residents and businesses have through the years illegally connected their rainwater outlets to the main sewer system. As the Garden Route is an all-year rainfall area that experiences significant amounts of rain at a time, stormwater can be substantial in built-up areas. When it rains, up to seven times more water runs into the sewers than should be the case for the estimated base flow of a town the size of Knysna. The extra water causes overflows of the sewerage system.

Projects **already being implemented** to remedy this situation include:

- Chloronating of storm water and river systems since December 2011. R50 000 per annum.
- Check all sewer lines for illegal stormwater connections. R300 000 tender advertised by mid-January 2013.

Future projects within the **five-year plan** include:

- Ongoing Illegal Connections Audits. Fine and monitor transgressors. Cost R324 000.
- Compile (and update) a Stormwater Master Plan. Cost R709 350. May have more financial implications in addition to current five-year projects.

Items in the five-year plan should ideally be tackled sooner rather than later, and in most cases can start as soon as relevant funding becomes available. When the major projects in the current and five-year projects have been implemented, the Knysna Municipality is confident that pollution levels will return to within acceptable levels set out by the Department of Water Affairs.

Some projects may have at its core the permanent or temporary employment of staff and long and short term contractors.

The report intentionally divided the plan into smaller projects to enable application for funding from a range of different departments, agencies and companies that would not be able to pay for the entire lagoon-saving programme as a whole but could allocate project-specific funding according to their particular mandate.

Substantial assistance is expected from the Department of Human Settlements to which a report has already been submitted. Feedback regarding this funding is expected at the end of this month (November 2012).

The most recent estuary water quality samples were taken on 16 October 2012, with the next one expected mid-November. Levels of bacteria at four out of 13 points in the lagoon, all originating from the CBD or informal areas, exceed acceptable recreational levels. Nine points, mainly in the vicinity of The Heads, Leisure Island and the White Bridge, tested under the limit and is therefore safe for public use.

The monthly Estuary Water Quality Report is available on the Knysna Municipal website at www.knysna.gov.za

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