



MEDIA RELEASE

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EMBARGO: Immediate

Lapland steps out of the dark

Knysna Local Municipality and Eskom, has sparked hope and brought dignity to about 30 families in Lapland, Rheenendal, on Wednesday, 7 September 2016.

After many years of living without electricity, Lapland families were thrilled when the electricity switch was flipped during the ceremony at the Community Hall.

In its endeavor to bring basic services to the people, Knysna Municipality's Integrated Human Settlements Department applied to Eskom for the electrification of Lapland. Eskom responded positively and on the 22nd of August 2016 the municipality officially handed over the site and the electrification project began.

An emotional and excited Executive Mayor and Ward Councillor, Eleanore Bouw-Spies, said, "Today is very special to me, not only because this falls within my ward but because I went to school in this area and like to refer to this community as "My People". I am delighted that today this community has basic services; this is a historic milestone for the Knysna Municipality and a life-changing experience for you who have been here for the greater part of your lives", said Bouw-Spies.

Due to environmental challenges, the area is unable to be formally developed as, it borders on an old Waste Water Treatment Works and a graveyard. For this reason the Knysna Municipality has been prohibited from formalising the community. However, in order to restore the dignity of the people through providing basic services, the Knysna Municipality has provided 30 Wendy Houses to families in the Lapland community, and further made provision for communal toilets, taps and also constructed an informal emergency road.

Bouw-Spies explained the importance of stakeholder partnerships and said, "We have identified the need to formulate an Integrated Human Settlement strategy to guide it's approach to the development of an holistic environment and to cater for the existing and future needs of the Municipality's diverse communities.

This can only be achieved if government sectors and the private sector work together in ensuring that we build a town where nature and people prosper. We have achieved a great deal in this community and I would like to thank our Manager of Integrated Human Settlement, Mr Mawethu Penxa and Eskom, for joining us in providing these people with electricity. ” she said.

Beneficiary of the project, Christina Abrahams, requested to say a few words of gratitude during the ceremony and said, “We are really excited about the development we are seeing in our area. We are grateful to our Mayor and Ward Councillor, Eskom and the Integrated Human Settlements Department for providing us with electricity and other basic services.”

Johannes Stroebel who has been living in Lapland since 1994 said the electricity will vastly improve their living conditions. “I am so happy, our lives will be better; we will enjoy the same basic things as other people. Our community will also be safer; our children were not safe in the dark. I am really grateful to Eskom and the Knysna Municipal Council.”

Susan Hartsenberg who has lived in Lapland for more than 16 years said that life has been very difficult without electricity. “It has not been easy for us here in Lapland without electricity. We have had to use candles and collect wood for fire, which was dangerous for our children. It was always difficult for our children to study or do their homework, as they had to use candles”.

Bouw-Spies concluded, “This is one of many projects that we plan to roll out. I believe if we continue to work together we can achieve so much more.”

ENDS

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