



MEDIA RELEASE

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KNYSNA GETS ITS FIRST GREEN SCORPION

On the 9 July 2019, Knysna Municipality's Environmental Manager, Pam Booth was designated as a Grade 1 Environmental Management Inspector by the Minister for Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, Anton Bredell. For Knysna this means that environmental crimes will be viewed far more seriously than they were in the past, with an emphasis on invasive plant transgressions (the management of listed invasive species) and transgressions in the coastal zone.

These issues are strongly linked to the challenges the town faces due to climate change. The build-up of combustible fuel loads caused unprecedented damage in the 2017 fires and was largely attributed to dense stands of invasive plants. Similarly, our beautiful coastline tempts is tempting for landowners who want to build in the active coastal zone posing a risk not only to themselves but to the sensitive coastal ecosystem we live in, a risk compounded by sea level rise and dynamic dune systems.

A Green Scorpion, or Environmental Management Inspector, is a government official from national, provincial or local government responsible for compliance and enforcement activities with environmental legislation. Environmental crimes are generally treated in the same manner and with the same seriousness as any other crime but specialised units are required to monitor and enforce the laws, as scientific and legal skills must be developed to combat such crime effectively (National Department of Environmental Affairs and Forestry).

The main function of the Green Scorpions is to enforce the legislation required by S24 of the Constitution, which guarantees that every individual enjoys the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health and well-being.

They have the power to:

Investigate: question witnesses, inspect and remove articles, take photographs and audio-visual recordings, take samples and remove waste.

Inspect: enter premises to ascertain whether legislation is being followed.

Enforce: search premises, containers, vessels, vehicles, aircraft and pack animals; seize evidence and contraband; establish roadblocks and make arrests.

Administrate: issue compliance notices and directives. The EMIs are not empowered to prosecute cases in court. All cases are handed over to the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) for prosecution.

ENDS

Knysna Municipality Communications Department

P O Box 21, Knysna. 6570. Western Cape. South Africa

Tel +27 (0)44 302 6300 (switchboard) or 302 6430 (direct)

e-mail commsintern@knysna.gov.za