



MEDIA RELEASE

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MUNICIPALITY AIMS TO INCLUDE INVESTMENT AND TRADE PROMOTION TO DESTINATION MARKETING PORTFOLIO AND TO WIDEN SCOPE OF TOURISM

The Knysna Council outlined their vision for "brand Knysna" at the Governance meeting on Tuesday 2 June.

Municipal Manager Mr Grant Easton said that Council has realised that there is a need to widen the scope of services offered to cater for other sections of the economy as well, not just the Tourism sector. "Our constitution stipulates that tourism is a function of Local Government and the grant to Knysna & Partners, an independent non-profit organisation, was a very successful way to enhance tourism in the greater Knysna area. However, in planning the need to widen the scope of services, an internal review of the Municipal Financial Management Act has changed the current suitability of funding Knysna Tourism through a municipal grant. More immediately because the SLA between Knysna Partners and the municipality also requires review, Council is required to undertake a Section 78 investigation in terms of the Municipal Systems Act. This investigation will determine the management arrangements and options best suited to ensuring tourism remains robust and dynamic within the municipality's constitutional ambit. This investigation should already have been undertaken last year at the conclusion of the previous SLA".

Council representatives have spent considerable time working with the Board of Knysna & Partners to define a new strategy and a new approach to funding. "The new strategy involves a change to the organisational structure and a change to the functions of the organisation to include destination marketing, business events, event facilitation, brand management, investment and trade promotion and the launch of an industry partner programme," said Easton.

The various options which will be examined include converting tourism into a Municipal entity; develop in house capacity; or procure the services required.

Council resolved last year to extend the SLA with Knysna & Partners for one year to 30 June 2015. During this time Knysna & Partners has already restructured its organisation and equipped itself to offer any newly identified services on a commercial basis going forward.

However, after recent review meetings it has become clear to both parties that the transition period was not adequate, due to a variety of reasons, and Easton said that a new recommendation was made to Council to extend the current SLA for a further 15 months. "In that SLA it is proposed that the Chairperson of the Board of Knysna Tourism give monthly report backs to Council at the Governance and Economic Development Section 80 Committee. This report shall include a report on the expenditure of the grant funding as well as progress against all other objectives."

Easton said that with the way forward formalised, at least for the short-term, tourism is able to continue business as usual. "Knysna & Partners can make arrangements for the management of the transition of all contracts and relationships entered into by them to the new entity which will include comprehensive and effective communication to all stakeholders."

Easton concluded by saying that Knysna & Partners and the municipality will at all times ensure that all the stakeholders involved in tourism including the general public, are kept informed as to the processes, decisions and timelines involved.

"Knysna is already a popular tourist destination and well known international brand. This has been made possible by the strong relationship between Council and Knysna Tourism as was, the next step now is to also make Knysna a draw card for investors and new business."

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