

A look back at the 2019 Knysna Oyster Festival

Knysna has long been known as the oyster festival town. According to Municipal Manager Dr Sitembele Vatala, the town will enjoy – and be proud of - that status for many years to come. “The 2019 festival took place without the support of a naming sponsor and all the associated benefits,” he said. “But, if we look at reports on the festival, it is obvious that we are not far from creating a new, better and soon to be more successful Knysna Oyster Festival than ever before.”

In its mandated report to Council for that period, Visit Knysna, a division of Wesgro, says that the “...festival was ultimately a good success.” In its new guise, the Knysna Oyster Festival took place from 21 to 30 June this year. “Keeping in mind that the festival did not enjoy the financial and operational backing of a naming sponsor as it had in the past, it still reached unexpected levels of success,” said Vatala.

The report indicates that pre-entry numbers to the Knysna Cycle Tour were as per previous years. Overall numbers were unfortunately down, due to the anticipated bad weather that had a negative effect on potential late registrations from surrounding towns.

With an increase in participants of the full marathon and a decrease in 21km runners, the Knysna Forest Marathon averaged out to similar numbers as previous years. Entries to the Houtkapper Trail Run were sold out before the closing date.

The report further shows that some accommodation establishments recorded improved numbers, while others’ numbers had gone down. This may, however, also be due to the growing numbers of – and bookings at – Airbnb establishments. These numbers are unknown. Restaurants confirmed a general improvement in business this year, especially over the weekends.

A steering committee has been formed to guide the 2020 festival preparations. This committee has a new terms of reference and a standard sponsorship package proposal with which potential sponsors may be approached.

A high-level meeting was convened by Visit Knysna and Knysna Municipality’s on October 1st with the Provincial Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEADAT), Wesgro’s events department, DECAS and the major events. DEADAT has offered its support to assist the steering committee with sponsor acquisition for the 2020 festival.

“The successes of this year’s festival must be ascribed to the locals who took it upon their shoulders to organise and manage the fantastic events on the programme,” said Vatala. “Thank you for your efforts. The 2020 Knysna Oyster Festival will take place from 26 June to 5 July,” he concluded. “And I cannot wait to see how, by working together, we will reach new heights. That is the only way that we can make the festival – and Greater Knysna – inclusive, innovative and inspired.”

ENDS
