

Knysna Municipality/Wesgro partnership is working to promote Greater Knysna.

Wesgro submitted its quarterly report on its management of Visit Knysna to Knysna Municipality's Governance and Economic Development Section 80 meeting held on 9 October.

Municipal Manager Dr Sitembele Vatala said it was encouraging to see the efforts made by the organisation for the period of May to September. "We all know how important the tourism industry is to our local economy. Wesgro's efforts to promote our area is definitely working towards strengthening that source of revenue."

Highlights of the report include:

Advisory Board and other stakeholders

Advisory Board meetings have been held, one in June and another in October. Representative of various tourism influencers from both Knysna and Sedgefield, the Advisory Board now consists of:

- Colleen Durant, Visit Knysna General Manager
- Corne Koch, Wesgro Acting Chief Marketing Officer
- Elmay Bouwer and Martin Hansson from the Business Forum Non-Profit Company (former Tourism);
- Petrus van Niekerk, Knysna Municipality Manager: Economic Development;
- Colleen Harding, Knysna Accommodation Association (KAA)/Explore Knysna;
- Mawanda Yengwa, Yengwa Tours;
- Ella Mahlulo, Emzini Tours;
- Michelle Lencoe, Lithemba Crafts & Tours; and
- Lyle Katzen, Afrovibe/Island Vibe/The Russel Hotel.

Knysna Municipality Director: Planning and Economic Development Marlene Boyce also has observer status at these meetings.

Two engagements have been presented to product owners and the public. Hosted at Villa Castollini in June, South African Tourism's Hanneli Slabber cast a light on what tourists from China, India and Australia expect while on a holiday. Kerstin Bahnmuller, owner/director of Amazing Africa spoke about how to optimise sales when dealing with destination marketing companies at Brenton Haven in October.

Visit Knysna continues to work closely with the Business Forum NPC, KAA and other stakeholders like tour guides and SANParks. The organisation also communicates updates on industry happenings, upcoming events and other relevant information with all stakeholders via regular newsletters.

Marketing strategies

The report identifies four core, niche markets and will continue to promote them. They are:

- eco adventure, sport and leisure;
- events and festivals;
- community, culture and heritage; and

- wellness, health and fitness.

The possibility of positioning 'selfie frames' at strategic locations within Greater Knysna is being discussed with the relevant departments within the municipality. These will allow tourists to actively, albeit unintentionally, market the destination via photos posted on their social media platforms. More than 1 050 tourists visited Visit Knysna's office between May and August, with more than half of those being overseas visitors. Keeping in mind that many vacationers do not necessarily visit information offices, this does not reflect the actual number of visitors to Greater Knysna within this period.

General Manager Colleen Durant represented Visit Knysna at the Southern Africa Tourism Services Association (SATSA) conference in June, and 14 products from Greater Knysna joined the Garden Route Product Roadshow to Cape Town in July. After meeting with Local Tourism Organisations (LTO's), it was decided that the Garden Route area will be exhibited at the Wesgro Western Cape Stand at World Travel Market Africa 2020.

Visit Knysna continues to host tour operators and travel agency staff 'familiarisation trips' to the greater Knysna area. This presents opportunities for exposure which, in turn, leads to our destination being included in tour- and travel packages.

The events calendar remains a priority focus area for coordination and promotion through the Visit Knysna marketing channels. The event boards at both Knysna's entrances have been upgraded, allowing for the continuous promotion of upcoming events. This format has also been incorporated in the framework of Sedgefield's billboards.

Tourism Month in September

The "Discover our World" campaign encouraged locals and visitors to follow clues on cards to discover various locations within the greater Knysna area. Participants were challenged to take a selfie at ten of the 18 venues, post it to social media and tag Visit Knysna. Many participating products offered prizes or discounts to participants, and hampers containing locally made products were awarded to lucky draw winners at the end of the month.

Sedgefield information hub

After all due procedures had been followed, Fijnbosch Coffee Shop in Sedgefield's Main Road has been appointed as that area's information location. An initial service level agreement has been signed for a period of one year, with the option to renew.

"Wesgro's management of Visit Knysna is a prime example of intergovernmental cooperation at it's best," said Vatala. "I have great confidence in the agency and Visit Knysna's ability to reclaim Knysna's spot at the top of South African tourism destinations."

Council entered into an intergovernmental service level agreement with Wesgro to carry out the functions of local tourism on behalf of the municipality on 23 October 2018. The tourism office - Visit Knysna- operates according to its mandate of marketing and promotion of the Greater Knysna area to attract visitors to our towns, according to the SLA with the Knysna Municipality. Wesgro, a government entity, is the official tourism, trade and investment promotion agency for Cape Town and the Western Cape.

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