

Grey Street upgrade makes steady progress

Knysna Municipality's Grey Street Project has advanced to include the second block, between Gordon and Trotter Streets, including the intersection at Grey and Trotter Streets.

"Although the nationwide lockdown delayed construction, the contractor returned to site during stage three and is working to complete these important works," said Acting Municipal Manager Dr Louis Scheepers. "We understand that the partial street closures relating to this project may result in slight inconvenience and frustration. These temporary closures are unfortunately a necessary part of the process."

The project only received the green light after an exhaustive public participation process and consultations with affected property owners, business owners and tenants. "These consultations were first initiated during the planning phase in 2015 and aimed at including as many affected parties as possible," Dr Scheepers confirmed.

The project encompasses the portion of Grey Street between Waterfront Drive and the Main Road. It includes the replacement of the old water pipeline, the total rebuilding of the road, intersections, sidewalks, parking bays and general beautification. "A block-by-block approach was implemented to minimise traffic disruption," Dr Scheepers explained. "While it would have been much easier and faster from a construction point of view to close the whole street, it would have been a practical nightmare."

"We are awaiting final test results on block one (between Waterfront Drive and Gordon Street), and hope to open this section to traffic very soon," said Dr Scheepers. "Work will progress along blocks, all the way to Main Road, in such a way that the minimum street closures are applied at any one time."

Once works on block two have been completed, excavations will commence on further blocks. "Residents are assured that completed sections will be opened to traffic as soon as practically possible. We are expecting an amended programme that will confirm how further blocks will be extended," Dr Scheepers said. "This programme will detail timing schedules and, once approved, will be shared with all affected parties, loaded onto our website and updated monthly."

As possessor of the site, the contractor is responsible for communicating operational issues directly to affected parties. "The contractor assures us that this has been done both in person and via a WhatsApp group that includes affected businesses and persons," Dr Scheepers said that the municipality is not a member of this group, for good reason. "Joining the group is likely to blur the lines between the contractor's responsibilities as possessor of the site against our responsibilities as the client."

The municipality has appointed an engineer, Blyne Miller, as its fulltime engineer on site. This is to ensure smooth operations at an acceptable pace. Any affected persons are invited to contact Blyne Miller on site to address and speedily resolve matters

"A revitalised Grey Street will not only better the lives of those who live and do business in and around it, but will enhance the experiences of visitors to Knysna – once they are free to return," Dr Scheepers concluded. "Until then, please exercise patience and keep the end goal in mind."

The project forms part of the municipality's Central Business District Renewal Programme. It is funded from the Municipal Infrastructure Grant allocation for the 2019/20 financial year, with a budget of R17 million. Construction started in February this year and the contract period for completion is July 2021.

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