

Municipal projects back on track post lockdown

Certain municipal capital and Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) projects were delayed by the nationwide lockdown. But these, Knysna's Acting Municipal Manager Dr Louis Scheepers explained, are back on track.

"Level 5 of the lockdown suspended all construction activities," he said. "This caused delays on a number of our projects that were scheduled to take place within the 2020/21 financial year. Work continued on these as and when the relevant lockdown levels allowed, and are still subject to new regulations and procedures. They have since advanced well and are gaining momentum towards completion."

"Important to note is the effect these delays may have had on our 2020/21 MIG annual allocation," Dr Scheepers said. "By the end of June we had managed to spend 92% of our MIG funding for the 2019/20 financial year. We were unfortunately not able to spend the balance, due to the lockdown and the associated suspension of construction activities, and submitted a rollover application."

Knysna Municipality has received R24 887 000 in MIG funding to implement its infrastructure plans for the current financial year. This is approximately R145 000 less than the previous year.

"We remained undeterred," said Dr Scheepers. "We take our responsibility to creating, maintaining and upgrading infrastructure very seriously. We can only deliver our services to our residents via sound infrastructure. I look forward to these projects reaching completion within reasonable timeframes."

Dr Scheepers was referring to some of the municipality's major infrastructure projects:

- The upgrading of gravel roads in several wards was postponed for two months due to the lockdown and the project as a whole is now at 60% completion.
- The upgrade of Grey Street was also suspended for two months and has since reached 45% of overall progress.
- Another two months was lost in phase one of the upgrade to the CBD sewer system, but this phase of the project has progressed to 70% of its completion.
- Phase one of the upgrade to the CBD water reticulation system is now at 95% completion, with phase two of this project already having made 20% progress.
- The new estimated completion date for the upgrade to the north and north-east bulk water systems is within the current month of September, with the remaining scope of works being finalised.
- The rehabilitation of the Knysna wastewater treatment inlet works, on the other hand, is at the commissioning stage.
- The upgrade to the Hornlee water reticulation system is set to reach completion towards the end of February 2021, while the upgrade to the sewer reticulation system in this ward should be completed by the end of October this year.
- Phase two of the upgrade and refurbishment of the Charlesford and Eastford pump stations also lost two months' worth of expenditure to the lockdown. The overall progress is currently at 45%.
- The Knysna wastewater treatment works conversion from a sequencing batch reactor to a nutrient removal plant is at 35% overall progress after losing two months' spending due to the lockdown.

- Construction of new pavements and sidewalks in Hornlee, Karatara, Rheenendal, Smutsville/Sizamile and Knysna's northern areas is progressing at a steady pace.

“Although electrification projects also faced certain challenges in both financial years, these are also progressing,” Dr Scheepers continued. “The Department of Energy (DoE) service connections had to roll over between the two financial years due to unforeseen constraints.”

An audit conducted by the DoE identified two settlements to complete the rollover application. These include 65 new connections in ward 1 and 24 connections in ward 7.

Dr Scheepers explained that, after a planning session with ward councillors, R2 160 000 had been allocated to the 2019/20 electrification budget. Areas where projects under this allocation have been completed include:

- Beverly Hills/Makapela;
- Love Corner
- Rhobololo 2; and
- Rosemore.

Areas where electrification under this allocation is still in progress include:

- Knoetzie;
- 7de Laan; and
- Katanga/Edameni.

As per the 2020/2021 budget allocation R3 000 000 was allocated to the electrification of informal areas. These areas are:

- Slangepark, Ward 1;
- Chris Hani, Ward 3;
- Nekkies West, Ward 3;
- Rosemore, Ward 4;
- Ethembeni (Zwelitsha), Ward 4;
- Bulk services in Edimeni, Ward 7;
- Bulk services in Dinnagwe, Ward 7;
- Bulk services in Kanonkop, Ward 7;
- Rhobololo, Ward 8;
- Love Corner, Ward 8; and
- Emabananeni, Ward 8.

A capital expenditure project, scope of work at the Brenton substation included the construction of a switching station building, the installation of an indoor switchgear and the commissioning of medium voltage lines. The global pandemic has delayed the delivery of key components from abroad.

Scope of work at the Eastford substation (phase 2), also a capital expenditure project, included the installation of an 11kv cable between the refurbished 66/11kv transformer and the ring main unit at Green Pastures, as well as the rebuilding of medium voltage lines to a pole mounted transformer. This feeder is an alternative supply to the Concordia treatment works.

“Two more capital expenditure projects are about to get underway,” said Dr Scheepers. “Once ordered material has been delivered, construction of streetlights in Brackenhill can start. Phase three of works on the workshop is expected to start shortly.

“We all felt the immediate effect of the nationwide lockdown on our personal freedom,” he said. “We also had an idea of how the associated restrictions might influence various aspects of our future. The delays caused to many of our projects – and the associated effects these will have – is just one example of how our future will be affected in many ways by the global COVID-19 pandemic.”

“The manner in which Council, the administration, our internal sections and external partners have responded to get these projects back on schedule is, however, testament to our commitment to service delivery,” Dr Scheepers concluded. “It also proves our resilience and ability to adapt to an ever-changing ‘new normal’. I believe we all have this ability and urge you to employ it in your own business’ efforts to regain its footing under these new, challenging circumstances.”

ENDS

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