

Pollution of the Knysna Lagoon in the spotlight

A recent lagoon spill once again highlighted the negative effect of contaminated matter in the lagoon after a high profile sports event had to be cancelled.

The municipality's water and wastewater departments worked non-stop this week to find the source of the blocked drain and the resultant sewerage spill into the lagoon. Cllr Peter Bester, Member of the Mayoral Committee (MMC) for Infrastructure, said the reason for the blockage has been identified. "What is worrying is that while the lines were cleaned municipal teams found a lot of foreign matter in the drains that are not meant to be there, including large stones and shovels. This adds congestion and will result in blocked lines, and consequent spills. Manholes are also manually blocked with buckets by thieves for 'mining' purposes – looking for anything with value."

Bester said the Municipality receives on average 144 sewer complaints a month, or 5 a day. "Sewers are designed to be self-cleansing and there should rarely be blockages if it carries the matter that it was design for."

"We all enjoyed the Chukka Festivals over the last two weekends, and the consequent business it brought to town was more than welcome. It was most unfortunate that an event had to be cancelled due to the actions of certain individuals that disregard our advisories and regulations. All recreational use of the lagoon is threatened if we cannot maintain a healthy eco-system. It is crucial for the wellbeing of our town and we must all work together to ensure we keep it healthy, and safe. Even if no one sees what you throw or drop down your drain, the consequences can be dire."

Bester said he requested a meeting with the relevant parties for a full explanation, to find out who the culprits were and action will be taken. "Every action has a subsequent reaction - and this is especially true with the sewerage drain system. According to studies the estuary is South Africa's most important estuary in terms of conservation - it is home to 43% of South Africa's plant and animal life and supports rare fish species such as the grunter, white steenbras, dusky cob and cape stumpnose. Just imagine what a spill like this is doing to that eco-system. We are committed to doing our part, but need the commitment of Knysna residents and businesses too. Think before you act."

ENDS

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