

# **LIRA COMMITTEE REPORT FOR 2018**

## **FINANCES**

Audited annual financial statements for 2018 have been posted on the LIRA website, and will be presented at the AGM. Highlights are:

- Total 2018 income of R1 377 846 against a budget of R1 395 360
- Total 2018 expenditure of R1 330 080 against a budget of R1 369 974
- Net 2018 income of R47 766 against a budget of R25 364

Breakdown of expenditure for 2018 is as follows:

- Security: R1 080 218
- Public area maintenance: R105 332
- General administration: R97 730
- Steenbok contribution: R46 800

The Balance Sheet at 31 October 2018 reflects the following assets:

- Net fixed assets of R166 252, current assets of R440 510, and total assets of R606 762

Capital and liabilities are:

Accumulated surplus of R271 288, guard hut contributions of R88 465, camera replacement reserve of R96 491, and current liabilities of R150 518, giving total reserves and liabilities of R606 762.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

The recruitment and retention of members has been an ongoing focus for the LIRA Committee, with personal visits and contacts resulting in LIRA's strong representation among Island residents.

There are a total of 432 Island properties, and there are currently 321 paying members.

Reasons for non-membership include: 33 properties in transfer/sale, 23 properties with tenants, 13 unknown, 21 unaffordable or stopped paying, and 16 won't join or resigned.

Membership therefore stands at 74% of all properties, or more accurately 81% of occupied properties. If tenanted properties and financially strained residents are excluded, this total rises to 88%.

A detailed membership database is maintained, and updated monthly, enabling accurate accounting, and assisting with the recruitment of potential members.

## **MEMBERSHIP LEVIES**

In 2019, monthly levies will be increased from R390 to R410, an increase of 5%.

Annual levies will be increased from R4400 to R4600, an increase of 4.55%.

Based on 2018 expenditure, the following is a breakdown of how levies have been spent:

Security: 81%, public area maintenance: 8%, general administration: 7%, and Steenbok Reserve contribution: 4%.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Sixteen LIRA Newsletters, Notices and Feedback Reports have been e-mailed to members and other interested parties in 2018, updating them on Island activities and notifying them of forthcoming events.

These e-mails are LIRA's primary means of communication and are sent to more than 500 addressees.

Links are provided to Knysna Municipality, Steenbok and Knysna Basin Project when appropriate.

MailChimp, an internationally-recognised service provider, is used to ensure accurate delivery, records of receipt, opens and other statistics. Readership for 2018 mailings stands at ±60%.

An added benefit of MailChimp is a polling feature that we shall use again in future. This year, it was useful with the request to site the Reflection Seedpod fire memorial in Steenbok – a poll of members' opinions was undertaken to inform the LIRA response. 116 people responded, of whom 84% supported the request.

When concerns were raised in October about overcrowding of day visitors, our notice requested members to submit suggestions that were then discussed at an Extraordinary General Meeting, and thereafter presented to KM as our Action Plan for the Festive Season.

It is planned to revamp the LIRA website in 2019.

## **SECURITY**

LIRA employs Allsound to provide the Island with security services similar to those found in gated estates.

While there have been no incidents of housebreaking, contact crime or car theft on the Island this year, reported crimes for 2018 include two thefts of bicycles, a ladder, cell phones and a vehicle break-in.

Security remains a major concern, and members are urged to report all incidents to Allsound's 24-hour Control Room, on 044 382 5589, to ensure prompt reaction as well as accurate recording of crime statistics.

Six guards provide a 24-hour service in three shifts, monitoring access to the Island, manning CCTV cameras at the entrance and at Green Hole, attending to call outs, and with visible bicycle and dedicated van patrols. Extra security is provided over the Festive Season.

Allsound has a strong working relationship with KM Law Enforcement and the SAPS.

## **WARD 9 REPRESENTATION**

Leisure Island falls within Ward 9, which covers the south-eastern portion of Knysna, and includes The Heads, Pezula, Rexford, Hunters Home, the Industrial Area, Thesen Islands, Lower Old Place and Brackenhill.

LIRA represents Leisure Islanders on the Ward Committee. Mark Willemse is our Ward Councillor.

Regular Ward Committee meetings are held, at which a Leisure Island report is tabled and discussed. Island issues raised in 2018 include: the sea wall, management of day-visitors, law enforcement, security, the gum trees, Knysna Tourism, Cearn Hall, disabled access, road surfacing, signage, general municipal services etc.

Feedback is also given on the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) of the Municipality, the broader five-year planning context within which the Ward Committee operates.

Strategic objectives of the Knysna IDP include: service delivery, economic development, financial viability, municipal organisational development, and good governance and public participation.

Major projects of interest to Leisure Island include water and electricity supply, modernisation of the sewerage treatment works, upgrading of George Rex Drive and the N2 intersection, etc.

Of particular relevance to the Island is the appointment of urban design consultants to compile a new Spatial Development Framework (SDF) for Knysna, with a delivery date of August 2019.

LIRA recommends that members view the Integrated Development Plan on the Knysna Municipality website and familiarise themselves with this important public document.

## **ENGAGEMENTS WITH KNYSNA MUNICIPALITY**

LIRA has had numerous interactions with KM over the past year, has built positive working relationships with municipal departments, and has seen the benefits of this in the service levels the Island has enjoyed.

The Mayor has attended a number of meetings and Island activities and has voiced his appreciation for the work done by LIRA.

A major resurfacing exercise was done on the Island's roads, and road markings and signage are well maintained. LIRA has requested a greater input into the prioritisation of roads for resurfacing in the 2019 maintenance cycle.

The work of the Parks Department has generally been good, with verges and public open spaces trimmed regularly, and bush cuttings collected promptly. The contracting-out of some of these services has been problematic at times, however KM has terminated this contract and in future all these services will be provided in-house that will result in a better service.

Refuse collection is reliable and efficient, and litter collection and bin-emptying ensure the Island looks attractive. KM response time to LIRA requests for repairs to street lights, water pipe leaks, potholes etc has been excellent, as has been the free septic tank emptying service.

The Fire Department has assisted LIRA with identifying and marking fire hydrants, and extinguished a garden fire in Horne Drive. Building Services regularly request LIRA inputs on building and planning applications for the Island.

Meetings have been held with the Community Services and Law Enforcement Departments to ensure municipal by laws are enforced, particularly during holiday periods. The by-laws prohibit the consumption of alcohol in public spaces, and LIRA has requested that this be enforced on all the Island's beaches.

Unacceptable behaviour resulting from excessive liquor consumption remains the major issue for Law Enforcement. Traffic violations, including drunken driving, speeding, and obstructive and illegal parking have also been raised as major concerns.

The Municipality has deployed extra security staff at Green Hole, has implemented the one-way road system, and is undertaking vehicle patrols.

A special effort has been made by Cleaning Services as part of its season preparations. At LIRA's request additional bins have been placed at Green Hole (including recycling bins), and additional cleaning staff and refuse collections have been deployed.

Temporary chemical toilets will be placed at Green Hole, Bollard Beach and Land's End over the holiday period.

## **GUM TREE TRIMMING AND GARDENING**

Arising from concerns of members about the risk of fire and falling branches, LIRA has trimmed 27 gum trees along Links Drive, based on expert botanical studies and a fire risk assessment made by the Southern Cape Fire Protection Association.

The work was carried out by a KM-approved contractor. LIRA's costs have been R97 000, with another R50 000 generously donated by residents. KM has budgeted to trim the remaining 20 trees in early 2019.

The results of the trimming have been positively received – these iconic trees have been retained in a healthy condition, dangerous branches have been removed, free firewood and chippings distributed, and adjacent homes are enjoying the morning sun.

LIRA has also assisted with a number of beautification projects on the Island's public open spaces. These have often been the result of requests by residents and have included generous donations of labour and funds.

Improved areas include parks in Parkes Road, Kensington Gardens, the bus stop park, and various lagoonside locations. A LIRA gardener maintains the gardens at the Island entrance and at Cearn Hall.

## **CEARN HALL**

At the request of the Country Club (the leaseholder), LIRA has entered into an agreement with them to assist with the management of Cearn Hall.

The Country Club has repaired and repainted the building, and local volunteers have removed overgrown trees and bushes, erected fencing, and planted attractive new gardens.

Interior work has included painting, spring-cleaning and reorganisation, with the assistance of the Fun Raising Committee, Library staff and the Friends of the Library.

A wheelchair ramp, funded by private donations, will shortly be provided.

A meeting has been held with the head of Library Services, and extensions to the Library are being considered. Ongoing improvements to the Hall facilities will be done as funds are made available, with a view to making Cearn Hall a more attractive and well-used Island asset.

## **THE SEA WALL COURT CASE**

The seawall case was argued in the Cape Town High Court on 30 May 2018.

Adv Derek Mitchell presented the LIRA case - that George Cearn had built the seawalls on his property, with the necessary authorisations, above the high-water mark. Ownership of the public areas of Leisure Island subsequently passed to the Knysna Municipality, who thus own the seawall, and have the responsibility to effect repairs.

LIRA's Adv Mitchell requested that the Court make a declaratory order confirming the Municipality's ownership of the seawall, and he requested that a structural interdict be made compelling them to inform the court how and when it intends to effect repairs.

Adv Farlam, for the Municipality, argued on the lack of proof that Cearn had built the walls on his property, and not below the then high-water mark. Additionally, the fact that the water now reaches the walls changes ownership, as they are now below the current high-water mark. Ownership therefore now vests in the State, and in terms of current environmental legislation, it is not permissible to make repairs to the walls.

He argued further that even if the Court found that the walls belong to the Municipality, due to the difficulty in obtaining permission to work on the walls, and because the Municipality has limited resources and greater priorities, the Court should not grant a structural interdict which would be unenforceable.

Until such time as Judge Papier's written judgement is received, no rebuilding of the sea walls can be undertaken.

## **INTERIM REPAIRS TO THE SEA WALL**

In June 2018, LIRA, after consultation with SANParks, submitted a proposal to the Municipality and SANParks for interim repairs to be made to the sea wall.

This described a quick and inexpensive approach to making repairs to those sections of the sea wall that are currently collapsing. LIRA believed that this would prevent further costly deterioration of the sea wall, pending the outcome of the court case.

Despite wide support for the interim solution, KM has resisted implementing this project.

LIRA has also recently submitted to KM a proposal for remedial work to the eroded beach at Bollard Bay. KM is considering implementing this proposal before the holiday season.

## **NEW ROAD NAME SIGNS**

A contract has been awarded to a local signage firm to replace all the Island's old road name signs and provide new signs where required.

The funding for this project has been raised by the Fun-Raising Committee, an independent group of Islanders who have raised money for the beautification of the Island through social events held during past two years.

The new signs will be to municipal standards, with reflective lettering in an attractive font on a green background. Once completed, early in 2019, the signs will improve the Island's appearance and make navigation easier.

Although not part of LIRA, the Fun-Raisers act in conjunction with the Committee in deciding how funds are spent. The Island Passport is their most recent fund-raising project.

## **STEENBOK NATURE RESERVE**

Steenbok Nature Reserve consists of two Municipality-owned erven on the north shores of the Island, and is jointly managed in terms of an Agreement between the Municipality and LIRA, which expires in 2021.

The Steenbok MANCOM, with representatives of LIRA, the Municipality, the Friends of Steenbok and SANParks, manages the Reserve in line with the following objectives of the Agreement:

- to manage the eco-system for the benefit of all Knysna residents and visitors
- to ensure the natural heritage is nurtured and protected for the benefit of current and future generations
- to create and maintain a place of enjoyment for all whilst recognizing the protocols applicable in nature conservation areas
- to establish and maintain plant communities representative of the Garden Route
- to protect plant life indigenous to Leisure Isle and the salt marsh community.

It is essential to avoid any risk of future development in the area, and to take all steps possible to safeguard Steenbok's future as a conservation area beyond 2021.

Positive progress has been made this year in obtaining recognition from SANParks of Steenbok as a protected area. MANCOM has attended various workshops in this regard and submitted a 10-Year Plan.

As a result, Steenbok has been incorporated in the updated SANParks Management Plan. The precise status will be known after submission to the Minister, but it is believed the outcome will result in conservation status for Steenbok, and guaranteed security in perpetuity.

Significant progress has been made in the five-year project to eradicate invasive plant species in the area west of the tennis club and in Kingfisher Creek. This project is intended to support the objectives of the Agreement, meet the requirements of environmental legislation, and assist with the process of having Steenbok declared a protected area.

The Reflection Seedpod memorial to the Knysna Fires, which was sponsored by local donors, has been erected in the Reserve. The memorial was unveiled in October in a moving ceremony. The Seedpod is a welcome addition to Steenbok, and provides visitors with a symbolic sculpture, with benches for reflection, while acknowledging the sheltering role the Island played in hosting people evacuated from the fire.

The Reserve has updated its website, and runs a very active Facebook page as a means to communicate Steenbok activities. A posting on the Reflection Seedpod memorial attracted a record of more than 10 000 views. Newsletters have been regularly sent out, and on-site notice boards are used to inform visitors of matters of interest.

A children's education book, 'Look Deep into Nature', has been produced to raise youthful awareness of the pleasures of the Reserve. The book was launched at the Steenbok stall at the Leisure Isle Festival and has been distributed to schools and libraries. All funds from the sale of the book go to the maintenance and upkeep of the Reserve.

The Reserve has also hosted numerous school outings and visits by special interest groups, and continues to be an extremely well managed and popular destination for Island and Knysna residents and tourists, and is a model of effective public-private partnership.

## **LEISURE ISLAND FESTIVAL**

This year's Leisure Island Festival, a highlight of the Island's social diary, was the most successful yet, with record funds raised by and for local charities. The Festival is hosted and supported by LIRA, and extremely well organised and run by an independent Festival Committee.

## **THE YEAR AHEAD – LIRA ACTIVITIES PLANNED FOR 2019**

2018 has been an exciting and eventful year for LIRA. There have been many successes, and some disappointments! 2019 promises to be even more challenging and the Committee has identified a number of activities and projects to pursue in the New Year. The support of our members and of all Islanders will be crucial in this regard.

Given the dynamic socio-political landscape of Knysna, and the economic challenges facing the Municipality, the Committee anticipates that 2019 will require greater involvement from LIRA to ensure that Leisure Island retains its status as a residential suburb of choice.

**Sea walls:** The long-awaited judgement in the sea wall court case will enable repairs to be made to the broken portions of the sea wall. An environmental process will also need to be undertaken to guide the future rebuilding of the sea wall. This should also incorporate improvements to the Island's lagoon frontage generally, and include roads and parking areas, and improved public spaces and facilities. As an interested and affected party, LIRA will have a major role to play.

The preparation of a **Spatial Development Framework**, as part of the Integrated Development Planning for Knysna, creates an opportunity for LIRA to initiate an 'Island Vision' project that encapsulates the views of Island residents on the longer-term future of Leisure Island, and to see that this is incorporated into the Municipality's plans.

To this end it has been suggested that workshops are held to develop a common vision on how we see the future, and to promote increased consultation and engagement with the Municipal planners.

George Cearn purchased Steenbok Island in 1925 - a real estate transaction that announced the birth of Leisure Island. With only six years remaining to our Centenary, LIRA intends to launch **a project collecting historical information**, with a view to compiling a commemorative book on Leisure Island.

Appeals will be made for contributions of memorabilia, photos, reminiscences etc, and volunteers will be sought to assist in this venture.

## **THE 2018 LIRA COMMITTEE**

The 2018 LIRA Committee currently consists nine permanent Island residents, all paid-up LIRA members. All are volunteers who freely give their often-considerable time, energy and expertise in representing our members.

The Committee members are: Keith Hollis, Clive Bennett, Mary-Anne Beviss-Challinor, James Botha, Paul Kotze, Argen Meter, Ingrid Meter, Brenda Neall, Declan Nurse and Dave Stromberg.

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