



2020 LIRA

COMMITTEE REPORT

The Committee took a decision to delay the presentation of its 2020 report due to the Covid impact, and now finds itself in a similar unfortunate situation with Covid numbers again rising in the town.

We, therefore, submit our report in this unusual format and hope that we will host a regular face-to-face AGM in December 2021.

LIRA's primary objectives remain:

- To maintain and protect the unique environment of the island and ensure that all our programs are geared towards its enhancement and preservation;
- To foster good relations with the Municipality, SANParks, Law Enforcement and other relevant bodies;
- To implement and maintain an effective security system to ensure the safety of both residents and visitors – and critical in maintaining property values.

It goes without saying that 2020 turned all our lives upside down – in January when the Committee began considering its duties, we could never have predicted the challenges ahead.

Our newsletters bear testimony to the work we did and the goals we tried to achieve, and I encourage you to read them. They are likely still in your inbox and are available on our website – www.leisureisleknysna.co.za.

MEMBERSHIP – Barbara Mills

The Committee views the monthly database as a critical aid in determining membership numbers and variations. The annual levies remain our primary source of income and, as such, we are acutely aware of fluctuations and changes.

We are pleased to advise that the current membership remains stable at 72.7% of households on the island. We are most grateful to everyone who, despite the uncertainties of Covid, continue to contribute.

The recruitment of new members is always a priority and we appreciate the invaluable contribution Peter Dieterich makes in ensuring our database is accurate.

Currently (as of November 2020), there are a total of 432 properties on the island of which 314 are paid-up members.

The shortfall is made of 9 second properties, 13 tenanted properties, 7 deceased estates, 13 non-members due to affordability issues and 31 houses currently for sale. The balance are non-members for unspecified reasons.

These figures have been remarkably stable and we are able to utilise this positively when engaging with Knysna Municipality on behalf of ratepayers.

MEMBERSHIP LEVIES

The Committee took a decision, based on the impact of Covid and financial challenges for many members, that no increase would be implemented in the 2021 financial year, ie to remain at R4830 pa.

The bulk of our income goes to providing security on the island, while general maintenance and improvements and the annual contribution to Steenbok Nature Reserve account for the balance.

A special appeal was launched in September 2020 to embark on the Seawall Project that was a remarkable success. It highlighted the incredible generosity of islanders and their willingness to participate in maintaining our infrastructure.

While we acknowledge the role of Municipality, it has been extremely disappointing in this regard, and we will not sit back and allow vital maintenance to go unattended.

STEENBOK NATURE RESERVE – Craig Carter

Steenbok has faced several challenges this year including changing leadership, rigorous discussion about its complicated management structure and the effects of the Covid lockdowns.

Leadership:

Keith Hollis retired from the role of Chairman of Friends of Steenbok Trust after 13 years. Brian Steele accepted the nomination to a position he held prior to handing over to Keith in 2007.

Roger Voysey also retired from his role as head of Steenbok and was succeeded in May by Kerry Evans who took over as Chair of the Management Committee. Unfortunately, for personal reasons, Kerry resigned from this role, as well from the LIRA Committee. Craig Carter has taken over from her.

Structure:

The structure of Steenbok management has been simplified in recent times with a move away from two Management Committees (one in terms of the LIRA/KM agreement and one in terms of the Steenbok Trust constitution) to only the Mancom as set out in the LIRA/KM agreement.

The role of the Trust reverts to one of custodian of all funds received for the management of Steenbok, as well as oversight of budget and expenditure.

The LIRA/KM Mancom has representation as follows:

Trust appointee: Charles Breen

LIRA appointees: Peter Surgey and Craig Carter (Chair of Mancom)

KM appointees: Mulalo Musekene, Dept of Environment KM

Ivan van Wyk, Dept of Parks and Recreation KM

SANParks appointees: Maretha Alant and Owen Govender

Volunteers: Di Stromberg, Dave Stromberg, Letti Bensley, Ingrid Meter and Fran de Jager

If anyone else is interested in being part of this team or helping out from time to time, please contact Craig on 082 653 0402 or Di on 083 254 5092.

Activities:

Due to Covid restrictions, Steenbok Nature Reserve saw many months with access prohibited both for the public and maintenance crews.

The area became rather overgrown at various times, but the team has brought it back to its usual excellent condition. In addition, much needed maintenance has been implemented to catch up on the backlog (including sprinkler systems, benches, pathways and other structures).

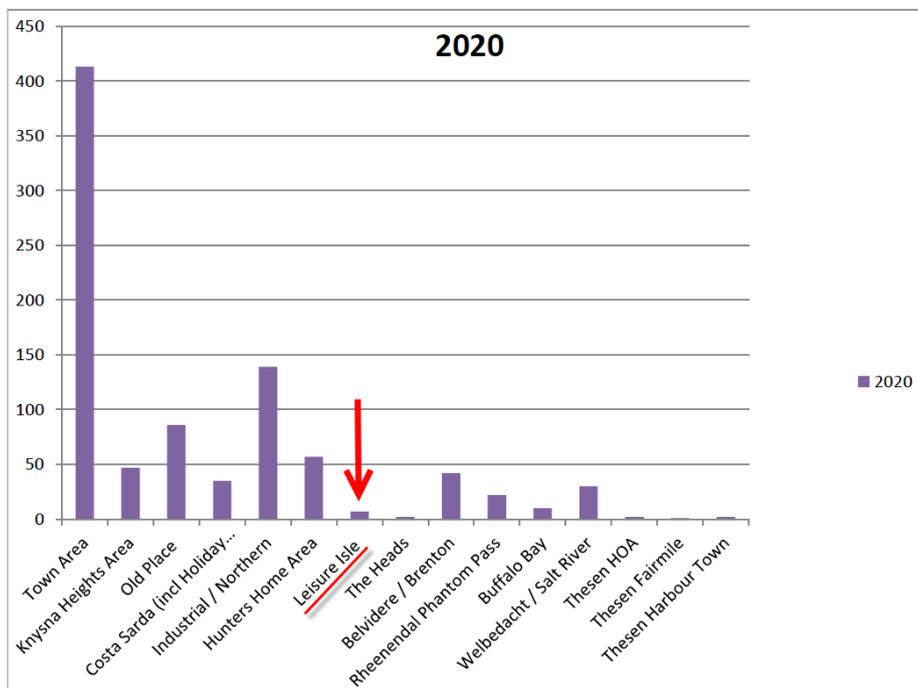
As a result of this, as well as lockdowns of schools, educational visits to Steenbok have been limited. Visits were restarted in August with strict Covid protocols in place. We hope to increase the educational opportunities as things start to return to normal.

The all-important management agreement between LIRA and KM runs until May 2021 and efforts are underway to renew this vital collaboration.

For more detail on what has been happening at Steenbok please visit the website www.steenboknaturereserve.org.za

SECURITY – Declan Nurse

Leisure Island remains one of the safest, low crime areas in Knysna, which can clearly be seen on the graph below: **Crime Stats for 2020**.



A total of seven crimes were reported to Allsound Security for the period which included:

- 4 bicycles stolen with bikes recovered in two instances
- 1 boat motor stolen from a moored boat - recovered and suspects arrested
- 1 wheelie bin stolen
- 1 burglary through open window (ladder used)

These incidents occurred in the busier, summer months when “foot traffic” on the island increases ie January, February and November.

The on-site security vehicle responded to incidents of crime as well as numerous “municipal by-law related” events, ranging from noise complaints, illegal fires and drunk and disorderly behaviour.

These violations do not fall within the jurisdiction for private security, therefore regular meetings are held between LIRA, Allsound Security and Knysna Municipality on how to effectively respond to and manage these incidents.

Again, it was agreed that for peak times, additional KM Law Enforcement be deployed to Leisure Island to manage by-law related offences.

We continue to ensure best practice in terms of visible patrols and monitoring of peak season influxes, thus ensuring that the highest levels of security are maintained on the island.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind residents not to be complacent, to exercise preventative security measures such as keeping valuables out of sight, securing doors and windows, and utilising alarm systems.

KNYSNA MUNICIPALITY AND WARD 9 REPRESENTATION –

Mary-Anne B-C

Various things we hoped to achieve during the course of the year were hampered by Covid; municipal offices and affiliated departments spent many weeks closed, engagements were often frustrated by inefficient Zoom meetings, with breakdowns in communication between departments as key staff were off duty.

Despite the difficulties, we enjoy good working relations with most departments and the response to our requests for assistance is usually satisfactory.

However, we have experienced some difficulties in communication with the Planning Dept, delays in responses to queries on applications with the Technical Dept remain a challenge, with little co-operation regarding our ongoing struggles for commitment on the seawall structural issues.

A long-term resolution on the matter bounces between Technical/Legal and SANParks.

We presented our IDP priorities and unfortunately these have been largely ignored in the budget as KM wrestles to provide basic services to the northern areas of our town.

The resurfacing of George Rex Dr is off the table and a measly allocation of R500k has been committed to a preliminary report on the scope of work.

FESTIVE SEASON PREPARATIONS – Mary-Anne B-C

We worked closely with all relevant departments and were again encouraged by their willingness to put the necessary structures in place – with the aim of ensuring a peaceful and enjoyable island for all during the Festive Season.

Law Enforcement, Cleaning and Solid Waste and Community Services Depts all came to the party and a detailed action plan was implemented – but was ultimately moot when the ‘Second Wave’ saw the lagoon and beaches closed.

We stress and appreciate the co-operative manner in which these issues are tackled – and remain mindful of the challenges of implementation.

MAINTENANCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE – Mark Sofianos

Maintenance and infrastructure are always on our agenda – and despite 2020’s lockdown and Covid issues, the LIRA committee was able to drive and oversee several successful projects.



Seawall Repairs: The seawall is one of the Island’s biggest assets – so with SANParks and KM at loggerheads over the issue, it became necessary for the residents to undertake emergency repairs.

After the LIRA fund-raising appeal and many generous donations, sufficient funds were made available for the required repairs.

Under the professional oversight and planning of Collin Dittmer, assisted by Dave Stromberg, Dennis Boyd and Craig Clark, a fantastic job was done by B&V Civils. The work was finished in time for the December season and signed off in January by Blue Pebble Environmental consultancy.

New Handrails: It then was apparent that new steps and handrails were required and again, thanks to the generous donations from three residents, several new timber steps and handrails were installed making access to the lagoon safe and easy.

Thornely Park Fencing: A new post-and-rail fence was installed in Thornley Park as an ongoing project to make safer parking, and to preserve the integrity of the park area and the seawall.

Although it was initially met with some unfortunate KM opposition, the rail fence has proved to be a great asset.



Leisure Island Entrance: First impressions count, and so LIRA continues to upgrade and maintain the gardens around the entrance.

Outdoor Spaces was appointed to assist with this and has given new life to the gardens and planters at the entrance, while maintaining this area every second week.

Paving borders which retain the gravel in the surrounding parking areas were re-done after their degradation and collapse.

Additional Litter Bins: With more and more people coming on to the island, we all need to be more aware of litter and the effects of this on our parks and open spaces.

Fifteen new deep bins were installed around the island – so there is no excuse for not putting it in a BIN! We encourage everyone to be aware of this and do your part. Be the solution not the problem!

Ongoing KM Liaison: On a monthly basis calls and mails are sent to the relevant KM depts regarding repairs to infrastructure and maintenance on the island.

This continued communication assists in ensuring that we do receive some attention to our roads and parks, and the open spaces and verges are regularly cut.

Kingsway Park: This is a new LIRA project that will require extensive input. With the fast development, growth and change in usage of the commercial properties on Kingsway Road, the park has quickly developed into an uncontrolled roadway and parking lot.

This is a sensitive issue and has required consultation with several KM depts. A proposal has been made and Parks, Traffic, Building Inspectorate and Land Use – all are aware of the problem and will assist in formulating a solution.

LIRA is deeply grateful to those who always offer support, ideas, financial assistance with projects, involvement and positive feedback. Remember we are all LIRA – not just the Committee. We can all make a difference.

FINANCE

A summary of the annual financial statements reflects as follows:

Total Income R1 524 721

Total expenditure R1 476 785

Net profit for the year was R47 937 which was R46 000 better than the budget, mainly due to the saving in expenses on maintenance. The Covid 19 lockdown during the year contributed significantly toward the savings.

As in the past, security expenses at R1 182 076 were the major cost and account for some 80% of the levy income.

With regard to the balance sheet, the major change is the voluntary contributions towards the seawall repairs. Members donated R365 950 in the financial year toward the anticipated cost of maintenance which place subsequent to the year end.

Capital and Reserves were R440 088 at year end.

COMMUNICATON – Brenda Neall

LIRA's prime communication tool is via email to some 560 recipients on the mailing database.

These are extraordinarily well read in general terms (average opening rates for emails) at 60% or over, but still mean that many members, and others, are not keeping up to date with LIRA reports and letters.



In the year Nov 2019 to Oct 2020, we sent out 12 communications on various matters. Key mailers were those that covered:

- The ad hoc feeding scheme set up by LIRA in hard lockdown that was incredibly successful in raising funds for this effort that distributed food aid to identified families in our townships, and gave food and financial support to several soup kitchens.
- The assistance LIRA gave the community food parcel project undertaken by the Siya Kolisi Foundation in April 2020.
- The equally successful fund-raising appeals and

report-backs for the seawall repairs in Sept-Oct 2020.

Another valued communication tool utilised by LIRA to share news, views and alerts is the social Whatsapp group – with over 230 participants – administered by Sheena Maré, and which serves to update residents on multiple LI topics and issues.

Committee members also deal one-one-one with innumerable communications sent directly by members.

ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Again, our interactions with SANParks were severely interrupted by lockdown restrictions, but we are pleased to advise that a very co-operative relationship exists between the parties.

The engagements regarding the approvals for seawall maintenance, assistance with vegetation clearing, identification of alien vegetation and illegal bait collection have all been productive.

We remain mindful of the delicate balance between development and the environment and will maintain our efforts to preserve the natural resources the island enjoys. Our areas of focus remain Bollard Beach dunes and ongoing rehabilitation efforts, the preservation of Kingfisher Creek/Land's End and Steenbok Nature Reserve.

LIRA COMMITTEE

Your LIRA Committee for 2020 has worked long and hard under difficult and unusual circumstances – we found ourselves in uncharted waters with Covid and its impact on our daily lives.

This remains a challenge as the “new norm” is established and methods of old no longer apply. Committee members freely volunteer their time, skill and energy and it is a privilege to serve with the current team.

The members as at year end 2020 were Craig Carter, Peter Surgey, Kerry Evans, Barbara Mills, Dennis Boyd, Mark Sofianos, Declan Nurse, Brenda Neall and Mary-Anne Beviss-Challinor.

As our December AGM had to be cancelled, all members of the Committee agreed to continue in the roles into the next financial year.



CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY

I would like to acknowledge everyone who, despite extraordinary circumstances, has been willing to step up and offer assistance, expertise and support in so many different ways. We also so appreciate your emails, messages and calls are what keep us going despite the frustrations and stumbling blocks placed in our way at times.

We are a determined bunch and, I assure you, we are all equally passionate about maintaining the integrity of the island.

We call on professionals to assist on an *ad hoc* basis when needed and many other individuals give their time and expertise freely in helping us make informed decisions. We thank them all.

The Committee is deeply indebted to two gentlemen who go beyond the call of duty in continuing to support LIRA despite no longer being active Committee members: very special thanks and appreciation to James Botha (Treasurer) and Peter Dieterich (Database Maintenance). Your roles are invaluable.

The Seawall Project was an example of co-opted skills – the “Technical Team” consisting of committee members Mark Sofianos and Dennis Boyd; along with Colin Dittmer, Dave Stromberg and Craig Clarke provided us with a brilliant document to form the scope of work for the required maintenance. Again, grateful thanks.

Finally, I would like to thank my Committee members – it is a pleasure to work with you all. Your generous enthusiasm, willingness and time is commendable.

The support you have provided me along the way has been tangible – I am truly grateful to you.

As we end this document, we do so hoping that 2021 will allow us to present a report to you all in person, in full colour and with slide show! With drinks and snacks to follow...!

For now, please accept our efforts to provide you with a virtual delayed AGM as a summary of the 2020 financial year.

Mary-Anne Beviss-Challinor

Chairman

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