

# LIRA COMMITTEE REPORT 2021

We are pleased to present our Committee report for the year. We trust that you will be happy with the work that we have managed to achieve during the year despite the hindrance of Covid. We look forward to answering any of your queries at the AGM on the 6 January 2022.

LIRA's primary objectives remain:

- To maintain and protect the unique environment of the island and ensure that our goal remains its preservation and enhancement.
- To foster good relations with the Municipality, SANParks, Law Enforcement, other communities and relevant bodies.
- To implement and maintain effective security protocols protecting our residents, visitors and our investment on the island.

The year has seen much activity on the island, the local elections resulted in a good outcome for Knysna after a troubled period and we trust that progress will be made early in the new year to begin restoring our town.

Many initiatives have been invaluable in generating positive progress and we particularly commend the successful Revive Knysna project. The Knysna Business Forum has also been active in placing pressure on municipal structures to perform. We cannot underestimate the need for positive energy in these times – working together to make things happen! All these initiatives assist in a groundswell of cohesive voices which can make a difference.

Our LIRA newsletters give members the opportunity to stay in touch – should you not receive them please make contact to ensure we have your current email details.

## **MEMBERSHIP (Barbara Mills)**

Current membership stands at 294 representing around 68% total of all property owners.

This figure is down by approx 2.5% and has meant we drop below the 300 threshold we like to maintain. Many factors have contributed to the change in membership, and we cannot discount the role Covid has played – as reflected and anticipated in the calls made when attempting to collect outstanding levies.

The membership is made up as follows:

294 households out of a possible 434; 36 properties in the process of being sold, transferred; 8 deceased members; 12 second properties; 14 tenanted properties and the balance is made up of “won't join, cannot afford, no known reason, stopped paying”.

We request all LIRA members to encourage new residents and non-members to join the Association – we are only effective if our membership remains strong. To reiterate, we rely on the levies to provide the day-to-day services which benefit all islanders and visitors.

## **FINANCE (Rob Hellings)**

A summary of the annual financial statements for the year to 31 October 2021 reflects as follows:

Total Income                    R1 447 422

Total Expenditure            R1 450 447

A small deficit of R3 025 was generated which was R38k worse than budget. This was mainly due to lower revenues which were R1 14k behind budget, as a result of lower membership levels. Expenditure was R74k lower than budget mainly due to savings in security costs as a consequence of the lockdown.

The lower levels of membership are primarily due to the deteriorating economic circumstances which prevailed throughout the financial year because as of the pandemic as well as a high level of property disposals on Leisure Isle.

Security costs continue to be the major expense incurred and comprised 83% of revenue.

Capital and reserves at R411k remain in line with the previous year.

[DOWNLOAD: Financial Statement 2021](#)

[DOWNLOAD: Budget 2022 - see links on AGM email](#)

## **MEMBERSHIP LEVIES**

While mindful of the impact of Covid, we have had to raise our levy marginally from R4830 – R4950 to meet existing commitments.

This will mean the Committee will have to manage income cautiously to ensure we achieve a positive set of financial results. As the burden of increased maintenance becomes more relevant, we will have to monitor our allocation of funds wisely. We will also work tirelessly to increase membership in the coming year to boost the coffers.

## **SECURITY (Declan Nurse)**

Thanks to LIRA-funded security provided by Allsound, the island experienced only 12 minor-to-relatively-minor incidents of crime, mostly petty theft. There was one more serious incident, an opportunistic house burglary with the perpetrator, a known serial criminal, 'captured' on CCTV and later identified, arrested and stolen property recovered.

While we are fortunate to enjoy great peace of mind regarding security, likely unheard of in any public suburb in SA, there is never room for complacency.

We thank Declan Nurse and the Allsound team of guards for keeping us safe.

[DOWNLOAD: Comparative crime stats for Knysna – see link on AGM email](#)

## **WARD 9 REPRESENTATION (Mary-Ann B-C)**

Under the guidance of our Ward Councillor, ward meetings again took place during the course of the year. Much debate resulted in a set of priorities which were proposed to Council for approval as part of the IDP document. This is a lengthy procedure and requires co-operation of all ward representatives – Thesen Island, Hunters, Rexford, The Heads, Noetzie, Pezula and Brackenridge.

The needs are immense and diverse – it was agreed that the George Rex/Causeway repair remained a priority, not only for the traffic load, but for the impact on tourism.

We managed to keep the seawall on the agenda as a key concern – this despite the ongoing unresolved dispute between SANParks and KM. We shall continue to pursue this actively in the coming year.

An issue affecting all of Ward 9 is the ever-diminishing budget allocation to the ward by Council – the majority of the funding was redirected to the Northern areas to meet the need for basic services.

As we have not received our usual allocations for road repairs and basic improvements, we anticipate having to lobby with determination to “get things done.”

We have good relations with municipal departments and work actively to ensure channels of communication are constructive and co-operative.

## **SEASONAL PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION (Mary-Ann B-C)**

Despite the limitations of meetings with KM due to Covid, we managed to start this process with a very constructive meeting in late September – all parties laid out clearly their wish lists and agreed on certain key aspects.

This process is not straightforward – it involves multiple departments, encompasses various levels of legal limitations and probably, most importantly, is only successful if all parties accept and buy into the plan with a common goal – that being a successful season with active law and order monitoring, implementation of by-laws as far as is feasible and clear objectives.

We held numerous meetings to ensure that tenders were awarded, processes were understood, and departments knew what was expected. A final meeting with our new SAPS station commander, Col De Wet, was promising in that he took a firm stand on the abuse of alcohol in public.

The implementation may not always have been perfect, but we are grateful that the season has been pleasingly calm despite large volumes of visitors on the main holidays.

The management of the cleaning teams has been fantastic, and we congratulate everyone who made this possible – long hours and difficult work.

We believe the hours devoted to putting the plans in place were very successful this year and look forward to building on the good relations forged in coming months. Part of this will be to acknowledge the input of our municipal departments as things quieten down.

Working alongside the KM departments, we are immensely grateful to Allsound Security for being the initial contact in all matters regarding island security and public order – a very difficult position when faced with large crowds. Huge thanks to Allsound's Declan Nurse and his team.

The day-to-day monitoring of Green Hole has been managed by Dave Stromberg and, again, thanks are due. Once again, Greg Pompeii was awarded the tender to provide cleaning services and has done an excellent job. We are equally grateful to him for his willingness to go the extra mile.

The sorry state of its public toilets is an issue we shall take up with KM in the coming months.

## **PROJECTS AND INFRASTRUCTURE (Mark Sofianos & Colin Dittmer)**

2021 brought on a busy year where the outdoors and the benefits of island lifestyle was seen by many residents and visitors alike.

After the restriction of 2020, more and more people spend time on the island enjoying the natural beauty and facilities which does add pressure to the infrastructure and resources.

Managing these for the benefit of all remains an almost full-time task and a priority for the Committee.

**Benches and Bins Project:** Our biggest project for 2021 was the replacement of all the benches and bins along Cearn/Bayswater Drives from Green hole to Thornley Park. The response for donations towards the project was overwhelming and, after consultation with KM and SANParks, we were able to replace all 28 benches with the generous donations received from residents.

Correlating the benches, plaques and requested positions within allowable parameters was a mammoth task, but it was successfully completed in time for the holiday season. The finalisation of positions for the old plaques will be completed soonest.

We trust that the closed bins will make a difference and prevent the Ibises from spreading litter, and that the benches will be enjoyed by all.

**Leisure Isle Common:** The hub of activity around the commercial precinct of Kingsway Park has added pressure to the availability of parking around the Leisure Isle common. Together with the KM and a professional landscape architect, a plan is being put in place to formalise the park and allow for orderly perimeter parking.

This will be carefully planned, including input from the Leisure Isle Festival Committee. In the interim we ask everyone to keep to the road verge and not drive across nor park on the open park.

We continue to engage with the KM on an ongoing basis to ensure grass is cut in all areas as regularly as possible, roads are repaired, and other services undertaken. We will continue to work with municipal officials and our ward councillor to improve the island and preserve its natural beauty in perpetuity.

With the assistance of contractors, Outdoor Spaces, the entrance gardens around the guard hut and grassed areas are maintained on a bi-weekly basis to ensure that the entrance is always neat and presentable.

In 2022 we would like to encourage more residents to assist and get involved in the common spaces and the gardens around the island. The difference that the Revive Knysna project has made to the town needs to be carried through to Leisure Island by our residents.

LIRA is not just the Committee, but every resident - and we can all make the difference.

## **STEENBOK NATURE RESERVE (Craig Carter)**

The agreement between the KM and LIRA for the joint management of Steenbok Nature Reserve expired at the end of May 2021. As stated at our virtual AGM, it has been extended by both parties, first to end December 2021 and then again to end April 2022.

An additional motivation shall be submitted early in January 2022 to ensure this agreement is renewed.

The ongoing maintenance of Steenbok has once again been well managed and thanks are extended to the team for the island, as well as KM for the dedication and hard work.

In addition to the regular maintenance of the Reserve, with the help of Ivy Garden Services and the KM's Parks Dept, new developments have included:

- The planting of a large milkwood tree on the towpath;
- New planting of a yellowwood tree at the play area;
- A new Gratitude Garden at Roger's Way and a tribute of thanks to Roger Voysey for his 14 years of dedication and service to Steenbok;
- Ongoing clearing of alien and invasive vegetation.

Implementation of our 'Dogs in the Park' project has resulted in new sponsored bins (with dog pictures), and an efficient, twice-weekly poo pick up and bin-cleaning system. This has led to a major improvement in litter management.

There has been much discussion about dogs off leads in Steenbok. The current situation is that municipal by-laws require that all dogs are on leads at all times. The enforcement of this by-law, as with all by-laws, is the responsibility of KM. LIRA has no capacity nor authority to act as an enforcer.

We are in discussion with KM about the option of creating a "free running area" in Steenbok in certain sections and will report back on progress via our newsletter.

A major project for the 2022 will be the preservation of Kingfisher Creek, in accordance with the Provincial Coastal Access Strategy. This is the area below the high-water mark that does not form part of Steenbok but is part of the SANParks reserve.

We have been advised by SANParks that, in its experience, signage and fencing restricting behaviour and access have not been well received by the public. They advise that we rather erect signs appealing to the better nature of users. The investigation of appropriate signage is under way in consultation with SANParks.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES (Dave Stromberg)**

A primary objective of LIRA is the maintenance and protection of the environment of the Island and ensuring that our programs are geared towards its enhancement and protection.

We maintain excellent working relationships with KM's Environmental Dept, and with SANParks.

Our joint management of the Steenbok Nature Reserve allows us to develop and maintain this wonderful open space, which has proved so popular during the Covid lockdowns. (See the Steenbok Section above).

Other areas of environmental focus for 2022 will be the Bollard Beach dunes rehabilitation; the removal of invasive and alien vegetation; and the expansion of the Green Hole picnic area, with preliminary investigations into new environmentally-friendly toilet facilities.

Longer-term environmental matters impacting the island which need to be considered are coastal erosion and sea-level rise; ongoing preventative maintenance to the seawalls, and application for Blue Flag status for our beaches and boat harbour.

## **COMMUNICATION (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 (opening rates for emails) at 60% or over, but this still means that many members, and others, do not keep up to date with LIRA news.

In the year Nov 2020 to Oct 2021, we sent out nine communications on various matters. Key mailers were those that covered:

- The final report on the amazing community effort to undertake and fund major seawall repairs in late 2020;
- The opportunity for members to have their say in the application by Coffee Craft for a liquor licence;
- The successful fund-raising appeal for the bench-and-bin project, and its implementation, in late 2021.

**New WhatsApp broadcast group, LIRA News:** With social media media offering so many communication possibilities, LIRA set up a WhatsApp broadcast group to complement the community and interactive WhatsApp group managed by Sheena Maré. This group, Leisure Isle Residents, has 241 participants currently.

This group is an invaluable source of info, advice and support on innumerable issues – and often illustrates the amazing community of wonderful, caring Leisure Islanders.

Many non-resident members do not care to receive the day-to-day chat of such a group, and so this new option does not allow interactive posting but serves as a means for LIRA to put out relevant island and KM news. LIRA News has 253 participants currently.

To enhance the reach of our emailers, we post links to these on both WhatsApp groups.

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

**Upgrading the LIRA website:** The website, [www.leisureisleknysna.co.za](http://www.leisureisleknysna.co.za), is now rather ancient by today's digital standards, and is sorely in need of a revamp of its content and software structure.

This is a big undertaking, and if anyone with internet/writing skills would like to assist with this, it would be greatly appreciated to have some help. Contact Brenda Neall if you are interested: [brenda.neall@gmail.com](mailto:brenda.neall@gmail.com).

## **LIRA COMMITTEE 2021**

The Committee continues to face uncertain challenges with regard to implementation of its goals.

Last year we reported on the resignation of the Municipal Manager, this was withdrawn and we were pleased Dawie Adonis remains Acting MM. The political instability of the KM in the build up to the local elections did not help matters. We are pleased with the outcome and trust progress will be made as the new incumbents take up the reins. In addition, the intermittent closure of multiple KM departments at times led to delays in service delivery, this coupled with technical and mechanical breakdowns has been frustrating.

I thank my fellow Committee members for their boundless energy and going beyond the call of duty to "make things happen". The time they volunteer freely, their patience and commitment to LIRA is invaluable.

The current members are Craig Carter, Peter Surgey, Mark Sofianos, Colin Dittmer, Declan Nurse, Barbara Mills, Brenda Neall, Rob Hellings, David Stromberg and myself. All Committee members have expressed a willingness to stand again next year and as such portfolio requirements are met.

Failing any additional nominations, we look forward to serving the residents of Leisure Island for the coming financial year.

Portfolios are allocated as follows:

Chair	Mary-Anne Beviss-Challinor
Deputy Chair	Craig Carter
Treasurer	Rob Hellings
Membership	Barbara Mills
Infrastructure & Projects	Mark Sofianos and Colin Dittmer
Security	Declan Nurse
Communication & Website	Brenda Neall
Environmental Issues	David Stromberg
General/Legal	Peter Surgery

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT OF AN SRA**

At a special LIRA meeting held on 11 November 2021, the various challenges faced by LIRA and residents were discussed, particularly long-term security and declining municipal service levels.

The meeting gave LIRA a mandate to consider some options which could assist in ensuring sustainable improvements and mitigating the decline.

One of the options considered, and which has previously been mooted, is the concept of Special Residential Areas. (SRA). In this regard, the KM recently adopted this as official policy, allowing for their establishment.

Over 500 SRAs have been set up in SA to date so the concept is not new. (The Llandudno SRA, for example, has been operational for five years.)

We believe that the conversion of LIRA into a fully incorporated SRA, approved by the KM, may be a solution to create a much stronger entity dedicated to serving the unique needs of the LI residents; that it will meet the wishes of the majority of LI residents and lead to much needed sustainable urban improvement.

Mike Gammie, attorney and resident on the Island, has agreed to give us an overview of his considerable experience on the matter at the forthcoming AGM.

**DOWNLOAD: Additional info on SRAs – see links on AGM email**

## **CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY** (Mary-Ann B-C)

Reflecting on the past year, I am grateful for much achieved. The underlying uncertainty of Covid so often threatened to dampen progress but somehow goals were ultimately attained.

Ward meetings were reinstated after the appointment of a Ward 9 Councillor – such a vital asset when engaging on municipal matters. To this end we acknowledge and thank Sharon Sabbagh for her dedication to Ward 9. Sharon has recently joined the Mancom of Steenbok as a municipal representative, and I have no doubt this will be very beneficial.

Again, as in the past, we call on professional advice when assistance is required – skilled input is vital if we are to remain effective and relevant.

Here, I extend our thanks to Mike and Di Gammie and Mark Tonkinson for hours of research and work on the merits and option of the SRA legislation recently adopted by KM. Their first-hand experience will be invaluable in determining its possibilities for us in Knysna.

As always, we remain immensely grateful to James Botha who manages to produce monthly management accounts and set of audited financial statements in record time; as well as to Peter Dieterich who keeps our database up to date. Your ongoing support is appreciated, gentlemen.

We thank Colin Carter's family for the donation of a beautiful flamingo made by their mother, Christine – after much consideration it was decided the safest place to put it would be at the entrance to the Boat Club office. Colin's daughter hopes to visit early in 2022 and has expressed her appreciation for all the love her father received on the Island.

There is much work to be done in 2022 and, in many instances, seeds of this have already begun:

- Security upgrades
- Monitor the seawall saga and apply pressure for an outcome on the dispute between KM and SANParks
- To finalise the LIRA/KM agreement with regards to SNR
- To continue to engage actively in securing Municipal services on the Island – law enforcement, maintenance, road infrastructure, general repairs etc (this includes the long-term maintenance of the Causeway and George Rex)
- Determination of “needs” on the island and ways to manage growing demands on infrastructure
- Increased community engagement to ascertain and manage expectations where possible
- Investigate the viability of BlueFlag Status for our beach
- Improvements to our website and methods of communication

In conclusion, I thank my fellow Committee members – your input is appreciated and your support invaluable. Much progress has been made and we have clear goals for the coming year. I look forward to working with you in looking after this beautiful island.

[Mary-Anne Beviss-Challinor](#)

LIRA Chair