

# LIRA COMMITTEE REPORT 2022

Herewith the Committee report for 2022. I am sure you will concur that much has been achieved by your Committee and I acknowledge the work of each member who gave of their time to make sure the tasks were completed, deadlines met and communications issued.

As always, LIRA's primary objectives are:

- To maintain and preserve our unique eco-system and the enhancement of our surroundings;
- To ensure the island remains a safe, secure and chosen destination for both residents and visitors;
- To remain actively engaged with Knysna Municipality, SANParks, SAPS and Allsound – as well as all other role players vested in our Island;
- To implement and maintain effective security protocols protecting residents, visitors and property investment on the island.

While we were all buoyed with the outcome of the local elections at the end of 2021, the political instability in Knysna poses a real threat to the town.

Financial instability and mismanagement will no doubt reflect in the lack of service at various levels as infrastructure and come under further pressure. Many organisations are stepping up and proving that community spirit and civic goodwill make an enormous difference – to wit, the results of the Revive Knysna campaign that have been astonishing. The Knysna Business Forum also does a fantastic job in the town.

The LIRA Committee has faced some difficult months with a destructive undermining and negativity simmering – I can only hope that the positive energy and cohesive spirit dominates and continues to make this Island an exceptional lifestyle choice.

We again appeal to anyone who does not receive the newsletters and notices to make contact and provide us with their details. They are an invaluable way of staying up to date.

## **CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY (Mary-Anne Beviss-Challinor reports)**

As always reflecting on the year allows one to take stock of what has been done and what still needs to be done. Our goals stated in our 2021 AGM document confirm that we have achieved much this year

- Tremendous improvements to our security on the island – a necessary step as we lagged in all aspects of surveillance and reporting. Guards are fitted with bodycams which record any confrontational incidents; the lines of communication are clear as incidents are reported to the control room and relayed back to guards for investigation; and bike and vehicle patrols continue. The new cameras with artificial intelligence complete the upgrade.

I must point out that LIRA has retained all the night guards and the malicious rumour that we have only one night guard, or that the number of guards has been reduced, is simply untrue.

- The LIRA/KM Steenbok agreement was finally signed by the then acting MM and I can report that when approached to assist with the recovery of payment recently, progress has been made. I hope to report success on this when KM return early Jan to office.

- We have good interaction with multiple key departments – progress is, however, often foiled by the political appointees in key positions, along with the ever-rotating, acting MM and CFO positions – this instability really threatens progress in our town. We can only hope the recent court action brought by the DA brings some clarity in the weeks ahead, and that the positions of MM and CFO are filled with suitable candidates in the coming months.
- We have consolidated our relationship with our Ward Councillor and she remains both a vital link in the communication chain and a voice on key issues when required. Her dedication under extremely difficult circumstances is admirable and we thank her.
- LIRA noted with concern that the awarding of Blue Flag beach status was unsuccessful for all Knysna beaches this year – the reason being the municipality failed to provide vital data regarding water status during the course of the year. This matter was reported in the *Knysna Herald* and we hope that the publicity forces some action – the estuary can ill afford this reckless oversight.
- LIRA facilitated the painting and improvements at the guard house and in Kingsway Park, new soak aways were successfully installed at both the guard house and Green Hole prior to the season.
- Improvements were made at the Island entrance with new curbing at the parking areas.
- A joint venture with Pam Booth and her department to remove illegal alien plants, especially lantana, met with limited success and this is a project that needs to be ongoing. I would like to see Islanders involved in this – Craig Carter called for volunteers and the response was disappointing.
- Stairway access to the lagoon was improved – with broken steps removed and replaced.
- The new year will see the completion of the can recycling station at the entrance to the island in an attempt to manage the bin picker issue – this is an ongoing project.
- **The SRA project**, regardless of the outcome, is a necessary exercise – our grateful thanks to the LISRA team: the tremendous energy of Mark Tonkinson, the attention to detail in the numbers by Rob Hellings and the substantial legal input from Mike Gammie. We really appreciate the many hours you contributed exploring options, legal requirements, implications and the like – we apologise for the negative rhetoric you have faced.

It cannot be denied that this exercise has highlighted much valuable information; the anomalies in the valuation role which are most significant for many homeowners; the projections from the five-year budget exercise affording insight into the costs in the years ahead facilitating better planning; the breakdown in the skill sets at municipal level which will affect the success of such an application and perhaps, most important (and disappointing), the acrimonious divisions that have surfaced when change has been offered as an option.

In an ideal world the SRA is a winning solution to sharing the responsibility among all ratepayers enjoying the benefits of an area – but it cannot be denied that there are obstacles in our specific case: the rating method remains contentious; the lack of understanding among some despite the communication and ready availability of vast

amounts of information; and the distrust of a politically-unstable municipal structure are all valid concerns.

The SRA will continue to be investigated, but following the revisions in requirements by KM, its current precarious financial position, as well as the introduction of the new rates roll, there will be a delay in the process.

- The Committee ended the year by supporting Noelene's Soup Kitchen Christmas Party for children in Hornlee. We encountered this remarkable woman during the year and we felt it appropriate to assist – it would be a great opportunity to expand this in the new year as she attempts to feed the children and the elderly in her community. Her gratitude is humbling.

It is also an opportunity to continue the goodwill we received during the feeding programmes we initiated during lockdown and give back to those in need on our doorsteps.

As we approach 2023, should this Committee be re-appointed, we commit to ensuring all the objectives of LIRA are met in terms of its Constitution. Our interest lies squarely in preserving the Island, protecting all it offers and ensuring our security both of person and property investment. We represent the will of the ratepayers and urge you to participate via working groups, technical expertise, opinion etc.

Many thanks are due. First and foremost, I thank all Committee members who have served the Island with generosity of time and energy. You have been a fabulous team – we have supported each other and made a difference. The volumes achieved are testament to your commitment. It has not always been easy or pleasant, but we have a common goal with our hearts firmly entrenched in ensuring the best for this unique place.

The ugly insinuation, defamatory comments and blatant disregard for decency toward some Committee members has at times been extremely trying. The fact that the issues are not brought directly to our attention to address prove an undermining element which simply feeds division – unnecessary and destructive.

Specific thanks to Brenda Neall and Rob Hellings who are not available to stand for re-election. Brenda has served on this Committee for some ten years and is standing down to devote more time to her business; while Rob, who has provided such solid accounting input, is going to enjoy his retirement and family. Thank you both – you will be missed.

We will also miss the invaluable input supplied to us monthly by Peter Dieterich in the database document he updates, corrects and maintains. This vital document has long formed the basis for all data – thank you Peter for providing such a detailed analysis. Your December email reminds us that you have submitted 108 such reports – and this bears testimony to your commitment. Grateful thanks from us all and certainly very big shoes to fill.

Finally, to everyone who has raised their hand and offered help, to those who send us encouragement, thanks and suggestions and those who simply get the job done – thank you one and all.

As I end my role as Chair, I particularly thank the many people who have supported me. A simple email, an unexpected message or a phone call have often made all the difference. I would encourage you all to reach out to your Committee members – I need not remind you that you have put them on the Committee and they serve your needs.

Best wishes to everyone for a prosperous 2023 – we will have many mountains to climb, I have no doubt, but together anything is possible.

## **FINANCE (Rob Hellings reports)**

### **Annual Financial Statements for 2022**

#### **Comment on 2022 Results**

The financial results of the association for the financial year ending 31 October 2022 can be summarised briefly below:

Income for the year was R1,420,093, R7,701 ahead of operating expenditure incurred of R1,412,392. Both income and expenditure incurred in 2022 were below the levels of 2021 and favourable to budget.

Relative to budget, income was R8k higher and expenditure R15k favourable resulting in an operating surplus which was R23k above budget. Administrative expenditure was R24k adverse to budget mainly due to expenditure of R22k incurred on the SRA for printing costs (posters and fliers) as well as the LISRA website development.

Security costs were R33k favourable to budget mainly due to lower seasonal security costs because of Covid as well as the renegotiated security contract which was slightly below the anticipated amount budgeted.

The balance sheet remains sound with net reserves of R442k which are represented by cash. The balance sheet continues to reflect the liability to the members who agreed to contribute to the legal costs pertaining to the rectification of the seawall. This liability is also represented by cash and is contingent upon the finalisation of the potential legal liability.

#### **Budget for 2023 and Membership Levies**

Income and expenditure increase substantially in 2023 mainly due to the introduction of the new AI cameras. These costs are estimated at R216k for the year and represent an escalation of over 15% on the 2022 cost base of R1.4 million.

In addition to this, a nominal amount of R42k has been set aside for repairs to the seawall, if required.

The security spend as a percentage of revenue remains in line with the previous year at around 87% and the effectiveness of the new camera system will be evaluated over time to establish whether savings can be made regarding guarding costs.

Over the past three years, membership levies have remained well below inflation. Costs have increased in 2023 mainly because of the decision to install cameras with artificial intelligence.

The continued lower membership levels remain a concern with an increasing cost burden falling on fewer members resulting, in part, in an escalation in membership contributions.

The above two factors together with a lower estimated membership base of 290 result in an increase in levies from R4,950 to R5,900 per annum or R525 per month.

## **SECURITY (Declan Nurse reports)**

Allsound Security has been gathering and compiling statistics for a number of years using data of criminal incidents as reported to it. These statistics are by no means an overall view

for whole of Knysna, but provide an overview of crimes affecting our client base residential and business areas.

There has been an overall reduction from 2021 to 2022 of 88 fewer crimes, the most notable difference has been a reduction in robberies (crimes against a person by force or threat of force) and, more significantly, the reduction of burglaries (Items stolen via forced entry to premises). Theft cases, however, have increased from 2021.

Allsound believes that one of the biggest contributing factors behind reduced burglaries (particularly night-time), has been the introduction of monitored CCTV cameras (with artificial intelligence software) across multiple suburbs and business areas, including recently on Leisure Isle. This sensible move to leveraging technology in preventing and combating crime has already proven itself.

This has resulted in early detection and reaction to potential threats – and made the criminal *modus operandi* a lot more difficult. This has, however, had a knock-on effect in other crimes such as opportunistic thefts.

### **CRIMINAL ACTIVITY DURING 2022 — LEISURE ISLAND**

During the second half of 2022, a few homes on Leisure Island were the target of night-time burglaries. These incidents occurred predominantly at holiday homes with no monitored alarm systems. These break-ins were the work of a couple of youngsters who were later arrested, and bail denied – with one, in fact, having a previous conviction for a Schedule 5 offence.

These arrests were facilitated by CCTV cameras installed at Green Hole.

In addition to the sporadic break-ins, we have also received an increase in reported common thefts. These have included thefts from building sites, copper pipes and taps, and other miscellaneous items from gardens. These incidents have occurred predominantly during the day and we believe can be attributed to members of the public who walk the streets looking for easy opportunities.

Clearly, as Allsound always advises, there's no room for complacency in safeguarding homes and access points.

### **MEMBERSHIP (Barbara Mills reports)**

Membership of LIRA is vital to the successful functioning of this association, and the all-important spend on security and infrastructure, maintenance etc.

The recognition and standing of any association in the eyes of the municipality is also enhanced by increased membership percentages, and so we urge all residents and homeowners on Leisure Isle to continue their support of LIRA, and to those who are not members, to join up to support the work that's done for the island; for their peaceful sleep at night, for our substantial property values in this, without doubt, one of the best suburbs in South Africa!

We had a very encouraging recruitment of 11 new members in October 2022, but unfortunately, we have also have a few recent resignations, leaving the total number of members around 290. This is a membership of around 65% and it is naturally our aim to try and better this in the year ahead.

Many factors have affected the membership rate. Amongst them are:

- A very high turnover of property ownership, and long periods of building and renovating when owners are in limbo with membership.
- The POPI Act means property agents will no longer provide details of new owners - and it can be challenging finding these.
- Tight economic times in post-Covid pandemic times
- Trepidation regarding change, especially the current SRA process.

## Infrastructure (Report by Mark Sofianos)

Throughout the year we try to make sure the island is always neat, tidy and that the KM infrastructure is taken care of. This takes continuous communication and requests to get things done.

KM this year repainted all the white post-and-rail fencing; replaced and repaired all the speed bump chevrons; some potholes were repaired and grass has been cut on a continued basis.

Unfortunately, the detail is left to LIRA to take care of and Joe, our weekly gardener, has kept the area around the entrance of the island, guard hut and library looking good.

The guard hut and two buildings in Kingsway Park were cleaned up and repainted. Additional bird-proof bins were added to Kingsway Park and at the bus stop helping to keep the island free from litter.

**Soak-away repairs:** Some of the LIRA infrastructure budget was expended in rebuilding two soak-aways that had become unpleasantly problematic - the one at the guard hut, and the one at Green Hole.

While LIRA is always reluctant to spend our budget on things that the KM should be doing, the reality of getting the Green Hole one fixed in time for the busy December period was nil - and so we made the space a whole heap more pleasant for the hundreds who enjoy summer days there.

**Causeway clearing:** Earlier this spring, gardener Joe undertook two back-breaking weeks to clear and cut back grass invasion of the sidewalk on the causeway. It has never looked so neat and tidy.

**Lagoon staircases:** Stairs to the lagoon take an immense amount of wear and stress - and this year we added a set at the Horne Dr/Bayswater area (kindly sponsored by a neighbouring resident), and replaced the broken one just south of Thornely Park.

**Can Collection Depot:** There has been a lot of concern and consternation expressed by residents about the number of rubbish pickers who are now making their way to the island on Thursdays, and after weekends, in search of cans - items that give a viable return at recyclers.

In looking for a win-win solution to mitigate possible criminality and littering but still allow these indigent folk to earn some money, the LIRA Committee has decided to trial a central can collection point, being set up behind the guard hut, where residents can drop off their cans for collection by pickers. Hopefully, this will largely pre-empt their need to trawl the suburb to scrounge for cans.

If it doesn't work - we can easily remove it, but we believe it's worth a try.

## SEASONAL PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION – (Mary-Anne Beviss-Challinor reports)

Stephen Langlands who has for many years managed this immense task under the Community Services banner at KM retired in October and passed on the baton to Richard Meyer.

Richard facilitated two meetings of all concerned parties, multiple ward representatives as well as key role players. Along with Col de Wet (SAPS), they both committed to utilising limited resources as best they could to ensure a peaceful, safe Season. While the implementation of by-laws remains a challenge in a politically-charged environment, we commend Richard and his team along with Col de Wet for their ongoing efforts to address public safety issues.

Once again, tenders were awarded to approved service providers for lifesaving and cleaning requirements. Again, our thanks to these teams who work under difficult circumstances – they are both vital and effective.

LIRA paid for and facilitated the installation of a new soak-away pit at Green Hole just before the Season. Despite these improvements the ablution facility remains a concern – sadly, abuse of the facility led to most of the issues. As long as this remains, it will not be possible to maintain this amenity satisfactorily – and will stay an ongoing matter on our agenda with KM.

Notwithstanding the above, a big thank you to Greg Pompeii and his teams who, despite large numbers of visitors on key days the island, kept things generally neat and tidy within reasonable time frames.

The relationships we have forged with all role players is something we really value – it makes communication effective and relevant.

## WARD 9 REPRESENTATION - (Mary-Anne Beviss-Challinor reports)

Political instability and financial constraints remain the biggest challenge to municipal processes. While affecting the town as a whole, the effect trickles down and affects our needs on the island very quickly. Budget allocations are ever diminishing, service levels vary and financial constraints becoming a real concern.

Our Ward Councillor has faced much opposition and more recently blatant intimidation while carrying out her duties in our Ward 9 area. (Ward 9 incorporates Thesen Island, The Heads, Hunters, Rexford, Noetzie, Pezula and Brackenridge.)

Although Ward meetings occur regularly, progress is limited.

Current areas of concern include:

- Lack of general maintenance and infrastructure – roads, potholes etc.
- The ongoing delays in the repair programme for George Rex and the causeway.
- The massive discrepancies and inconsistencies in the new valuation roll.
- The lack of progress regarding the seawall dispute – this has again been escalated to Province in an attempt to force progress as the seawall becomes significantly compromised in areas.

- The awarding of a year-long permanent contract (ie not a seasonal permit) to the fruit seller on George Rex Drive in direct violation of numerous municipal by-laws, with contravention of health and safety requirements to name but a few.

## STEENBOK RESERVE (Craig Carter reports)

It has been another full year for the Steenbok team with ongoing management of the park and the successful renewal of our all-important, 10-year management agreement with the municipality, as well as several projects including the concrete slab, new bins, news signs at Kingfisher Creek, renewal of signs at the salt marsh, dog signs, Joy Garden plus bench renewals and placements.

Thanks again to the dedicated team as well as the Knysna Municipality and SANParks for all their help.

Membership is up again this year to almost 350; thanks to all those who support this amazing and treasured space on Leisure Island.

## COMMUNICATIONS - (Brenda Neall reports)

LIRA's prime communication tool is via email to some 570 recipients on the mailing database. These are extraordinarily well read in general terms (opening rates for emails) at an average of 60% or over, but this still means that many members, and others, do not keep up to date with LIRA news.

**Comms despatched:** In the year Nov 2021 to Oct 2022, we sent out 14 newsletters and notices on various matters. There has been a flurry of comms on the SRA project and this will likely continue as the process moves forward.

**WhatsApp broadcast group, LIRA News:** This continues to be an effective way to share links to LIRA comms, and to pass on other relevant Knysna news and announcements, complementing the community and interactive WhatsApp group managed by Sheena Maré. This group, Leisure Isle Residents, has 279 participants currently.

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

**Upgrading the LIRA website:** With no clear consensus of the exact role and value of the LIRA website, as well as someone to give the project due expertise and time, we stalled the project to upgrade the website, [www.leisureisleknysna.co.za](http://www.leisureisleknysna.co.za), that is in need of a revamp, particularly its software structure.

**New communications person needed:** Brenda Neall, who has handled this portfolio for some ten years, is not standing for re-election to the Committee and will hand over to a new Committee member in the weeks ahead.

## LIRA COMMITTEE 2022

The current members are Mary-Anne Beviss-Challinor, Craig Carter, Rob Hellings, Peter Surgey, Mark Sofianos, Gordon Shutte, Declan Nurse, Barbara Mills and Brenda Neall.

All Committee members, except Rob Hellings and Brenda Neall, have expressed a willingness to stand again for 2023.

Along with some new nominees, they look forward to serving the residents of Leisure Island for the coming financial year.



**Portfolios are currently allocated as follows:**

- Chair - Mary-Anne Beviss-Challinor
- Deputy Chair - Craig Carter
- Treasurer - Rob Hellings
- Membership - Barbara Mills
- Infrastructure & Projects - Mark Sofianos
- Security - Declan Nurse
- Communication - Brenda Neall
- General/Legal - Peter Surgery
- General/Finance – Gordon Shutte

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