



## **LEISURE ISLE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**

### **LIRA COMMITTEE REPORT FOR 2024**

#### **OVERVIEW FROM THE CHAIR**

We are pleased to report on the completion of a successful year for LIRA and Leisure Isle.

LIRA's objectives are to ensure that the unique character and environmental heritage of Leisure Isle is maintained; to liaise with the Municipality and other authorities to ensure appropriate levels of service; and to manage a cost-effective security system for the protection of residents.

Our Island lifestyle is second to none, and our property values continue to rise. We feel safe on Leisure Isle at all times. We maintain our infrastructure when the responsible authorities fail. We enjoy freedom from annoying residents' association rules. These things, which we tend to take for granted, are an indication of the successes achieved by LIRA over its 21 years of existence.

The LIRA committee is small and works hard, and has been assisted by valued inputs from many Islanders. This help has enabled us to fund necessary projects, and keep the Island beautiful. We have not mentioned names in this report, but take this opportunity to thank all who have contributed so generously to the wellbeing of Leisure Island.

#### **MEMBERSHIP**

LIRA membership is voluntary. Current membership is between 70-75% of Islanders. Recruitment of new members is onerous, and reasons for low membership include properties in transition, disagreement with the approach taken by the committee, and too small a recruitment team. We believe membership levels of 80% are attainable, and invite you to assist by encouraging friends and neighbors to join.

Strong membership numbers keep levies low, and result in increased income for LIRA's activities. They also give us greater credibility in our engagements with the authorities. Affordability is not an issue, and reduced levies can be arranged.

We welcome all those who have joined us as new members this year, and thank existing members for their continued support.

## **COMMUNICATION**

We keep our members informed through emailed LIRA Newsletters, and LIRA WhatsApp posts. If you would like to receive LIRA communications, or want someone to be added to our lists, please let us know.

We have this year launched LIRA Facebook and Instagram platforms, with weekly postings covering current Island events. We have refreshed the LIRA logo, and we are using it on all new signage and media. We are in the process of updating the LIRA Website, and hope to have this completed early in the new year.

## **FINANCES**

### **Financial Results for 2024**

The annual Financial Results for 2024, which are included in the AGM information pack, and which will be tabled at the AGM, can be summarized as follows:

- Revenue for the year was R2 397 997, made up of levies and donations.
- Operating expenditure was R2 431 403. Major items were security (R1 614 184) and seawall repairs (R464 178).
- After taking into account depreciation, interest and tax, we finished the year with a deficit of R2 081.
- Total Owners' Funds and Reserves now stand at R491 031, and include a camera replacement reserve fund of R96 491.

### **Membership Levies**

The 2025 membership levies were announced in our October Newsletter, and became effective from 1 November. They will be tabled for ratification at the AGM.

Each year we have a balancing act between increasing the levies to provide funds for improved services, and keeping levies as affordable as possible. Increases or decreases in membership obviously have an impact on this balance.

The new levies for the 2024/25 year are:

- Monthly-paid levies will increase from R540 to R580, a 7.4% increase, for a total annual payment of R6 960.
- Annual levies will increase from R6 480 to R6 960, a 7.4% increase.
- Annual Levies paid prior to the end of February will qualify for a discount of R400 and will be R6 560. Members who qualify for a discount, but still pay the full annual levy, will have the discounted amount allocated as a donation for use on Island projects.
- Payments must be referenced with ERF numbers.

## **Budget for 2025**

The 2025 Budget gives an indication of how your levies will be spent.

The proposed Budget for 2025 was circulated to members for their input in the October Newsletter, and is included in the AGM pack. Minor changes have been made to this - a reduction in garden services, and a provision for increased depreciation and tax. Ratification by members of the Budget for 2025 is required at the AGM.

Details of the 2025 Budget are:

- Expected income from levies increases from R1 975 135 (2024) to R2 163 846 (2025) This income is based on budgeted membership numbers of 327 members (75%).
- Expenditure is planned to increase from R1 995 373 (2024) to R2 206 244 (2025).
- The planned operating surplus is R5 602, after interest, depreciation and tax.

## **Pastel**

With the implementation of the Pastel/Sage accounting system this year we are now sending statements and invoices to all members. The changeover from the old spreadsheet system has highlighted a number of shortcomings with the old database. We regularly update our database, but rely on you to advise us of changes to your personal details.

We would like to thank all members for their patience and understanding with the implementation of Pastel, which we believe is critical to the management of LIRA in the future.

## **SECURITY**

### **Security Arrangements**

LIRA's security arrangements have been effective during 2024, and much work has taken place behind the scenes. We have an excellent and professional relationship with Allsound, our security service provider, and we work in close partnership with them. Our Allsound contract includes the following:

- A 24 hour Guard stationed at the Island entrance.
- A dedicated 24 hour Response Guard and vehicle which undertakes regular day and night patrols of the Island and responds to calls for assistance. The patrol vehicle also responds to private alarm activations.
- CCTV cameras at the Island entrance, including a license plate recognition camera, as well as cameras at Greenhole and other areas along the waterfront.

The above measures have proved to be successful, and Leisure Isle is essentially crime-free, with only two burglaries reported during 2024. Both burglaries were committed by the same group of youngsters who had allegedly also been involved with similar incidents a couple of years ago. Thanks to Allsound and the Community-In-Blue (see below) the perpetrators were

apprehended and are in custody. Other minor instances of opportunistic crime have been reported.

We frequently meet with Allsound and the Guards to review all the security arrangements, and adjustments and improvements are made on a regular basis. Our investment in a back-up electrical supply at the entrance guardhouse meant that the Island entrance has remained functional and well-lit during load shedding. We have plans for additional improvements to the Island entrance and street lighting which will be implemented in future.

The fact that we are largely surrounded by water means that the island perimeter is naturally protected, but we have identified the salt marsh along Woodbourne Drive as a weakness. The budget for 2025 includes new thermal cameras in this area, as well as cameras along Woodbourne Drive and in strategic positions elsewhere on the Island, which will be installed in the new year.

### **LIRA Safety Initiative**

The lack of effective Municipal law enforcement has been a problem for a long time. This year we decided to address the issue early in order to create an awareness and acceptance of the need for compliance with the municipal by-laws. We embarked on a LIRA Safety Initiative primarily aimed at zero tolerance of alcohol possession and consumption in public places. The initiative also focusses on preventing dangerous driving, traffic and parking management, litter and glass on beaches, noise and anti-social behaviour, and water safety.

We engaged extensively with the authorities, including Knysna Municipal Disaster Management, Law Enforcement and Traffic, the SA Police Services, and SANParks. We adopted the slogan *'Leisure Isle is Knysna's beachfront and Knysna must nurture this precious asset.'* We received strong support and cooperation from all the officials, but it became clear that KM does not have adequate resources to police the bylaws. The Committee therefore took a decision to implement our own additional safety and security measures as part of our preparations for the Festive Season.

LIRA has deployed volunteer members from the Community-in-Blue, a SAPS initiative aimed at promoting community safety, to patrol Leisure Isle and support the authorities. We have also employed extra Allsound foot patrollers. Our objective is to ensure strong visible policing and a uniformed presence. We have not yet reached the really busy time of the holidays, but thus far, and with excellent support from the authorities and particularly from SAPS, we are very satisfied with the results.

The above arrangements will result in extra expenditure, and a number of LIRA Members have indicated that they will provide financial support. An appeal has been launched by the Committee to raise the estimated R140 000 cost of additional patrols. There will be enormous benefit to Leisure Isle and Knysna if the safety and security of all residents and visitors can be assured over the holiday season.

In conclusion, please take care to secure your property, and do not leave things lying around in your garden or front doors unlocked. And remember, *'LIRA looks after Leisure Isle, it is your responsibility to look after your home!'*

### **Guards' Xmas Gratuity**

We have a team of six loyal and committed guards dedicated to Leisure Isle. They look after us day and night, regardless of the weather. In addition to their vital contribution to our safety, they assist residents and visitors in many different ways. Please show your gratitude by donating to the annual Guards' Xmas Fund.

### **LIRA SOCIAL COMMITTEE**

Our Social Committee has held a number of events this year, with the aim of bringing Islanders together and building community spirit.

A Boerie Bash was held at the Boat Club in March, followed by a Barefoot Beach Walk in May. A Magical Music event was staged at Cearn Hall in September, and in November we kicked-off the LI Festival with an Anniversary Party to celebrate 21 years of LIRA's existence.

These events proved a great success, and showed us that Islanders like an excuse to get together and socialize. Similar events are planned for the new year.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

#### **LIRA Garden Services**

The resignation in mid-year of our two dedicated LIRA gardeners required us to do a rethink of how we maintain the Island's many public spaces. We adopted a three-part plan, with the KM Parks Department retaining responsibility for the larger parks and verges; the appointment of a service provider to do a monthly clean-up of the medium sized parks; and by encouraging residents to adopt parks adjacent to their homes.

The response has been fantastic, and wonderful work has been done, in a variety of different styles, on many of the parks. One-on-Bollard, Church Square, The Grove, Kensington Gardens, and De Smidt and Beacon Parks are just some of the examples. Thank you to all concerned. The Island has never looked prettier.

#### **Seawall Authorizations.**

Five years have passed since LIRA obtained the environmental authorizations that have enabled us to maintain the seawalls that protect the Island. In August we received confirmation from DFFE that the validity of our Environmental Maintenance Plan remains in place, and also from SANParks for our Knysna Protected Environment permit. We are in the process of getting an OSCAE exemption permit, with assistance from the KM Environmental Department.

All work on the seawalls has been compliant with the environmental legislation, and we have maintained excellent working relationships with the authorities. We are now working with a coastal engineer on an assessment of the risk to the Island from storm surges and sea level rise. This will inform any future environmental applications we may need to make in order to replace vulnerable portions of the seawall, and to address the erosion at Bollard beach and dunes.

### **Seawall Repairs and Maintenance**

The repair work completed after the 2023 September storms has been effective, and there has been no major damage to the seawalls this year. We have continued with preventative maintenance on the stone seawalls, and planted grass on the Cearn Drive verges. In August we undertook extensive repairs to the damaged Bollard timber pole seawall and picnic area.

We have now used up the funds from last year's Seawall Appeal, and thank those of you who contributed. We have made a provision for emergency seawall repairs in the 2025 budget.

### **Island Infrastructure**

We have been frustrated at times by the lack of services from under-resourced municipal departments. Repairs to broken street lights and water leaks have been intermittent, and we have been unable to get additional speedhumps installed, nor get any budget allocation for resurfacing of deteriorated roads. We have at last succeeded in getting the many Island potholes filled, and in having our street markings repainted.

Refuse collection and cleaning services from the Solid Waste Department have been effective and reliable. They have supplied wheelie bins, which we have placed at Greenhole and on the waterfront to replace the old swing bins that the Ibises so love.

We have made repairs to the Greenhole public toilets which have stopped the sewage spills and pollution problems, and the toilets are now functional. Portable toilets have been provided for the season, and the KM cleaning contractor is again on site, ensuring that our beaches and picnic areas will be litter-free, and the toilets cleaned and serviced.

The Island entrance map has been replaced with a more easily-readable new map, CCTV signs have been erected, and a new welcome sign has been placed on the guardhouse.

### **STEENBOK NATURE RESERVE**

Steenbok Reserve has had another great year, and continues to be a favorite place where residents and visitors can enjoy the peace and beauty of this Island asset.

The Reserve is jointly managed by LIRA, the Municipality, SANParks and the Friends of Steenbok Trust. Our team of volunteers, helped by various service providers and by the KM Parks Department, has throughout the year kept the Reserve in a pristine condition.

The Reserve's audited financial results for 2023/24 are very satisfactory. Income was R292 046, of which some R100k was contributed by members of the Friends of Steenbok Trust, R70k from LIRA, a Municipality grant of R51k, and with donations and fundraisers making up the remainder.

Expenditure was R294 593, of which R249k went towards Reserve maintenance. We undertook two necessary but unbudgeted projects - an irrigation upgrade, and road resurfacing at the main entrance, while still ending the year with only a small deficit.

A number of fundraisers were held this year. Musical events, bird and seagrass talks, and the popular Steenbok stall at the Leisure Isle Festival raised funds and attracted new members. We also received a generous donation from the festival organizers.

Projects this year included the erection of signage to discourage visitors from disturbing the sensitive flora and fauna at Kingfisher Creek and Lands' End. Our intention is to restore this beautiful saltmarsh and dune forest to its original natural condition.

Old benches in the Reserve have been replaced, new bins installed, and refurbishment done on the Seedpod and toolshed. New signage has been erected. Massive amounts of alien vegetation have been cleared, new trees planted, and an eco-friendly weedkiller introduced. Annual counts have been done of wading birds, *Brunsvigia*, and indigenous orchids.

The Reserve has hosted school groups, sports activities, and of course countless dogwalkers, tourists, fisherfolk, and nature lovers. The Steenbok website has been improved, the Facebook page has attracted growing numbers of followers, and popular SNR Newsletters have been sent out.

The 2025 SNR Management Plan and Budget have been approved. The 2025 Budget shows an income of R281 464, expenditure of R275 694, with a net income of R5 770. We are pleased to report that we have once again received our grant-in-aid from the Municipality.

## **EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

LIRA is not represented on the Ward 9 Committee, and communication between the Municipality and Island residents has suffered as a result. We have asked our councilor to in future keep us informed of ward meetings and IDP public participation processes, and to share with us important municipal communications. We have asked for a member of LIRA to be invited to join her Ward 9 committee. In this way we believe we will be able to better assist our members, and achieve better service levels and budget provisions for Leisure Island.

We have had extensive engagements with many Knysna Municipality departments and officials, and despite their financial and administrative problems, we have received excellent support from them. They appreciate the contribution Leisure Islanders make, and generally are able to respond to our requests for their services.

Our LIRA Safety Initiative has given us access to the various law enforcement agencies, and we have participated in the local Community Policing Forum. Our recent engagements with SA Police Services officials have proven invaluable in our Festive Season preparations.

Our involvement with the seawalls and Steenbok Reserve has led to us developing strong relationships with SANParks officials, and with the national and provincial environmental authorities. We regularly attend the SANParks Forums, and they have been supportive of our activities, and acknowledge our environmental responsibility and compliance in all we do.

We have participated in the work of the Knysna Infrastructure Group, the citizens' initiative that is actively assisting the Municipality with infrastructural matters. We attend meetings of the Garden Route Alliance, and interact with many other residents' and homeowners' associations, sharing information and assisting with matters of mutual concern.

We believe that these efforts we have made to broaden our outlook, and to promote Leisure Island in the wider Knysna community, have enabled LIRA to provide a better service to our members.

## **THE COMMITTEE**

The following members were elected onto the committee at the December 2023 AGM: Richard Ayres, Craig Carter, Alison Collier, Craig Clarke, Paul de Villiers, Barbara Krige, Sheena Mare, Colin Mathiesen, Dave Stromberg and Lauren van Halderen.

At the first committee meeting in January Colin Mathiesen was elected Chair, with Craig Carter as Deputy Chair.

Sadly, Barbara passed away in August, a great loss to us. During the course of the year resignations were received from Richard and Lauren due to their move to Cape Town.

Lynette Tiedemann continues in her role as our LIRA Administrator.

All the current committee members have indicated that they will remain on the committee into the new year, but we would welcome more members to strengthen the team. Portfolios can be allocated according to skills and availability, and there is no limit to the number of LIRA committee members.

Please consider making yourself available to serve the Island. LIRA needs you!

**Colin Mathiesen**  
**Chair, LIRA**

**13 December 2024**