East Cape FOCUS

ENewsletter from the Democratic Alliance Eastern Cape Provincial Head Office

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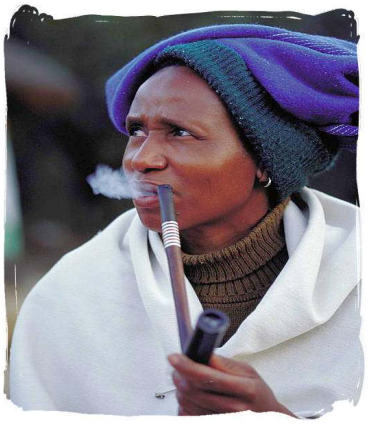

Please submit your contributions to: elmarie@region.da.org.za

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DA'S GREEN SHADOW MINISTER VISITS MAKANA

Fears were raised that thousands of litres of raw sewage allegedly overflowing into an Alicedale river could become a health risk at a popular tourist town 50km downstream.

Six months of complaining to the Makana Municipality have gone by, but this has fallen on deaf ears and residents have become frustrated. MP Annette Lovemore, accompanied by Prof Mike Whisson, visited the town recently to investigate. Townfolk have blamed infrastructural problems on an unprecedented development boom in the town, including the building of the upmarket Bushman Sands Golf Estate – which also requires regular watering.

The town has grown so much, the ponds can't cope and the sewage runs straight into the river. Claims were also made that independent water tests commissioned six months ago by the Bushmans Sands Golf Estate, which is downstream from the sewage farm, had revealed that the resource was not even suitable for irrigation.

Annette Lovemore has promised the concerned residents that the concerns will be raised in a set of questions in Parliament.

AND IN NDLAMBE. . .

GOOD news for Ndlambe is that the municipality has acquired a R9-million grant from the department of water affairs and forestry, to be able to upgrade our ailing sewerage plant.

Mayor Vukile Balura said the grant was obtained after presenting Ndlambe's case at a water indaba in Jeffreys Bay last week.

He stressed that he was not having a holiday during the strike, as some have suggested, but lobbying national and provincial authorities at the indaba.

Director of infrastructural development Xolani Masiza said the R9m may not be enough to fix all of Port Alfred's sewerage problems, but it would be a start.

Racial slant

Debate over the appointment of municipal manager Rolly Dumezweni took on a racial slant at last week's special council meeting.
Although the DA supported the appointment of Dumezweni – the only candidate who was left after two others withdrew – they had questions about his salary package.

Councillor Louise Swanepoel said Dumezweni, formerly Ndlambe's director of human resources, had acquitted himself well in his interview for the job, and had a grasp of the challenges in Ndlambe.

But she said the salary was advertised as being "highly negotiable".

As Dumezweni has been appointed with the same salary as his predecessor, George Ngesi, "I don't think it was negotiated," she said.

DA whip Kevin Mileham added, "The municipal manager is the highest paid individual in Ndlambe – almost double what other people are getting in the private sector. It's too high."

ANC councillor Thembile Bethe retorted that the DA was speaking in "double tongues".

"There are no salaries correct for whites and other salaries correct for blacks," he said.

Mileham objected. "It's not about race. I've never brought up race," he said.

Mayor Balura said the debate over salaries was stale.

Mileham was threatened with ejection from council by Speaker Khululwa Ncamiso if he continued to debate the matter.

Increase will affect service delivery

To afford the wage increase thrust upon it by the SA Local Government Association (Salga) after wage negotiations with unions, Ndlambe would have to dip into its operating budget, said Swanepoel.

"We told Salga we could pay 8,5 per cent and now we are going to pay 13%. We haven't budgeted for it. That money will have to come out of those departments' operating budgets. It's going to affect service delivery," she said.

Expensive cell phones

The DA questioned the amount spent on cell phones for directors. Each cost R1400.
ANC chief whip Alroy Taai said the matter would be looked into.

Mileham said new laptops, one of which cost R18000, should also be looked into.
The Speaker said directors would be asked to give account.

Agenda abandoned
More than half the agenda at last week's council meeting was abandoned for a future council meeting, after Taai said many questions could not be answered due to the absence of finance director Howard Dredge.

Dredge, Balura and Masiza left the meeting early to attend to the issue of the strikers detained by police and the problems with Port Alfred's water supply. - Jon Houzet

EC PROVINCIAL CONGRESS
GRAAFF-REINET
13 – 15 NOV 2009

Letters in the press . . .

The latest confirmed cases of the H1N1 swine flu virus in this Province by the Eastern Cape Department of Health has sparked alarm bells for the Democratic Alliance. Jumping from 83 confirmed cases to 326 in just2 weeks is no longer an exaggerated situation, as suggested by the MEC about a month ago. This raises serious concern and calls for drastic intervention.
This huge jump suggests that the current measures taken by the Department are not effective. Also, the lack of public awareness about this pandemic is worrying and must be addressed.
We live in a poverty-stricken province where the prevalence of people living with HIV/AIDs and other serious conditions is high. As we know, this flu is extremely dangerous. It is particularly so in a province with an adult HIV prevalence of 18 percent. Those with HIV are particularly endangered.
As government we need to come up with a comprehensive plan to deal with this deadly threat.
Also, the anticipated influx of visitors for the 2010 World Cup raises concerns and brings another kind of seriousness which needs to be addressed sooner, rather than later.
I have drafted a motion as a matter of public importance requesting an urgent debate to agree on steps for a cohesive H1N1 swine flu prevention plan. All the departments must get on board and play a significant role in order for us to stop this deadly virus in its tracks.

PINE PIENAAR, MPL, DA PROVINCIAL SPOKESPERSON ON HEALTH

I REFER to the article Sexwale on East London fact-finding mission (SD, August 22). It is encouraging to note the Minister of Human Settlements, Tokyo Sexwale, on a fact-finding mission regarding housing problems in East London.

However, it appears that again the minister, like his party, is engaging in talk- shops with communities to solve housing problems. The minister is quoted as saying: “I’m here to conduct a sincere conversation with the local leaders and residents to hear from them about the conditions they live under.” He talks about not giving easy answers and promises to face difficult situations.

But there are problems that can quickly be solved; for example, the 19000 houses that need repair in the province. Why not simply fix them, rather than delay the process by having more conversations with communities?

The provincial Department of Housing must set a deadline date by which all these houses are repaired.

With a budget in place and the number of units required for rectification known, there should be no more dilly-dallying over this matter. –

Dacre Haddon MPL, DA spokesperson on Human Settlements, Bhisho Legislature

2010 STADIUM EMBARRASMENT

THE ANC in the Nelson Mandela Bay Council yesterday refused to support a motion that a report on “unacceptable and irresponsible behaviour” by councillors at the Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium after a match between Bafana and Brazilian “golden oldies” should be debated, saying the opposition was looking for “political capital”.

It was introduced by **Elizabeth Trent (DA)** and seconded by **Jeremy Davis (DA),** who said it had emerged Speaker Charmaine Williams was present during “this diabolical example of poor behaviour”.

Davis said it had also been suggested “during the debacle that if security were called they would be fired as they are employed by ‘us’”.

Trent said The Herald report, “the accuracy of which has never been challenged”, said Deputy Mayor Bicks Ndoni had set a probe in motion.

She said the alleged conduct of some councillors was “highly damaging and highly embarrassing” and had “tarred all councillors with the same brush as if we are all guilty of this shocking behaviour”.

Until justice was done, all councillors “are tainted with suspicion by the public and it is an embarrassment to us all”.

Trent proposed that the probe’s conclusions should be tabled at the next full council meeting, Williams should deal with the matter as required by Section 13 of the Code of Conduct that the findings should be reported to the council and made public, and that “an appropriate sanction should be discussed and applied by (the) council”.

ANC REJECTS CALL FOR DEBATE ON VAN STADENS

THE Nelson Mandela Bay Council has refused to accept the need for an urgent debate on the non- performance by the lessee of the Van Stadens resort, with ANC councillors rejecting a motion of exigency introduced by **Elizabeth Trent (DA).**

The fact that a spectacular section of prime beachfront, leased for development in 2004 that included a five-star hotel, had been turned into a luxury private haven for multimillionaire Kobus Smit and his friends was first exposed in The Herald last week.

Justifying an urgent debate, Trent said that after five years there was a possibility that officials had failed to keep track of the project and this should now be investigated and the findings submitted to the council at its next meeting.

Trent said the “non-performance” had a very negative effect on the metro’s recreational directorate’s ability to deliver on its mandate, one of the priorities being to provide seaside holiday facilities for the less affluent. “At Van Stadens, the rich seem to enjoy almost exclusive use of this pristine facility while the poor were denied this opportunity.”

NEW AMATHOLE LEADER FOR DA

THE DA has appointed **MP Stuart Farrow** as the new leader of the party’s Amathole constituency to replace provincial leader Athol Trollip.

Farrow, who lives in King William’s Town , was introduced last Friday at a media cocktail function held at the party’s new offices in Berea, East London.

Farrow succeeds Trollip, who is now the new leader of the party in the National Assembly in Cape Town.

Farrow said as the DA’s shadow minister of transport and new leader in Amathole, he wanted to instill a renewed sense of confidence in the team of party leaders he will be working with.

“Our focus area is to ensure that we do well in the upcoming local government elections in 2011. We will contest each and every ward in Amathole.

“Our target is to run the Buffalo City Municipality and the Amathole District Municipality in a new aligned coalition with other opposition parties,” said Farrow.

The party was already in talks with a number of opposition leaders to set up a battle plan to unseat the ANC within his constituency, he said.

He planned to strengthen the party’s outreach to the black electorate started by Trollip.

“Reaching out to the non-traditional DA supporters is important because that is where our growth as a party is going to come from ,” said Farrow.

He is no stranger to leadership positions within the DA as he currently serves on the party’s federal and provincial councils.

He is also the party's chairperson of the Eastern Cape Joint Caucus, heading all the MPs and MPLs .

DA regional chairperson Kobus Botha said they were looking forward to working with Farrow . "We are fully and solidly behind him. We support him and we have had no instability from our structures since his appointment," said Botha.

Already Farrow has been involved in a DA cleanup campaign in Southernwood, East London, where, on August 22, the party's leaders and councillors filled over 200 refuse bags with litter picked up off the suburb's pavements.

DA MPL John Cupido has taken over from Farrow as the party's Chris Hani constituency leader. – ***Daily Dispatch***

PARLIAMENT FOR PEOPLE - ATHOL TROLLIP AND GARETH MORGAN VISIT RURAL E CAPE

We recently visited Mthatha and Port St Johns in the Eastern Cape to have a look at the water supply and sanitation infrastructure in these areas. We were accompanied by Shadow Deputy Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs **Annette Lovemore, DA MPL Veliswa Mvenya and DA Councilor Zama Bomela** on our visit. What follows is an account of the shocking conditions we saw in this area that has not only resulted in large scale pollution of the Mthatha river but also intermittent water shortages in Mthatha and a water shortage crisis in Port St Johns.

We decided to visit Mthatha and Port St Johns for a number of reasons that include replies to parliamentary questions posed that revealed the high levels of contamination and faecal pollution of the Mthatha river and other rivers in the Eastern Cape; the Blue Drop Report of 2009 that gave the Mthatha municipality a score of only 37 out 100; the death of eight people from the Mpheko village after they drank polluted drinking water; and also being approached by local community residents on the poor state and lack of maintenance of the dams in Port St Johns.

Furthermore, on Saturday 22 August the Office of the President announced that it would be granting a R5 billion windfall to Mthatha to improve service delivery and infrastructure in the area. It also promised to correct this situation and repair and rebuild the crumbling infrastructure within six months.

We therefore decided to visit the area to firstly, speak directly to Mthatha and Port St Johns residents and secondly, to see for ourselves what needs to be done in order to develop a proper and efficient functioning water supply and sewerage infrastructure in the area.

We will use our membership in Parliament to engage directly with both the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs and the Office of the President in the coming months to not only raise the concerns of the residents and what we saw on our visit but also to ensure the R5 billion is properly spent and that the Office of the President fulfils the promises it has made.

Water treatment plant in Mthatha: The water treatment plant is completely dilapidated and it was clear that the infrastructure at the plant has not been adequately maintained. There is old and decrepit equipment and litter lying everywhere. The plant appears to only be operating around 30% of its optimal level – the settling tanks are overtaxed and only one of the four sand filters is working, the other three filters are clogged up and appear not to be backwashed properly. There were also HTH containers standing around the plant despite municipalities having been requested to desist from using HTH **(Our webpage provides further details and photos of the state of the plant and what management at the plant told us).**

The informal trading area and taxi rank in Mthatha: There are large piles of rubbish lying around the town that clearly indicate that refuse removal is largely absent in Mthatha. There is also a huge rubbish dump on the banks of the river next to the informal trading area. The informal traders told us that they had requested formal trading facilities from the ANC led local government but were still waiting for this and as a result were exposed to the elements and had no access to proper toilets. **(photos of the rubbish dump and the informal trading area as well as interviews with the informal traders are on our webpage).**

The sewerage works in Mthatha: The sewerage works is not adequately fenced and there was no activity taking place at the facility. The ponds were overfilled with sludge and raw sewerage and there was evidence of underground seepage around the facility. The chlorination plant had been vandalised and was not in use. As a result, there is effectively raw sewerage running into the Mthatha River and we saw this first hand – the stench was unbearable at the point of discharge and there was dense water hyacinth that had effectively blocked the river at this point. **(photos of the seepage, the vandalised chlorination plant and the raw sewerage running into the river can be found on our webpage as well as an interview with Mr Sobetwa who had been seconded from the OR Tambo District Municipality).**

Sandmining along the river outside Mthatha: Just outside Mthatha we discovered that the river was completely covered with water hyacinth, which is most likely due to the high degree of untreated sewerage in the river. There was also a sandmining operation that supplied informal brick makers alongside the river. This operation had caused massive soil erosion and this top soil washes into the river and eventually clogs the river mouth. These brick workers operated in extremely poor conditions and were exposed to the contaminated river water on a daily basis. **(Our webpage provides photos of the sandmining operation and the poor working conditions).**

Port St Johns: We saw firsthand how the poor maintenance of the dams and pumping equipment had resulted in a looming water crisis in the area. The Umzimbuvu river, the largest undammed river in the province, is silting up which is evident by the sand bars that had formed. We were told that a system had been designed on the Mngazi river to draw water from it just below flood river but this extraction had not taken place during high water periods due to a malfunction of the pump system and the holding dam had run dry as a result. The ANC led local government had also tried to crudely dam the Mngazi river in order to create a false high water and had done this without conducting a impact study beforehand and had also used bulldozers on the riverbanks. The town dam is at a critically low level despite the area enjoying one of the highest rain fall levels in the country. As a result the higher lying areas have been without a proper water supply for almost 3 months. The town's sewerage plant has also never been completed and as a

result many businesses are discharging their effluent directly into the river. The water purification plant is archaic. There had also been 3 shark attacks this year alone which is believed to be a result of the raw sewerage entering the ocean from the rivers and the uncontrolled ritual sacrifices on the beach where animal parts are thrown into the sea.

Three things are clear from our visit. Firstly, there is absolutely no control over what is entering the rivers in Mthatha -the main source of drinking water in the area. Secondly, Mthatha residents are supplied with virtually untreated water due to the poor condition of the infrastructure at the water treatment plant. Thirdly, the ANC local government's failure to properly maintain the dams in the Port St John's area has resulted in extremely low water levels in these dams and severe water shortages despite this area enjoying high levels of rainfall.

All these factors have resulted in a severe health risk to the local community (apparent by the death of eight residents in Mpheko) and many Port St Johns residents sitting without running water for months.

Furthermore the poor water supply and quality of water has also deterred investors. The lack of investment has in turn resulted in virtually no economic growth or development taking place or job creation in the area – clearly evident by the large number of informal traders in Mthatha.

It is vital that the current dismal situation in both Mthatha and Port St Johns be addressed immediately and we therefore welcome the Office of the Presidents recent announcement that it would inject R5 billion into the area over the next few months.

However, it is imperative that this amount is spent effectively and efficiently to ensure that proper water supply, water treatment and sewerage infrastructure is repaired and built in the area, that the informal traders are given access to proper facilities including toilets and that a proper waste removal service is put in place to prevent rubbish entering the river.

It is also imperative that the Department of Water and Environmental Affairs releases the Green Drop report that was completed in 2008 and which rates the wastewater treatment services in all municipalities as we believe that Mthatha and Port St Johns form part of a bigger wastewater treatment crisis that currently exists in South Africa.

We will therefore be taking a number of action steps in Parliament over the next few months.

Daily Dispatch LETTER OF THE WEEK. . .

Puppet-master bullies running SA

THE Mayor of Buffalo City, Zukisa Faku, must be applauded for standing firm against her bullying masters.

The article ANC tried to stop city from hiring new boss (DD September 8) typifies the way in which the ANC wants to control every aspect of our lives.

The Constitution states clearly that there is to be a separation of powers and an independent judiciary.

If ANC councillors, like school children, have to report to their provincial "prefects" before making a decision, the country is not being run by the ANC's politicians but by puppet-masters in provincial headquarters and Luthuli House.

This is a desperately serious issue, as the separation of powers is one of the few guarantees towards a fully functional democracy.

If this is tampered with, then our future as a nation is very bleak indeed.

The process of appointing Mandla Sithole as municipal manager of Buffalo City was transparent and endorsed by the ANC members on the committee.

The organs of civic society and business agreed with the choice and now disciplinary action is to be taken against those (ANC) councillors who voted for Sithole.

I doubt whether legally any disciplinary action would succeed.

And if Mr Sithole was appointed on merit, as the best candidate, and is capable and will be a valuable municipal manager, then what is the ANC whining about?

– **Dacre Haddon, Democratic Alliance MPL, Bhisho**

DA PROMOTIONAL ITEMS

Find a list of our most recent Promotional Items on offer from your COM
Orders should reach PHO before **21 September 2009**

Please supply your news to Elmarie Botha on elmarie@region.da.org.za or fax 041 5821769