

# Minutes of the quarterly eThekweni Biodiversity Forum meeting

## August 2010

**DATE:** 05 August 2010

**TIME:** 09h00 – 12h00

**VENUE:** Paradise Valley, Durban

### PRESENT:

Adrian Armstrong	AA	Jabu Sithole	JST	Natasha Govender	NG
Andrew Booth	AB	Jean Lindsay	JL	Nicci Diederichs	ND
Barry Lang	BL	Jean Senogles	JS	Nolwezo Nzimande	NN
Bheki Mdletshe	BM	Jeanne Tarrant	JT	Nomafu Dlamini	NDL
Bianca McKelvey	BMK	Jeffrey Maivha	JM	Reshnee Lalla	RL
Bryan Ashe	BAS	Jessica Brislin	JB	Richard Winn	RW
David Hancocks	DHA	Kirstin Williams	KW	Rob Jamieson	RJA
Derrek Ruiters	DRU	Lesley Frescura	LF	Rodney Bartholomew	RBA
Di Higginson Keith	DHK	Lungi Ndlovu	LN	Roger Uys	RU
Errol Douwes	ED	Lynne Thompson	LT	Sibonisile Mpungose	SMG
Fhululedzani Bueleni	FB	Manisha Maganlal	MM	Sue George	SG
Fran Lewis	FL	Martin Clement	MC	Thami Kunene	TK
Gary Cullen	GC	Mpumelelo Sithebe	MSI	Viloshanie Reddy	VR
Greg Mullins	GM	Muhammed Essop	ME	Zama Masinga	ZM
Heather Cairns	HC	Mzekelo Madikane	MD		

### APOLOGIES:

Debra Roberts, Jo Boule, Alistair McInnes, Cameron McLean, Geoff Pullan, Gillian Noyce, J.E. Granger, Ahmed Thandar, Sue Shafto, Johann Vermeulen, Kate Richardson, Sibusiso Mkhwanazi, Karl Westphal, Johan Bodenstein, Reitumetse Molotsoane, Sabelo Nkosi, Hilary Vickers, Gillian Noyce, Aarnia van Vuuren.

### 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

NG welcomed all and facilitated introductions.

### 2. PRESENTATION: Nicci Diederichs Mander (Futureworks), Project Co-ordinator of the Greening 2010 Programme, presenting on the projects undertaken toward offsetting the carbon footprint of the 2010 Soccer World Cup.

LF commented on the large number of squatters still at the Umgeni Bird Park and suggested that the activities around cleaning up and rehabilitation of the Blue Lagoon Park should extend to the Bird Park as well. LF also enquired if the Green Hub will also stock information pamphlets and brochures of other organisations i.e., not only eThekweni. ND replied that the Green Hub is meant to be an information centre and will most certainly welcome brochures from other environmental organisations. AA stated that rivers are notorious for alien infestation and asked if there will be funding in the future to continue the cleanup of this and other rivers. ND replied that Greening 2010 was very much focused on the Soccer World Cup; however, it was an excellent way to get leverage for future projects by raising awareness about the importance of the Umgeni ecosystem and the fact that this very high-use area has historically been very underinvested in. Hopefully, with the Soccer

World Cup Greening 2010 projects, one is able to get buy-in from high level city officials to sustain such projects. RJA asked why the city needs to buy land to plant trees when there is so much land owned by the city where trees can be planted. ND responded that with the Buffelsdraai and other tree planting projects, they tend to go with the so-called low-hanging fruit – Buffelsdraai was already owned by the City, for instance. RJA also added that something needs to be done about the removal of indigenous trees and plants from verges. This is not allowed and needs to be dealt with. He also stressed the need for property owners to be advised about this. HC asked ND about the running of the Green Hub i.e., who is going to staff the Hub, what will be the hours of operation, what budget will be used? ND replied that it will most likely not be the City that staffs the Green Hub (possibly Wildlife Society?) and that hopefully the Hub will generate funding through sale of books and trails that will be on offer (e.g., canoe trails). BAS asked if there exists a component to involve the communities in these projects and states that carbon sequestration is actually debatable. He asked ND why the lights at the Moses Mabhida stadium remains on at night despite the World Cup being over, especially since it's supposed to be energy efficient. ND replied that the task of running and managing a stadium is actually quite a mammoth one and Moses Mabhida is still in the teething stages of this management and there are many lessons still to be learnt. LT queried about the long term plans in the area i.e., it is not sufficient to simply clean up the estuary when the real problems occur in the upper catchment areas. ND handed the question over to GC who would likely be more suited to answer the question and NG suggested that discussion around this be raised after GC's presentation.

### **3. PRESENTATION: Gary Cullen (Economic Development, DUCT) and Andrew Booth (DUCT) speaking on the Durban Green Corridor and the uMngeni River Care Programme.**

GC and AB discussed the work being done around cleaning up the Umgeni river system, which focuses on cleaning up of anthropogenic litter, clearing streams, removal and management of invasive alien species and community involvement in rehabilitating and maintaining areas around the Umgeni river system. LT asked about how the teams working in the various areas deal with issues around the ownership of the land they're working on and AB replied that the method they use is to go in and start the work and deal with questions later. AB said that they generally do not get too much resistance from local communities and this way means less wastage of time. GC said that in some instances one has to consult ward councillors etc., especially if the local communities are going to be involved in the long term maintenance of the area. BAS asked about the roll-out of the project and suggested that GC present at the Catchment Management Forum. GC replied that it is a matter of time that this project expands; this is merely a starting point. GC also added that Catchment Management Forums would become a key structure to construct partnerships. BMK was concerned about water quality issues and questioned GC about whether scope exists with this programme to control some of the water quality issues with the Umgeni. GC replied that this programme creates an opportunity to facilitate discussions around subjects such as this.

### **4. EMD REPORT BACKS**

#### **a) Town Planning Matters**

RB reported on the various Town Planning Matters that the EPCPD is undertaking. He noted that the public processes have finally come to an end. The objections from the public would now be collated and taken to committee. Roosfontein Nature Reserve is to be proclaimed and the timeframe for this to be finalised is likely the end of August. The rezoning of the 200 ha Fosaville property (170 ha for conservation) is to be taken to committee. With respect to the rezoning of properties in the Outer West, all plans are to be taken to committee within the next three months.

JL asked RB about what has become of the Green Bylaws that the EPCPD was working on prior to all the Town Planning interventions. JL expressed concern at the need to effect changes to certain policies e.g., indigenous

planting policy OR enforcement around the cutting of indigenous trees. RB clarified that the Green Bylaws would not contain legislation around the planting of trees etc. Examples of issues dealt with in the bylaws are local emerging weeds and establishing legal process around dealing with this and / or establishing regulations for locally threatened species that may not be represented at a provincial or national level. JL wanted to know in that case who one is to lobby around other bylaws and RB responded that this would generally sit with the city's legal services department. JL said that she would follow up with this. RBA queried as to whether the rezoning RB spoke about would be included in the title deeds of properties. RB replied that zoning is a good enough measure to protect environmental assets; however, if one is to register a conservation servitude on a property, this will be reflected in the title deeds. RBA also asked if the landowners that now have their properties affected by environment are being compensated in any way. RB replied that the EPCPD is currently working with Real Estate to reduce the ratings on properties where the development potential is affected by environment.

#### **b) Mayoral Biodiversity Award**

LN informed the forum that the nominees have been finalised and a steering committee will soon meet to consider these finalists.

#### **c) Invasive Alien Species Strategy**

ED informed the forum that the invasive alien plants control strategy has been finalised and was sent to council early in 2010. He noted that this is an evolving document and he would like to draw knowledge from other departments and organisations who are also involved with invasive alien species control to improve the strategy. As such ED will be circulating the document, together with the action plan, to receive input from the members of the forum to update the strategy.

RW asked ED if there is a strategy in place to prevent people removing woody species once an area has been cleared of invasive alien species. RW stated that it would be better practice to remove invasive aliens from an area, rehabilitate with indigenous species and then later move on to another area. This prevents people from going in a cutting all the woody species present (that were previously protected by the dense alien coverage) simply because the path has been cleared. ED suggested that a good idea might be to get local communities involved with maintaining and protecting areas. RW also suggested writing in a protection fee to projects. LF noted that what could also be useful is to have people that are on the ground often (e.g., Birdlife members that go birding) to feed information to a common database.

#### **d) KZN Biodiversity Stewardship Programme**

DR is continuing to work on proclamation of selected reserves as part of the KZN Biodiversity Stewardship Programme, Roosfontein being the reserve that is currently being taken through this process.

#### **e) Giba Gorge Special Rating Area**

NG reported on behalf of AM as follows:

The Giba Gorge Environmental Precinct has now got a permanent Conservation Management staff compliment (since Feb), headed up by Tuthuka Majola (manager) reporting directly to AM and conservation committee. Implementation Programmes highlighting all work planned for on a monthly basis, including deliverables and performance indicators, have been distributed to all landowners since February. All of these will be available on the new Giba Gorge website which is due to go live by the end of May.

Some of the work done to date includes:

1.) Development and updates of Conservation Management Plan (available on website to come:

[www.ggep.org](http://www.ggep.org))

2.) Alien plant clearing (bulk of work) in grasslands between M13 and Eagle Rock and in the forest around McIntosh Falls.

- 3.) Construction of two new trails (ongoing) in the main gorge forest and McIntosh and Kirkman falls - details of which will be on website.
- 4.) Soil erosion control on various cutlines and roads.
- 5.) Involvement of schools in River Health Monitoring.
- 6.) Construction of parking area off Longforger Avenue.
- 7.) Plans to construct staff facilities and visitor ablutions - to allow for school buses.
- 8.) Landowner newsletters distributed and new website content handed over to designer.

## 5. GENERAL

### a) KwaZulu Dwarf Chameleons

Adrian Armstrong (Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife) gave a short presentation on the impact of the proposed development of Durban International Airport on the KwaZulu Dwarf Chameleon (*Bradypodion melanocephalum*) population in the area. He stressed that the Eastern Precinct of the former airport has the largest population of the threatened and endemic KwaZulu Dwarf Chameleon.

AA urged the forum to help protect the habitat of this threatened species by:

- Writing to the Minister of Transport, Minister Sbu Ndebele, as soon as possible, asking him to ensure that all the KwaZulu Dwarf Chameleons are conserved on site by protecting the old Durban International Airport Eastern Precinct from transformation and development.
  - **Postal address: Minister Sibusiso Ndebele, Minister of Transport, Private Bag, X193, Pretoria 0001;**
  - **Fax: 012 328 3194.**
- Forward your concerns to the Municipal Manager, Dr Michael Sutcliff.
  - **Fax: 031 311 2170**
- Forward your concerns to the Environmental Planning and Climate Protection Department.
  - **Fax: 031 311 7134**

### b) Durban's Nature Attractions and Outdoor experiences guide

Members of the forum found errors in the information outlined in the guide. NG suggested that people that do find mistakes in the guide email her and she will collate the information and pass it on to ND.

Many members also requested copies of the guide. ND will leave a box of the books at the EPCPD office (166 Old Fort Rd, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, City Engineers Building, Room 226). People may also go to ND's office to pick up the guides if they wish (48 Old Main Road, Kloof). In addition, the books will be available at the Umgeni Green Hub.

### c) EPCPD Newsletter

JL congratulated MM on the outstanding job with the EPCPD newsletter, stating that it has been incredibly well received. The information has been particularly useful, especially for people that do not usually attend the Biodiversity Forum and are unaware of the work being done.

### d) Tree policy

JL queried again about the municipal policy of planting/landscaping with at least 70 % indigenous plants. Many people (individuals/companies) are landscaping with 'problem' plants (emerging and potentially invasive species). It was suggested that this figure be re-examined and JL asked NG to circulate the policy with the minutes so as to determine the way forward. **(Attached to email)**

### e) Cutting and planting on verges

RJA stressed the need to ensure that only locally indigenous planting should be allowed on verges as verges are important corridors for biodiversity.

#### **f) Framework presentation**

The Architecture Dept has started a process of developing a framework to manage five parks in eThekweni as a pilot project, one of them being Bulwer Park. BAS informed the forum about this process to ensure that the links to D'MOSS between Bulwer Park and Pigeon Valley and even Meyrick Bennet Park remain intact. The community meeting took place on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July 2010 and the process was initiated by Imagine Durban.

### **6) UPCOMING EVENTS**

#### **a) Sustainable Cities Exhibition (13 – 15 August 2010)**

JL informed the forum of the Sustainability Exhibition at the ICC from 13 - 15 August. Entrance is free. MM noted that EPCPD will be exhibiting at the venue.

#### **b) Durban Commitment (4 September 2010)**

LN informed the forum that on 8 September 2010 we will be celebrating the second anniversary of the Durban Commitment which is a commitment that was signed in Durban during the LAB (Local Action for Biodiversity) conference in 2008 by the mayors of 21 international cities to conserve biodiversity within their respective cities.

To celebrate this, LN noted that there will be a performance of a biodiversity-themed play that Ellis Pierson has put together on Saturday the 4th at the Botanic Gardens to which everyone is invited.

#### **c) The Mariannhill Landfill Conservancy Spring walkabout (16 October 2010)**

The Mariannhill Landfill Conservancy Spring walkabout (3 steep km) will be at 9 am on Saturday, 16 October 2010 (meet at Boma). Food and drink will be supplied afterwards to celebrate the planet. Confirm booking with Richard Winn asap as numbers are limited. For Richard's contact details email [govendernatasha@durban.gov.za](mailto:govendernatasha@durban.gov.za) or call Natasha on 031 – 311 7144.

#### **d) Birdlife KZN Photo Exhibition (13 – 27 October 2010)**

LF informed the forum that BirdLife Port Natal is offering its members and the members of BirdLife KZN the opportunity of contributing to avian conservation in KZN by submitting their photographs for adjudication, and possible choice for exhibition at the Natural History Museum in Durban in October 2010. Thirty entries will be selected for printing to A3 size and will be exhibited at the Durban Natural History Museum in the City Hall from 13 – 27 October 2010. The good news is that ALL entries submitted will be exhibited as part of a continuous slide show on plasma screen in the exhibition hall at the same time.

The panel of selectors comprises Guy Gibbon (SA Birding, Roberts Online); David Allan (Acting Director and Curator of Birds, Durban Natural History Museum); Crystelle Wilson (Editor *KZN Birds*); Jenny Norman (Vice Chair BirdLife Port Natal) and Ben Myburgh (Chairman: Westville Camera Club).

The exhibition will be opened on Wednesday 13 October at 18h00 by David Allan, Acting Director of the Museum as guest speaker, and will be open to the public. Please diarise this date and remember to be present at the opening or visit the exhibition for the following 14 days.

The exhibition will be widely publicized, not only to bird club members, but also in the general media to raise awareness among as large an audience as possible of our incredible avian diversity and beauty.

There are four categories for the exhibition, and entries may be submitted in more than one of them.

- a) Garden birds;
- b) Birds in Action;
- c) Red Data birds;
- d) Biodiversity is beautiful

**e) Return of the Barn Swallows and Mt Moreland (7 November 2010)**

NG asked the forum on behalf of Hilary Vickers to diarise and attend the Return of the Swallows event at Mt Moreland on Sunday 7 November at 4pm. All are asked to bring their sundowners and enjoy the swallows returning to their roost. NB: This is a particularly auspicious occasion as this is the first return of the swallows since the KSIA opened. For details please see our new website [www.barnswallow.co.za](http://www.barnswallow.co.za)

**Closing and Date of the next meeting:**

NG closed the meeting at 12h00 and thanked everyone for attending.

Next meetings: Thursday, 4 November 2010

Times: 9:00am – 12:00pm

Venue: Paradise Valley

**Acronyms used in these (and previous) minutes:**

AIO	Alien Invasive Organism
BSAP	Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
BSSA	Biodiversity Stewardship – South Africa
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity (Global)
COP 9	Ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (a CBD initiative)
CARA	Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act (Act 43 of 1983)
DAEA	Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs (Provincial)
DEAT	Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (National)
DME	Department of Minerals and Energy
D'MOSS	Durban Metropolitan Open Space System
DUCT	Duzi Umgeni Conservation Trust
DWAF	Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (National)
ECO	Environmental Consultant
EESMP	EThekweni Environmental Services Management Plan
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EKZNW	Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife
EM	EThekweni Municipality
EMD	(eThekweni Municipality) Environmental Management Department
EMP	Environmental Management Plan
EPCPD	Environmental Planning and Climate Protection Department
GGEP	Giba Gorge Environmental Precinct
GHG	Green House Gases
IAP	Invasive Alien Plant
IAS	Invasive Alien Species
ICLEI	International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
KZN	KwaZulu Natal
LAB	Local Action for Biodiversity
MOSS	Metropolitan Open Space System
NEMA	National Environmental Management Act (1998)
NEMBA	National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (Act 10 of 2004)
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NRB	eThekweni Municipality's Natural Resource Branch
SANBI	South African National Biodiversity Institute (National)
SAPTA	South African Pet Traders Association
SCP	Systematic Conservation Planning
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SOER	State of the Environment Report

