

# **Environmental Portfolio**

# **Monthly Progress Report # 02**

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1	INTRODUCTION					
2	BIODIV	/ERSITY RESTORATION PROJECT	4			
2.1	The Co	wies Hill Conservancy	4			
	2.1.1	Cowies Hill Conservancy _Footprint	5			
	2.1.2	Cowies Hill Conservancy _ Management	5			
	2.1.3	Cowies Hill Conservancy _ Emblem	5			
2.2	Conservancy Areas					
	2.2.1	Avon Place Conservancy Park (0,8094 Ha)	5			
	2.2.2	Turnbridge Conservancy Park (1,148Ha)	6			
	2.2.3	Comrades Corner	6			
	2.2.4	MacDonald Rd Wetland Area	6			
	2.2.5	Palmiet River & Tributaries	7			
3	GREEN	IING & AESTHETICS	7			
3.1	Gate Gardens					
	3.1.1	Primary Gates	7			
	3.1.2	Secondary Gates	7			
3.2	Beautification Sites					
	3.2.1	Woodside Junction	8			
	3.2.2	Braby Place Rockery	8			
	3.2.3	Josiah Gumede Road _East	8			
	3.2.4	Palmiet Bridge Park	8			
	3.2.5	Ernest Witcutt Bridge	9			
3.3	Barrier Planting					
	3.3.1	Norfolk Terrace (cul-de-sac)	9			
	3.3.2	Paradise Valley Fence	9			
3.4	Roads 8	Roads & Verges				
	3.4.1	Josiah Gumede Rd	9			
	3.4.2	Norfolk Terrace	9			
3.5	Litter C	Collection	9			
3.6	Road Si	ignage	10			
4	MUNIC	CIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE, COMMUNITY PARKS & FACILITIES	10			
4.1	10					
4.2	Munici	Municipal Facilities & Community Parks				
	4.2.1	Cowies Hill Park (Cecil Fisher Road)	10			
	4.2.2	Cowies Hill Community Hall				

5	STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION	11
5.1	eThekwini Municipality _ Biodiversity Management Department	11
5.2	eThekwini Municipality _ Natural Resources Department	11
5.3	eThekwini Municipality _ Public Employment Programme (PEP)	11
5.4	Duzi Umgeni Conservation Trust (DUCT)	12
5.5	Community Participation	12
5.6	Garden Services	12
_		
6	BUDGETING AND CHE ZONES & WORK SITES	
6.1	Reimbursement Costs	12
6.2	CHE Zones & Work Sites	12

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

I have been in Johannesburg since 1<sup>st</sup> April dealing with family care issues and must extend huge appreciation to Mrs Margret Daniel for her commitment to our Greening & Aesthetics projects and her supervision of the Green Team in my absence.

The Cowies Hill Estate (CHE) Environmental Portfolio report is structured under the current four focus areas:

# i Biodiversity Restoration Project

- The Cowies Hill Conservancy (Reg No 105 CKZN-02)
- CHE Conservancy Sites

## ii Greening & Aesthetics

- Beautification sites
- Roads & Verges
- Public Open Space Maintenance
- Barrier planting
- Litter collections

# iii Infrastructure, Community Parks & Facilities

- Condition assessments
- Municipal interventions / maintenance
- Street Signage

# iv Stakeholder Collaboration

- eThekwini Municipality \_ Line Departments
- Duzi Umgeni Conservation Trust (DUCT)
- Community Participation
- Garden Services contractors

#### 2 BIODIVERSITY RESTORATION PROJECT

# 2.1 The Cowies Hill Conservancy

The Cowies Hill Conservancy was registered (Reg No 105 CKZN-02) with KZN Conservancies Association in October 2021. The Cowies Hill Conservancy area currently mirrors the Cowies Hill Estate residential area.

The Biodiversity Restoration Project aims to eradicate all Invasive Alien Plant (AIP) species and to promote the conservation of locally endemic indigenous plant species. This will improve the natural habitats for fauna (all of the animal life present in a particular region or time).

For the purpose of educating our community, a (limited) range of tree identification tags have been obtained from the KZN Conservancies Association and these will be fixed to trees in all Conservancy Areas in the near future.

#### 2.1.1 Cowies Hill Conservancy Footprint

Whilst the Cowies Hill Conservancy was established under the auspices of the Cowies Hill Estate, there are a large number of other residents in Cowies Hill who have a keen interest biodiversity restoration. The current Cowies Hill Conservancy footprint does not follow any geophysical boundaries and it excludes the Woodside Conservancy Area along Stafford Rd (Grassland, Wetland areas and drainage corridor).

Apart from the logical promotion of biodiversity restoration in our local region, the motivation for the extension of the footprint will be to market, generate interest and build momentum for the eventual inclusion of the Woodside Security Association (WSA) area into Cowies Hill Estate.

The only consideration for the CHE at this stage will be the funding of activities (IAP eradication, maintenance etc) within the Woodside Conservancy Area. All planned activities will therefore be funded by independent sponsors rather than the CHE until such time as WSA area is incorporated into CHE.

<u>Recommendation:</u> The Cowies Hill Conservancy footprint be extended to include the entire Cowies Hill area so as to incorporate the Woodside Conservancy Area along Stafford Rd (Grassland, Wetland areas and drainage corridor alongside the Deutsche Schule Durban (DSD) to Palmiet River).

# 2.1.2 Cowies Hill Conservancy \_ Management

We will need to formalise a management structure in the near future and call for volunteers to fill various portfolios. We will "borrow" ideas from the Westville Conservancy as we already have a good working relationship with them. The management structure can be finalised once the above recommendation has been considered and approved.

### 2.1.3 Cowies Hill Conservancy \_ Emblem

Most conservancies affiliated to the KZN Conservancy Association have a logo. It is proposed that our emblem be the image of "Kevin & Frank" – our Palmiet River Bushpigs.

# 2.2 Conservancy Areas

# 2.2.1 Avon Place Conservancy Park (0,8094 Ha)

For the purpose of keeping records, the site address of the Avon Place Conservancy Park is 18 Belvedale Road (ERF 3921 Pinetown \_ SG 3082/1965). The dimension of the property is approximately 320meters long and 50 meter wide.

The access bridge into the Avon Place Conservancy was erected in March and trails have been cut. (The steel cable handrail will be installed shortly).

Invasive Alien Plant (IAP) eradication is receiving on-going attention. **Ricinus communis** (Castor-oil plant) seed has been germinating rapidly and the maintenance team have will continue to manually remove seedlings.

Users of the Avon Park must be cautioned to stay on the cut paths as there is a very large wild beehive in a hollow log located western part of the park situated in the dense **Setaria megaphylla** (Broad-Leaved Bristle Grass) thicket close to the stream.

# 2.2.2 Turnbridge Conservancy Park (1,148Ha)

This park is situated at 33 Turnbridge Drive (ERF 251 Woodside – SG 1567/1950) and is 230meters long and 50 meter wide.

Footpaths have been cut and users should be advised that the lower footpath traverses so swampy pockets of wetland. The access bridge withstood the recent floods but it will require some realignment and levelling. Much of the 19mm quarry stone was washed away in the floods but surplus stock from the original purchase will be used to restore the bridge.

Extensive refuse removal and IAP eradication has been carried out. Fortunately, the floods scoured out much of the IAP species growing in the drainage line.

#### 2.2.3 Comrades Corner

As reported previously, litter removal, extensive herbicide spraying and manual removal of IAPs has been undertaken in the last reporting period. No other activities were undertaken in the past two months.

# 2.2.4 MacDonald Rd Wetland Area

There has been some regrowth of IAP's in the wetland and the maintenance team is scheduled to attend to this issue.

A large number of aloes and succulents were donated by a CHE member and these were planted at the corner of MacDonald and Morewood Crescent as an extension to the existing aloe garden. Some of this stock may be transplanted to more suitable sunny sites in future.

Despite our use of 110mm PVC sleeves placed around the base of tree saplings, the municipal maintenance contractors (Weed-eater gang) have again damaged a number our plants. Wooden stakes ("intingos") will now be inserted next to the saplings and the grass will be cleared around them.

The area has been previously sprayed with herbicide to control the heavy infestation of **Bidens** pilosa (Blackjack) weed but this will be an on-going maintenance issue as seeding has been prolific and it will take repeated effort to control this particular weed species

#### 2.2.5 Palmiet River & Tributaries

There has been no activity along the Palmiet River and her tributaries yet. The floods in April and May have extensively scoured the flood line and removed a significant amount of vegetation, mostly invasive species. A new plan of action will be prepared for the Palmiet River in the near future. (See 5.3 \_PEP below)

# 3 GREENING & AESTHETICS

# 3.1 Gate Gardens

The Cowies Hill Estate has erected access "gates" or security booms at 21 locations within the estate. Formal landscaping has been done at some of the gates and the vision is to create Gate Gardens at all primary and secondary Cowies Hill Estate access points. The gardens will be planted with local endemic indigenous plant species selected for suitability in terms of natural habitat sunny, semishade or shade habitats.

# 3.1.1 Primary Gates

The Primary Cowies Hill Estate Gate Gardens are as follows:

- Gate 1 Norfolk Terrace
- Gate 2 MacDonald Road
- Gate 3 Dudley Rod
- Gate 4 Josiah Gumede Road (East Sasol Garage)
- Gate 5 Josiah Gumede Road (West Comrades Marathon Water Fountain)
- > Gate 6 Woodside Avenue
- ➤ Gate 7 Stafford Road
- Gate 8 Acacia Avenue

# 3.1.2 Secondary Gates

The Secondary Cowies Hill Estate Gate Gardens are:

- Gate 9 Bedford Road
- Gate 10 Rockhaven Road
- Gate 11 Belvedale Road
- Gate 12 Buckingham Place (East Josiah Gumede Rd)
- Gate 13 Ernest Whitcutt Road
- Gate 14 Buckingham Place (West Woodside Ave)
- Gate 15 Phyliss Argo Road
- ➤ Gate 16 Balmoral Drive
- Gate 17 Cecil Fisher Road
- Gate 18 Tunbridge Avenue
- Gate 19 Catherine Avenue
- Gate 20 Raleigh Road
- ➤ Gate 21 Cedar Road

The "Green Team" have spent much of their time in during this reporting period (March to May) attending to the maintenance of the landscaped gate gardens at Rockhaven and lower Josiah Gumede near Sasol Garage. Weeding and general maintenance has been attended to at the MacDonald Rd and Dudley Road gates as well as the Norfolk Terrace embankment below the M13. have also been attended to.

#### 3.2 Beautification Sites

#### 3.2.1 Woodside Junction

Under the supervision of Mrs Margaret Daniel, the Woodside – Josiah Gumede intersection has undergone an extensive clean up. As this site is one of the major access points into Cowies Hill, it is recommended that professional landscaping be undertaken.

Landscaper's scope of work will include the erection of gum-pole retaining wall (+/- 50 x 600mm long poles 100/125mm dia and installation of sandstone rock features (+/- 3ton load) and supply 6c/meter top soil. A quotation from Ben Botha Landscapes for the amount of **R 16 950,00** was submitted to CHE for consideration. A second quote for the amount of **R14 580, 00** (with same quantity of materials) was requested from Mnandi Indigenous Landscaper (Mr. Lee Human -a Cowies Hill resident) was subsequently obtained for purposes of comparison.

The cost of compost was excluded from both quotes as CHE has negotiated wholesale discount rates from a supplier (t/a Organic for Africa). The plants for the Woodside Junction will be sourced from residents and labour for composting and planting will be undertaken by the "Green Team" to save costs. A donation of R2000 from Mr Bob Norval has been pledged towards the beatification project.

Recommendation: It is recommended that Ben Botha Landscapes be commissioned to landscape the site as he had prepared the original Scope of Work.

# 3.2.2 Braby Place Rockery

Some work has been done by the Green Team maintaining and expanding the rockery area and verges along Rockhaven leading up to Braby Place. This will require on-going maintenance.

# 3.2.3 Josiah Gumede Road \_East

Gardens of Agapanthus and an avenue of Erythrina caffra (Coast Corral Tree) have been planted on the bank opposite the Sasol Garage. Future plans are to plant alongside the M13 – Exit 13 off-ramp leading up to Sasol Garage.

### 3.2.4 Palmiet Bridge Park

A great effort has been made by the Nhassengo family whose property abuts the Palmiet Bridge Park at the lower end of Stafford Road. The family have made a huge effort maintaining, at their own cost, the public open space abutting their property. Mrs Nhassengo is in agreement that the area should be landscaped and planted with local indigenous species. A plan for procuring and planting appropriate endemic plants will developed in due course.

#### 3.2.5 Ernest Witcutt Bridge

A beautification site has been identified around the Ernest Witcutt Bridge. Work will include removal of trees and branches left on the roadside after he floods. There have been discussions with Mrs Carla Ferreira & Mr Willie Boshoff (cnr Springside & Ernest Witcutt) as well as Mr Andrew Laas (cnr MacDonald & Springside) regarding the removal of exotics and planting of an indigenous garden their respective verges. The concept is to mirror the indigenous forest and garden established by the Goss family and establish forest margin type plant species at this site.

Recommendation: The Ernest Witcutt Bridge area be prioritised as the next CHE beautification project.

#### 3.3 Barrier Planting

#### 3.3.1 Norfolk Terrace (cul-de-sac)

The **Carissa macrocarpa** (Amatungulu) hedge planted along Norfolk Terrace cul-de-sac is growing slowly. As reported previously, the position of the hedge is directly above an old tarmac road surface. Encroaching grass around the hedge line has been cut back and this hedge will be maintained on a regular basis. It should be noted that other plants proximate to the hedge seem to have rooted well so we expect the Carissa to also mature. At this stage no new plants will be planted to replace the dead plants until the viability of the existing stock is established.

# 3.3.2 Paradise Valley Fence

A mix of barrier hedge plants was planted along the fence at Paradise Valley at the M13 flyover to Sasol Garage. Additional stock will be planted in future to thicken the hedge in due course.

# 3.4 Roads & Verges

### 3.4.1 Josiah Gumede Rd

After the floods, the sidewalks and street gutters along both sides of Josiah Gumede Rd were cleaned between Woodside Rd and the Sasol Garage. Over a dozen sacks of rubbish was removed for dumping.

# 3.4.2 Norfolk Terrace

A major clean-up of the embankment between M13 and Norfolk Terrace was undertaken in the first week of May. Work included the collection of litter, dead branches and removal of weeds. Overgrown grass was cut back with the brush-cutter. The grass and weeds rooted in the pedestrian sidewalks were also removed and dumped by a contractor.

#### 3.5 Litter Collection

Mr Cele continues to collect litter along our streets and road verges on a weekly basis. Tyson Properties have kindly offered to sponsor a refuse bin. Bins will be branded with both the CHE and Tyson Properties logo.

- > Action: CHE Management to
- i Obtain permission from eThekwini DSW for CHE to place a bin at the Woodside Junction site.
- ii Obtain approval from DSM of the branding on the bin (similar to that of Keep Westville Beautiful)
- iii Confirm with DSW that they will empty the bin
- iv Provide high resolution CHE artwork to Tyson to create the branding.

# 3.6 Road Signage

Road name signage has become dirty with grime and algae. Signage needs to be scrubbed with sugar-soap and water. The cleaning team will require a stepladder and water containers to be transported to all street signs on a 6-month cycle. A plan will be developed for road signage to be cleaned by the green team in the near future.

# 4 MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE, COMMUNITY PARKS & FACILITIES

#### 4.1 Infrastructure Condition Assessments

After the extensive damage caused by the April & May Floods, an inspection of all road, curbs, stormwater drains etc. needs to be undertaken to access the condition of infrastructure and the need for maintenance and / or repairs. Ideally this exercise should be GIS driven so that photographic records together with informed engineering advice can be forwarded to the municipality for appropriate action.

Whilst this is a serious matter, time constraints and other priorities have limited my involvement and ability to develop firm proposals for dealing with municipal services and infrastructure. Georeferenced records of all faults should be kept to establish whether these are repeat faults, consequential faults (as a result of poor workmanship) and new faults. This will enable us to have a clear view of the condition of our infrastructure and a record of the municipality's responses.

Infrastructure Condition Assessments should however be prioritised as this will assist the municipality in taking pro-active and preventative measures to keep out infrastructure in good condition.

**Recommendation:** Civil Engineers with GIS capacity should be identified from our CHE community to assist develop an infrastructure condition assessment methodology

# 4.2 Municipal Facilities & Community Parks

# 4.2.1 Cowies Hill Park (Cecil Fisher Road)

The Cowies Hill Park off Cecil Fisher Road is owned and maintained by the municipality. It comprises a playground with swings, slides etc as well as an open field on the upper terrace. For unknown reasons, a number of trees have been planted by the municipality in the centre of the field.

The vision for Cowies Hill Park is to establish a hedge along the road embankment and to plant out the banks with indigenous grassland flowers. This will assist in preventing motorbike scrambling and hedging will improve security.

Currently the municipal signage has been vandalised and the the grass on the field is frequently overgrown and requires mowing. Cowies Hill Estate has erected a board similar to the primary and secondary gate signage.

# 4.2.2 Cowies Hill Community Hall

Both trees and boundary walls are heavily infested with invasive *Dolichandra unguis-cati* (Cats claw creeper). It is proposed that, in conjunction with the relevant municipal officials, IAP eradication be undertaken and that all exotic and undesirable plants be replaced with indigenous local endemic species. This is not a priority but will to receive attention in due course.

# 5 STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

# 5.1 eThekwini Municipality \_ Biodiversity Management Department

Due to my absence from home, there has been no further liaison with Mr Russel Stow (CHE member); Senior Environmentalist at the municipality's Development Planning, Environment and Management Unit with the view to developing a funding proposal for our Biodiversity Restoration Project.

# 5.2 eThekwini Municipality \_ Natural Resources Department

The Natural Resources Department has offered to supply indigenous trees to conservancies in eThekwini for planting during Arbor Week in September.

Action: A list of trees and plants required for the Cowies Hill Conservancy will be prepared shortly.

# 5.3 eThekwini Municipality \_ Public Employment Programme (PEP)

A considerable amount of time and effort was spent working in conjunction with The Westville Conservancy preparing our business plan and budget. The PEP was to have commenced in January and we were advised that R500million had been transferred by National Treasury to the city for the project.

It has been a huge disappointment that the eThekwini Municipality has cancelled the PEP as the funding model was recently declared to be in violation of the municipality's financial management policy!

# 5.4 Duzi Umgeni Conservation Trust (DUCT)

We were previously advised that the Palmiet Restoration project was to continue with the eradication of IAPs along the Palmiet River (from the Stafford Rd bridge up to Tunbridge and Birdhurst Rd) earlier this year. Unfortunately, there has been no sign of progress and I suspect that the DUCT has still not found a suitable Project Manager to fill the vacancy.

# 5.5 Community Participation

Community participation has been positive with a number of messages being posted on the CHE Wapp platform. It is hoped that comments and requests from members will bring greater awareness of the work done upgrading our community area.

#### 5.6 Garden Services

No progress has been made with compiling a list of Garden Service contractors who operate within CHE with the view to establishing a weed eradication protocol.

#### 6 BUDGETING AND CHE ZONES & WORK SITES

#### 6.1 Reimbursement Costs

It is not desirable for CHE to enter into employment contracts for labour to attend to the Greening & Aesthetics projects. The current arrangement is that CHE reimburses for all costs incurred for Greening & Aesthetics. All work is recorded photographically on a daily basis as proof that work has been undertaken.

Further discussion is needed to ensure that there is no conflict of interest for board members, or family of board members, to be reimbursed for their time.

The alternative is that a full Scope of Work be formalised and that a tender be advertised for service providers to offer quotations to manage the Greening & Aesthetics aspect of CHE.

# 6.2 CHE Zones & Work Sites

The following spreadsheet indicates planned activities such as IAP eradication, maintenance, planting etc across proposed "Zones". The idea is to task the labour to attend to "Work Sites" within each of the 8 CHE Zones to show a strong presence and to have maximum impact rather than spreading their efforts thinly across the whole CHE area.

It is estimated that 2 labourers will require approximately 55 work days to attend to the Work Sites listed below. Please note that work effort i.e. "days" is estimated by each Zone (colour coded) rather than each specific Work Site. Excluded from this spreadsheet is the weekly litter collection activity which will also be structured around Zones.

Additional Work Sites may be identified and they will be included into the programme in future.

CHE Zones	Focus Area	Work Sites	Days	55
Zone1	Beautification Sites	Ernest Whitcutt Bridge	Days	5
Zone1	Secondary Gates	Gate 12 _ Buckingham Place	Days	1
Zone1	Secondary Gates	Gate 13 _ Ernest Whitcutt Road	Days	1
Zone1	Secondary Gates	Gate 19 _ Catherine Avenue	Days	1
Zone1	Secondary Gates	Gate 20 _ Raleigh Road	Days	1
Zone1	Primary Gates	Gate 4 _ Josiah Gumede Road (Sasol Garage)	Days	1
Zone1	Beautification Sites	Catherine Avenue Triangle	Days	5
Zone2	Conservancy Parks	Comrades Corner Conservancy Area	Days	1
Zone2	Primary Gates	Gate 5 _ Josiah Gumede Road (West)	Days	1
Zone2	Primary Gates	Gate 6 _ Woodside Avenue	Days	1
Zone2	Secondary Gates	Gate 9 _ Bedford Road	Days	1
Zone2	Secondary Gates	Gate 10 _ Rockhaven Road	Days	1
Zone3	Conservancy Parks	Avon Place Conservancy Park	Days	1
Zone3	Secondary Gates	Gate 14 _ Buckingham Place	Days	1
Zone3	Secondary Gates	Gate 11 _ Belvedale Road	Days	1
Zone3	Secondary Gates	Gate 15 _ Phyliss Argo Road	Days	1
Zone3	Secondary Gates	Gate 16 _ Balmoral Drive	Days	1
Zone3	Secondary Gates	Gate 17 _ Cecil Fisher Road	Days	1
Zone3	Beautification Sites	Balmoral Drive Traffic Island _ Planter Box	Days	4
Zone4	Conservancy Parks	Turnbridge Avenue Conservancy Park	Days	1
Zone4	Conservancy Parks	Palmiet River & Catchment Conservancy Area	Days	1
Zone4	Secondary Gates	Gate 18 _ Tunbridge Avenue	Days	1
Zone4	Primary Gates	Gate 7 _ Stafford Road	Days	1
Zone4	Beautification Sites	Palmiet River Park (Stafford Rd Bridge)	Days	1
Zone5	Beautification Sites	Sasol Offramp _ M13 Exit 13 _East	Days	2
Zone5	Beautification Sites	Josiah Gumede _ Erythrina Avenue	Days	1
Zone5	Beautification Sites	M13 Onramp_ Josiah Gumede Rd (Sasol)	Days	2
Zone6	Beautification Sites	Cowies Hill / Dawncliff Offramp _ M13 Exit 13 _West	Days	1
Zone6	Barrier Planting	Paradise Vally Fly-over	Days	1
Zone6	Barrier Planting	M13 Onramp_ J.Gumede Rd, Tividale & Cheshire Ave	Days	3
Zone7	Conservancy Parks	MacDonald Rd Wetland Conservancy Area	Days	1
Zone7	Primary Gates	Gate 2 _ MacDonald Road	Days	1
Zone7	Primary Gates	Gate 3 _ Dudley Road	Days	1
Zone7	Beautification Sites	Morewood Cres Aloe Garden	Days	1
Zone7	Beautification Sites	Dudley Road Park	Days	1
Zone8	Primary Gates	Gate 8 _ Acacia Avenue	Days	1
Zone8	Secondary Gates	Gate 21_ Cedar Road	Days	1
Zone8	Barrier Planting	Norfolk Terrace Cul-de Sac Carrisa Hedge	Days	1
Zone8	Barrier Planting	Norfolk Embankment	Days	2