



Hout and About

MARCH 2012

The publication of the Residents' Association of Hout Bay
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The majestic beauty of Hout Bay from the beleaguered Chappies. Photo courtesy of Klaus Minges. The bright red plant growing on the mountainside of Chapman's Peak is quite special: Erica Nevillei is endemic to the Peninsula, growing only on the rocky cliffs near Noordhoek, Chapman's Peak and the Constantiaberg

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Len's Lines

A message from the Chairman of the Residents' Association of Hout Bay

CHAPPIES – continues to be in the news

Enter into the spotlight: Lewis Pugh, environmental campaigner and endurance swimmer. Lewis lives in Noordhoek but has been spending a lot of his valuable time assisting Bronwen Lankers-Byrne, the intrepid and "never say die" or "give up" activist and Social Justice campaigner. Both Bronwen and Lewis are concerned about Chappies and the needless waste of money – R54 million - to build a Toll Plaza and Office Block for Entilini/Murray and Roberts on Chapman's Peak Drive. Both say that this money could be better spent on schools, clinics and houses for the poor in Hout Bay. A Consultant for the City of Cape Town, Simon Nicks, said over 6 years ago that Imizamo Yethu needed at least 6 schools and Hangberg Sentinel School is vastly over-crowded - 60 pupils in a class.

Lewis has reported the matter to UNESCO. Chappies lies inside a World Heritage site - namely the Cape Floral Kingdom. This is an area of unparalleled natural beauty and biodiversity. The Cape Floristic Region, the smallest of the six recognised floral kingdoms of the world, is an area of extraordinarily high diversity and endemism, and is home to more than 9 000 vascular plant species, of which 69 percent are endemic. The Cape Floristic Region has both economic and intrinsic biological value as a biodiversity hotspot. It is important that it is preserved for the community, the country and the world for future generations. This is why visitors and tourists come to this site – they want to see the natural beauty from the mountains to the sea. They do **not** come to see concrete structures or the half tunnel which resembles an Egyptian tomb. But, beauty is ultimately in the eye of the beholder and some people (without a soul) will see beauty in the concrete structure of a Toll Plaza with a concrete canopy straddled overhead and a double storey Office Block for the Entilini/Murray & Roberts staff on Chapman's Peak Drive.

The Provincial Government of the Western Cape and their partner Entilini/Murray & Roberts are not budging on their projected course in the Chappies Toll Plaza and Office Block venture. This is why the Residents' Association of Hout Bay has no alternative but to take the matter to the High Court, for it is only by the High Court issuing an Interdict that will bring construction to a halt, pending review proceedings and a declaratory order by the court as to what can or cannot be built on this mountainside. Our Association wishes to thank the public for its tremendous support both in protesting and financial contributions to our court action. Our Association is joined in this court action by the Greater Cape Town Civic Alliance (which is an alliance of over 140 Civic Organisations).

Perhaps the cartoon from Zapiro which appeared in the Sunday Times says it all. Chapman's Peak is not Hollywood but Entiliniwood (subsidiary of Murray & Roberts). Chapman's Peak, Hout Bay, is not Las Vegas where one could expect a concrete monolith or a Toll Plaza and Head Office Block. However, these sort of buildings would certainly not be put up at any other World Heritage site, such as the Victoria Falls, Yosemite National Park or the Grand Canyon in the USA – as Lewis Pugh has pointed out to the press.

This is a further appeal to you now to also make a financial contribution to a fund established specifically for the purpose of stopping construction of the proposed inappropriate luxury office block and so saving Chappies for us and future generations.

The fund will be administered by Environmental specialist attorneys Cullinan and Associates and contributions should be paid into the following account:

Standard Bank

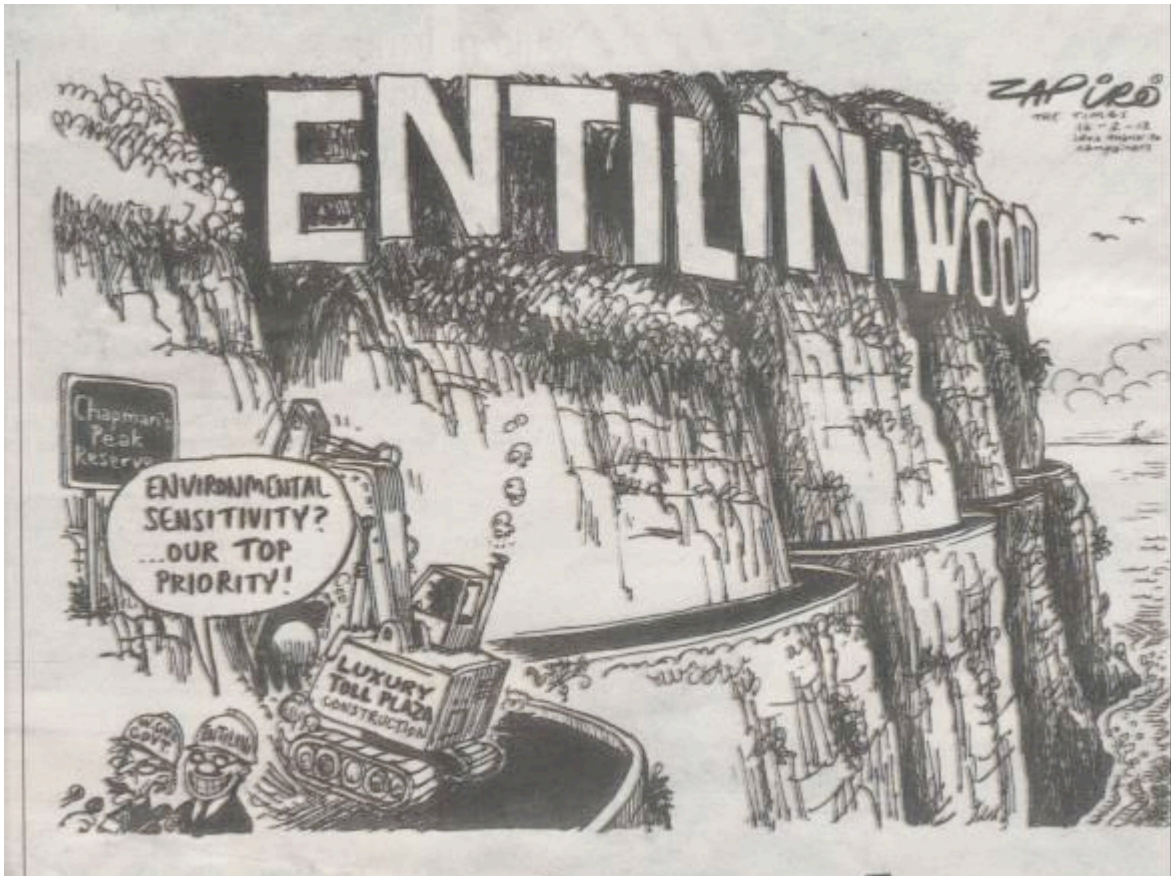
Account name: Cullinan & Associates Inc. Trust Account

Account no: 070223149

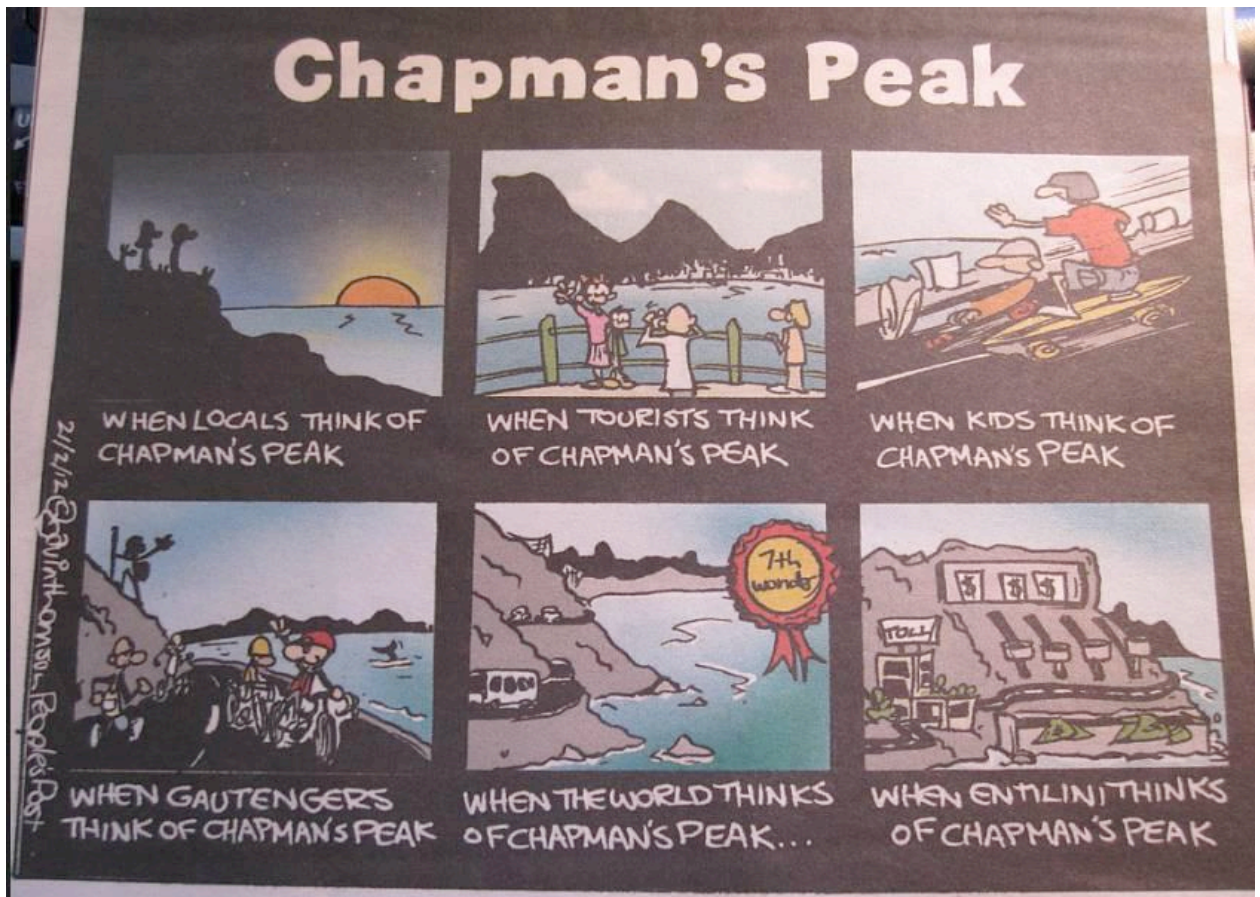
Branch code: 020009

Reference: Chapman's Peak (Very important to insert this)

Please send proof of payment with your name and contact details to: at rahb@houtbay.org.za or at Fax 021 790 3839



Cartoon by Zapiro in the Sunday Times 12 February 2012



Cartoon in the "Peoples' Post" Newspaper 21 February 2012



BACK TO NATURE: A backhoe removes rubble and fill at the start of major wetland rehabilitation in the Disa River floodplain at Hout Bay after legal action by the authorities against a development company. PICTURE: THOMAS HOLZER

Developer starts rehabilitation of filled wetland

JOHN YELD
Environment & Science Writer

THE DEVELOPMENT company that controversially filled in Disa River wetlands adjoining its Hout Bay Beach Club dune development has started rehabilitating the site.

The extensive rehabilitation work, which must be completed by the end of next month, comes after sustained pressure and objections from the Hout Bay community – including a petition from Kronendal Primary School – and after legal action by the City of Cape Town and the regional office of the Water Affairs Department.

The developer, Really Useful Investments 219 (Pty) Ltd, filled in a substantial part of the wetlands' floodplain adjoining the Disa River for further development, but insisted that the work was done legally in terms of a construction environmental management plan that had been approved by the provincial environmental authorities last February.

It ignored an order from the city to stop work in terms of the stormwater management by-law. The city then issued a directive under the National Environmental Management Act, and Water Affairs served a directive under the National

Water Act.

Today, the city said in a statement that both it and Water Affairs had had "significant concerns" about the impact of the infilling on the riverine and wetland environment, the quality of the water, and the beach areas next to the Beach Club.

The city's directive required the developer to stop infilling immediately, to survey the natural flood lines and appoint a freshwater ecologist to assess the impact of infilling and make detailed recommendations for rehabilitation.

This process had taken some time to conclude because the

developer had needed to obtain information from wetland and hydrological specialists.

The city said it had received confirmation from the developer that preparation work for the rehabilitation of the wetlands would start yesterday.

Rashid Khan, chief director of the regional Water Affairs office, said: "This is another good example of cooperative governance between the city and the department to protect our natural resources."

The spokesman for the developer, Somerset West attorney Johan du Plessis, was not available for comment.

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Here's the good news. Greg Oelofse – Head of Environment, Policy & Strategy for the City of Cape Town, reports as follows:

- 1) Hout Bay Wetland - the City has successfully, through the correct legal processes, ensured that the responsible parties rehabilitate the wetland at their cost and to the City's satisfaction. This work is currently in progress and the City is monitoring progress on a daily basis. The wetland should be restored and functioning by winter.
- 2) Sand managed in Hout Bay is an ongoing issue. A number of actions are planned or underway, these include:
 - a) A trial removal and transport of excess sand to the top of the neck to feed Sandy Bay (the original sand transport corridor).
 - b) A Terms of Reference is currently being advertised for the appointment of a specialist to develop a single sand and dune management plan for the Hout Bay beach and surrounding areas. (I am sure we would be happy to make the plan that evolves from this work public and available to I&AP's)
- 3) With regards to the buildings (the Metro police office and toilets), the City recognises that these buildings were poorly considered and built in areas that cannot sustain hard infrastructure due to sand build up. The buildings will be demolished and removed and processes are underway to secure budget funding for that purpose.

So, after many years, a High Court action against the developer by the Environmental Conservation Group and an ECG initiative costing nearly R100 000, to present a reluctant City with the legal reasons why it should take action in terms of its own by-laws against the developer, the City has at last issued a directive to Really Useful Investments owned by Donald Hemphill, to remove the illegal infill on this wetland. If it is not all removed by the end of March the City will step in and finish the infill removal at the developer's expense.

We applaud the City's actions as well as those taken by Thando Stimela of the State's Department of Environment & Water Affairs who served a similar directive on the developer, thus emphasising the crucial importance of keeping our rivers and estuaries free from illegal infilling.

Natural systems at play. Hout Bay is part of a wind driven system.



Hout Bay beach - photo from the 1920's provided by Greg Oelofse

Seen in the context of the natural systems at play. Hout Bay is part of a wind driven system. I attach a photo from the 1920's that shows the original dune fields. Build up of sand on the beach and driven by the south east wind are natural processes that will continue year in and year out. It is worth reminding people that these are powerful natural processes and are not new. When we build infrastructure in the path of such systems we land up with the issues that we now sit with.

The City is now recognising that these dynamic coastal systems require specialist management as well as commensurate investment of resources to ensure that our coastline remains the social, economic and environmental asset that it is. The City's Economic, Environmental and Spatial Planning Portfolio Committee (EESPCO) approved a report on the 8th February recommitting the City to formalising a Coastal Bylaw as well as the development of a Coastal Hazard Policy and a Coastal Management Programme for the City. These regulations will once implemented will be central to ensuring that our coastline is protected and managed to the standard that we expect.

Important Notice & Reminder

**THE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION
OF HOUT BAY**

**will be holding its
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

VENUE: Hout Bay Library Hall, HOUT BAY

DATE: Wednesday 14th MARCH 2012

TIME: 19:00

GUEST SPEAKER

Greg Moseley is a geologist by profession and a climber by vocation - and passionate about ensuring the conservation of mountain land anywhere.

He has been working as a geologist since 1965 and has lived on four continents and worked on six. More importantly he has climbed on five of them!

Having lived in cities with mountain parks within their boundaries - Rio, Caracas, Vancouver - as well as Cape Town - Greg has some knowledge of the problems and opportunities that they present to the people of those cities, tourists and the management. He is well suited to be on the Table Mountain National Park Forum.

As Chair of the Cape Town Section of the Mountain Club of SA and Vice Chair of the TMNP Forum he has endeavoured to safeguard the rights and privileges that go with the "mountain in the sea".

Topic: Preservation of our Natural Heritage: the Mountains in the Western Cape and especially Table Mountain and the defiling of this mountain pass, along Chapman's Peak Drive, against major public outburst of rage and protest

If you are not a member, join the Association today.
Application forms available on request from our Secretary or from the Chairman,
Len Swimmer lens@telkomsa.net

For more information, e-mail rahb@houtbay.org.za or see website, www.houtbay.org.za
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Voice from the grave

EVERYONE seems to have an opinion about the building of the Chapman's Peak toll plaza, even former prime minister and mountain climber General Jan Smuts.

This is what he had to say at the unveiling of the Mountain Club War Memorial in 1923: "We, as a nation, valuing our unique heritage, should not allow (Table Mountain) to be spoiled and despoiled, and should look upon it as among its most sacred possessions, part not only of the soil, but of the soul of South Africa.

"For centuries to come, while civilisation lasts on this subcontinent, this national monument should be maintained in all its natural beauty and unique setting. It should be symbolic of our civilisation itself, and it should be our proud tradition to defend it to the limit against all forces of man or nature who disfigure it."

Letters/e-mails from our Members & Associates

1. **Letter from Roger Summer**

Dear Len

Thank you for your message. I at last received a message from Helen Zille, using Donae Strydom's computer, but this was regarding seat belts. I could not reply directly to Zille so my reply was to Donae Strydom and I requested her to forward my message to Helen Zille. Here is a paragraph concerning Chapman's Peak and an extract from a message to Carlisle.

Regards

Roger

On the subject of Chapman's Peak I sincerely hope that The Premier will be able to ensure that the proposed Offices are not built. This wonderful site should be left alone in perpetuity and the very idea of any building, let alone a Head Office for Murray & Roberts, is to my mind, and thousands of others, preposterous. Surely it would be cheaper and less damaging politically to cancel any contract with Murray & Roberts in respect to the Offices?

It may amuse you and The Premier to read a copy of my message to Robin Carlisle sent on the 6 February –

'Dear Robin

Bearing in mind the amount of opposition to the proposed Office Block could you not persuade Murray & Roberts to build elsewhere? Just imagine how Bronwen Lankers - Byrne must be feeling at this moment whilst starving herself to death!! If she does die perhaps her remains could be kept in a glass case and on show at the new office building. Just in case you missed today's Cape Times the following is a letter of mine which was published and in response to the spin Murray & Roberts published last Friday. Since when did firms like Murray & Roberts care about the environment. I worked with these kind of people in London for 30 years. The only word they understand is profit. Can't we work together on this one?

Kind regards

Roger'

2. E-mail Noelene Republic of Georgia (South Russia)

Hi Len,

I appreciate the email, thank you. I have read the attached doc, so absolutely crazy what they want to do, it makes me angry.

I will be keeping up to date on the news from Hout Bay.

I look forward to the next publication of Hout and About.

Kind Regards, Nolene

3. E-mail Helen Duigan, Johannesburg

Hi Len,

Re: Radio702 interview, Carlisle & yourself: You held your own against him, but I know how difficult it is in a radio interview like that, when there is so little time to put your points across.

I heard Terry?? this morning on Chris Gibbons's show - he made some excellent points. And as Chris said - this is not going to lie down easily - damn well it won't and shouldn't! Just wish I had the R250 000 you need. There is something iniquitous about officials who can rely on government money for court cases, while ordinary citizens who try to protect the environment must find the resources.

Helen

To know what's going on in Hout Bay, why not join the Residents' Association? Join today – here's how:-

Contact us via email on rahb@houtbay.org.za and a membership form will be promptly sent to you.
