

KENTON/ BUSHMANS CHAMBER OF BUSINESS & TOURISM.

PRESIDENTS REPORT

FOR THE PERIOD 1ST JULY 2014 to 30TH June 2015

Introduction

The past year has yet again seen our economy weakening from many points of view. Some of it due to global issues but mainly driven by internal issues within our country that make investors uncomfortable. The political playing field is causing many issues country wide as participants try and gain ground on one another.

To this end our shortage of housing in particular has been the main political ball being kicked about as part of undelivered service to our community in Ekhuphumleni.

Notwithstanding that we have yet again seen strong growth within our Building activity In Kenton and Bushman's as well as property changing hands. Building projects for new homes on vacant land and or homes bought and demolished for re-build on existing land comes to +- R100,000,000. In the mind of most everybody that has been in Kenton/ Bushman's for a long time say this is the best it has been for quite some time. A further +- R60,000,000 plus is in the planning phase.

Property sold during the period +- R95,000,000 across 91 properties in our area.

A project to build 564 low cost homes in Ekhuphumleni will commence shortly.

December/January was an excellent season for everyone here once again – some said better than ever before.

All of this has assisted in masking the true effect of the poor economy for Businesses in Kenton and Bushman's during the period reported on.

Our objective remains to support initiatives of other organisations in the Chambers domain in order to maximise business opportunities for all our members.

Important achievements during the last year include:

- Our Kenton/ Bushman's website was upgraded/ enhanced to accommodate mobile devices. The look and feel of the site was also reworked to be more modern.
- The negative impact of media exposure to the housing and service delivery protest held recently in Kenton sparked an idea with two Chamber members. They thought it good to combat the negative with a positive. From this idea was born the "Winter Campaign" with a reach of +- 370,000

- OTHER MEDIA :
We have had very good exposure during the year as follows;
Article in the Weekend Post (Thanks to Neville Loader), UK Guardian Newspaper “10 best beaches in the world” and featured Shelly Bay. Wild side Magazine also featured it as one of the 10 best in S.A. Die Burger featured the Kenton/Bushman’s area, My Family mag. as well, Sawubona inflight magazine, TV 2 filmed here for Pasella programme, Wheels magazine featured Boknes and Beachcomber Horse Trails was one of 10 best in S.A to name some.
- Beautification / Regeneration project – started in 2013/14 has now with Chamber membership participation in the Ward 4 committee been included as a project pending for commencement in Ward 4 and is included in the Infrastructure Development Plan “IDP”. This then means that as funds become available the beautification of the CBD will commence as presented some 15 months ago.
This project will see the face of our town change for the better of Tourism and Business when it gets underway.
- The Chamber financial position has been addressed by revising staffing structure going forward. Increase in available funds for projects will be seen in coming year.

Important issues on the table for Kenton and Bushman’s in 2015/2016 are:

- Service delivery impacting all communities in Kenton and Bushman’s. Housing, refuse etc.
- Our roads are in a sad state of disrepair and are raised at every possible forum by the Chamber.
- Environmental issues at the mouth of the Bushman’s River regarding silting of the mouth and the now rapidly encroaching dune at the mouth.
- Problems over Xmas and New Year with crowds on the beach etc. which will be addressed this year. There have been meetings already with stakeholders, Municipality, Traffic and SAPS. The SAPS have committed to a zero tolerance position for the coming season.
- The negative impact on small business in town as well as the impact on the estuary and Traffic due to the proposed development of a 24 hour truck stop at the entrance to Kenton on Sea as well as Small shopping centre and Hotel/Lodge for overnight stops.

On the Horizon

- A Boutique hotel next to the House Planner.
- FDT Architects headquarters as well as accommodation units next to Hi Tech.
- A retirement Village consisting of +- 56 units to be built across the way from the school.

The Tourism and Accommodation / Chamber office

- ACCOMMODATION AND THE XMAS SEASON: We had an excellent Xmas Season and again over Easter and the many public holidays which turned into long weekends. More Grahamstown Festival visitors than in the past stayed here this year. The same seasonal pattern for visitors was evident this year.
- The accommodation establishments have all had an excellent year and many with bookings even in the 'quiet times' i.e. from May – August. They are all mostly booked up already for December/January with only the first part of December being a slow start which is normal until the last moment. People still want to come for the week over Xmas and New Year. This has been so for many years but the accommodation people and letting agents virtually all want a 2 week let only which causes problems for us in finding place for international travellers at the end of the year that don't realise this is our high season.
- Visitors came from all over the world literally – Alaska – to Japan – South and North America but the majority from UK and Germany and then the Benelux countries. The spread of countries has increased as have the enquiries that we receive and stats from our website on who is visiting it and from which countries. Many more from Africa, and middle and Far East. The new visa regulations have had a major impact on tourist coming to SA with many cancelling trips and others changing their minds.
- Facebook and Twitter continues to grow and is proving popular with a wide variety of people – local and from around the world.
- Our new Kenton/Bushman's, Boknes and Cannon Rocks brochure/map was available to the public in December, as was the Sunshine Coast Adventure and Leisure Map. The Telephone Guide which lists all members was ready for distribution in December as usual.

Sunshine Coast Tourism

Our relationship with the main tourism body Sunshine Coast tourism remains in good health as we work closely together on various initiatives that promote travel and tourism in our area. Chamber members Eugene de Witt and Michael Wilmot represent Kenton and Bushman's.

Sandy Birch, Tourism Manager's, presentation will be posted on our website for detailed reading.

The Executive Committee

I want to thank the Chamber Executive committee members for the effort and commitment to a cause which other than our three office bearers receive no remuneration for their efforts.

Our three office staff, consisting of Erica, Jeremy and Iris have again done a great job in upholding everything the office stands for and personally I want to thank them both for their contribution during my term.

A special word of thanks must be noted for Mike Kirby, who has given of himself to the Chamber for many years and will now finally take it easy as he will no longer be available to fill the position of Treasurer. Mike has been more than a pillar of strength and calming agent when the seas are rough during his tenure as President and Treasurer.

Membership

- Gains – more than 10% of membership BUT
- Losses of almost same amount – owner relocations, closures, mergers, affordability, perceived value, suspensions
- Use of website by members:
 - Accommodation establishments & game reserves – excellent use
 - Business sector – Business Directory not being effectively utilized

Business

Business networking evenings were held.

Finance

Mike Kirby will present the financial status of the Chamber according to the agenda.

Certificates of Appreciation were presented by me to the following:

- **Mike Kirby** Longstanding service and dedication
- **Chester Wilmot** for his quest in fighting the “Creeping Dune” war and passion for the estuary.
- **Shona Bell** For guidance and implementation of the “ Winter Campaign”
- **Kenton Night Watch** for their initiative and care for the community in patrolling our streets voluntarily and at their cost.
- **Erica McNulty** for her longstanding dedication and support in Tourism and the Chamber office in general

Eugene de Witt

President

25th September 2015