

PROPOSED N21 (R300) CAPE TOWN RING ROAD

FOCUS GROUP MEETING: BOTANICAL/CONSERVATION ORGANISATIONS

DATE: Friday, 5 March 2004
TIME: 10h00 – 11h00
VENUE: SANRAL Offices, Parc du Cap, Bellville
FACILITATOR: Desiree du Preez

1. ATTENDANCE

| PRESENT | ORGANISATION |
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| N Job | Botanical Society: Cape Conservation Unit |
| S Winter | Botanical Society: Cape Conservation Unit Project Manager |
| N Daly | SANRAL |
| E Baard | Western Cape Nature Conservation: Scientific Services |
| D du Preez | Chand Ecosense JV |
| H Davids | Chand Ecosense JV |

2. INTRODUCTION

D du Preez thanked those present for attending the meeting. She provided a brief background to the project and stated that the reasons for having this meeting are to try to resolve remaining high significance botanical impacts and to obtain guidance on the use of CAPE information in the EIR.

The proposed route, the City of Cape Town's (CCT) approved transport plan (to indicate planned routes and existing road reserves) and detailed alignments at high significance sites were presented. An explanation of the botanical significance of each of the sites was presented. The sites are:

- Westlake Wetland
- North of Zandvlei Nature Reserve
- Loss of connectivity between Rondevlei and Capricorn
- North of Strandfontein Residential Area
- Wellington Road Interchange Area

3. DISCUSSION

| I&AP | COMMENT/ QUESTION | PROJECT TEAM | COMMENT/ QUESTION | ACTION |
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| E Baard | Does the proposed route impact on any of the core conservation sites on the Cape Flats? | D du Preez | No, none of these sites are affected. | |
| S Winter | Rondevlei and Capricorn are two core sites. These are not directly impacted on, but connectivity between them is severed. This impact cannot be written | N Daly | The area between the two sites is disturbed – there is the landfill site that will still be operational for a number of years. | |

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| | <p>off. The City has planned their biodiversity network by joining core sites remnant vegetation nodes and corridors. The core sites cannot function without the connectivity.</p> | | | |
| E Baard | <p>Within the urban context it is not only pristine vegetation that is important. One of the biggest challenges is to manage connectivity between pristine sites. Degraded sites are therefore also important in this context.</p> | D du Preez | <p>What can be done to have connectivity and the road?</p> | |
| N Job | <p>What about a large bridge structure to cross the area?</p> | N Daly | <p>This is very expensive.</p> | |
| E Baard | <p>One has to accept that you will win some and loose some. One has to decide what can be lost in this case, and what is important. The question is also how to best place the footprint on the ground.</p> | | | |
| S Winter | <p>The proposed road seems to compromise biodiversity at such a (high) level. How does one reconcile that? I was unaware that the northern (Bloubergstrand East-West Arterial) and southern (Cape Flats Freeway Extension) were already approved. This discussion cannot be completed without the City's involvement. It is their biodiversity network. The biodiversity network will only be window dressing if it is not</p> | N Daly | <p>We have regular meetings with the City, including the environmental section.</p> | |

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| | considered in decision making. It must be given a fair chance. You will need to speak to the City. | | | |
| S Winter | What is their feeling about the separation of the two core sites? | D du Preez | We have comments on the proposed False Bay Ecology Park, but not any on specific issues like that. | |
| N Daly | There appear to be different views within the City's departments. How can one get a best fit with the proposal? In some areas the (dedicated) road reserve is much wider than what is needed for the road, like at Zandvlei. | | | |
| N Job | What about accommodating water movement in that area? Is their sufficient bridging planned? | N Daly | At Lakeside the surface flow is already affected by housing. Bridges are planned across the rivers/canals and large culverts will accommodate further surface flows. | |
| D du Preez | The City has required that rivers be crossed with bridges wide enough to accommodate the biological reserve. | | | |
| D du Preez | Moving on to the Strandfontein area. This area has Cape Flats Fynbos/Thicket Mosaic with no specific rare species. It is only highly significant due to CAPE's irreplaceability rating. There is also a disturbed strip behind the houses that will be incorporated in the road plans, but it would have an impact on some fynbos. | E Baard | The City must be included in discussions about this area, to decide what is acceptable. Development or mining could encroach on this area in the near future anyway. The Botanical Society is used to these kinds of debates. | |
| S Winter | Is there a clear need for this road from a traffic viewpoint? | N Daly | The route is needed as an alternative for people in the south to access other | |

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| | | | areas, e.g. the airport without having to move towards the city centre. Traffic studies indicate that this road will take a substantial amount of traffic from the existing network. | |
| S Winter | What about the north? | N Daly | That is the direction of growth of the city. | |
| | | D du Preez | The Bloubergstrand East-West Arterial road has been planned by the City and is required for further development in the Blaauwberg area. | |
| D du Preez | What about the most important site along the route, at Wellington Road in Durbanville. | | | |
| S Winter | Is there a river in this area? | D du Preez | Yes, the Mosselbank River flows towards the east of the site. | |
| S Winter | From where does it originate? | N Daly | The area around it is developed, with only a few stormwater drains into the road reserve. | |
| | | D du Preez | The specialist description reads "the headwaters of the southern arm of the tributary of the Mosselbank River rises in the area of the road reserve". | |
| S Winter | Are there any springs in the road reserve? | D du Preez | We don't know of any springs. | |
| S Winter | Did your specialist recommend search and rescue in the area? | D du Preez | He recommended large-scale transplant of plant material into a similar, but disturbed area that should be managed to ensure success of transplanting and conservation of the vegetation. The problem is that SANRAL does not have the legal mandate to buy land for other purposes than road reserve. | |
| S Winter | Can you mandate the City to purchase land | N Daly | At the moment, there is no site identified. This project, | |

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| | with money provided by SANRAL? The City could enter into a contract with Western Cape Nature Conservation to manage the site. | | if it goes ahead, will go onto public tender. We will have to state exactly what must be done. The footprint of the road is small within the larger road reserve. Can it not be sufficient if the remainder of the road reserve is conserved and carefully managed? | |
| E Baard | That will not mean anything for biodiversity conservation in the long term due to the loss of connectivity between pieces of road reserve and with other areas. Plants and animals need to stay in contact with other areas to keep processes alive. You would also certainly affect the local drainage patterns of surface and subsurface water. Looking at it objectively, there is no option here. | | | |
| N Daly | What about creating wetland areas within the interchange, like at Swartklip interchange. | N Job | The plants here are adapted to a particular water regime that we do not know enough of to recreate. | |
| N Daly | If this area was left, development around it could affect it so much that in 10 years time there is nothing there. | | | |
| E Baard | Could the entire area not be crossed by a bridge structure to maintain the wetland and its hydrology and pants? Or can the configuration of the ramps be changed? | N Daly | The cost of a bridge structure is huge. The configuration cannot really change. | |
| S Winter | Are there no alternative routes? | N Daly | No, there are no expressways in the vicinity that can be used for upgrade. | |
| S Winter | Can the possibility of | | | |

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| | <p>purchasing another area not be further investigated before being written off? Has an investigation into a suitable site been commissioned? Unless this has been done, the alternative cannot be written off. We know of many areas in the Tygerberg that are privately owned and desperately need some form of conservation. There is a possibility of negotiating with a farmer. Botanical Society has a Stewardship programme that has been set up to engage with landowners to secure pieces on their properties. We have the tools and legal processes in place, as well as pro-forma agreements. We can facilitate such a process. All you need to do is find a willing landowner and discuss the matter with the City. They could be the title holder. Renosterveld lacks reserve conservation status – that is what makes it so threatened. This can be used as positive mitigation for the project and can be precedent setting</p> | | | |
| E Baard | <p>This model is actively applied in the United States. I support it to at least be investigated. There must be some similar habitats somewhere that can be</p> | N Daly | <p>Certain laws govern us. I can therefore not say that it can be pursued.</p> | |

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| | conserved. | | | |
| N Daly | It is too vague to state that there could be similar sites. | S Winter | You should give your botanist the mandate to investigate it properly. The law does require mitigation. | |
| N Daly | If we talk long-term, what guarantees are there that such an area will be maintained? | S Winter | The area can have legal conservation status. Furthermore, in the contract criteria about management are clearly stated. Western Cape Nature Conservation are a signing party and they monitor these areas. | |
| N Daly | What cost factor is involved for management? Do you have any figures? It should be someone else's responsibility to manage such an area, not SANRAL's. | S Winter | Management cost depends on the site. Did your specialist not indicate a figure? | |
| D du Preez | Yes, there is a figure included in the specialist study. | S Winter | It is agreed that SANRAL should not be the management authority; it should be the responsibility of a conservation agency. We can provide information on contract nature reserves. Our programme is aimed at securing the last bits of renosterveld. We have substantial investment from the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund to enable us to find solutions. In terms of the long term view, road reserves should be assessed botanically for proactive conservation. | |
| N Daly | These reserves have been there for a long time. Should they be declared for conservation, roads would have to be built somewhere else. | S Winter | This will become more of an issue when the new Biodiversity Bill is enacted. The City's biodiversity strategy will become more of a political issue. The City is actually now classifying all their | |

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| | | | properties according to their conservation status. That process has started, which means that road reserve properties could also have a conservation class allocated in near future. | |
| NDaly | How much renosterveld actually remains? | E Baard | On this side of the Cape Fold Mountains less than 3% of the original remains – approximately 10 000 – 15 000 ha in total, but these figures need to be confirmed. | |
| | | S Winter | Accurate information is available regarding the original extent and what remains. | |
| N Daly | 4 ha in 30 ha would be highly significant, but you say that any area is highly significant. | S Winter | This is because there is already less than 3% of renosterveld left on an area that includes the Overberg and the Swartland. | |
| | | E Baard | In the Overberg there are about 15 000 little remnants of varying size. The main concern is actually the loss of connectivity. If you go to some of the smaller sites, you can see that some plants, animals and insects that should have been there are missing. This is due to the loss of interconnectivity; animals cannot move around. Hence our comment on cutting up the renosterveld at the Wellington Road Interchange. In 4 pieces, it will look the same but in the long term it will not be the same. | |
| N Daly | In 5 – 10 years time development will be all around – would that not have the same effect? | N Job | Look at what the City has mapped out. If the City has a strategy to preserve some of the corridors, the project has increased | |

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| | | | significance. Then it is not only a 3 ha site in isolation. 3 ha is not a critical site. | |
| | | E Baard | I am convinced that, would the road not go ahead, that there would be an arrangement with the landowner of the site for linking it up with the farmlands via Mosselbank River. | |
| | | S Winter | A study was done in 1998 by the Botanical Society to identify the conservation worthy vegetation on the Cape Flats. | |
| N Daly | To come back to the mitigation in kind. What about the reclamation of another area that has been degraded that can be passed on to somebody. | S. Winter | We would like to mention 2 examples of renosterveld in the Tygerberg area. They are both privately owned. One is on De Grendel. Part of the property (some on degraded old lands) has been mined and part developed, but there is still a significant piece of renosterveld. We are planning to approach the owner to have that conserved. Another example is Altydgedacht. | |
| N Daly | The road reserve is there. You can't put it next door because there are houses. | N Job | You will have to look at it carefully. There have been priorities set and there are areas where you "can't touch". | |
| N Daly | What does that mean? Can nothing be touched forever? | N Job | I do not know what it means legally. There are areas of higher and lower significance. | |
| | | E Baard | So there are different grades of "don't touch". | |
| | | N Job | Yes, one also has to look at social needs, economic viability etc. The areas indicated on the map indicate areas identified | |

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| | | | purely from an ideal conservation perspective, as the key area for conservation. It is a guide indicating conservation priorities (red areas). The Cape has a lot more red areas than other places in the country and pressures are different. | |
| N Daly | Thus, in conclusion, Wellington road is the critical issue of the project. | N. Job | Agreed. | |

4. CONCLUSION

After ascertaining that there were no more questions or comments, D Du Preez closed the meeting at 12h00.