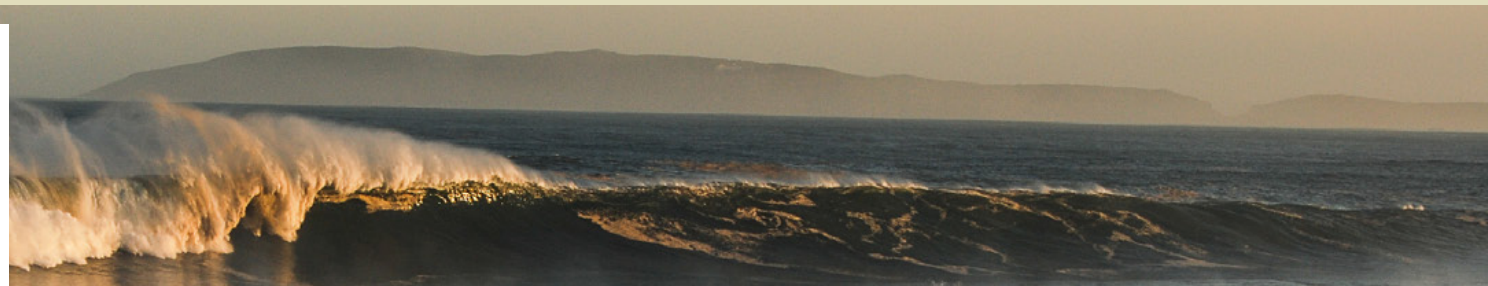




PLETTENBERG BAY  
COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT FORUM



## ANNUAL FEEDBACK - DECEMBER 2013

### WHAT IS THE FORUM?

The Plettenberg Bay Community Environment Forum is a non-political, non-profit organisation made up of a group of conservation agencies, environmental NGOs and concerned individuals that have been involved in the protection of the environment and the promotion of sustainable development in the Bitou area for the past 16 years.

### WHY WAS THE FORUM ESTABLISHED?

The Bitou area's beauty and appeal come from its magnificent setting and natural splendour. These assets, on which our tourism economy is founded, are at times threatened by over-exploitation and inappropriate development, made worse by the impacts of climate change. The need to balance expansion, resource use and development with the protection and wise use of the environment is therefore more critical than ever.

Our guiding principle has been to achieve sustainable development of our unique and beautiful surroundings by encouraging observation of the law, best practice and good governance by decision-making authorities.

### WHO ARE THE FORUM'S MEMBERS?

Representatives of the following organisations regularly attend Forum meetings:

*Bitou Municipality*  
*Botanical Society of South Africa*  
*CapeNature Conservation*  
*Crags Conservancy*  
*Eden District Municipality*  
*Eden to Addo*  
*Garden Route Initiative*  
*Indalo Conservancy*  
*Keurbooms Estuary Forum*  
*Nature's Valley Trust*  
*Orca Foundation*  
*Plett Bird Club*  
*Ratepayers' Associations*  
*SA National Parks*  
*The Bitou Valley Foundation*  
*The Qolweni Conservancy*  
*WESSA*

All individuals with environmental concerns or issues are welcome to attend our meetings.

All our members are unpaid volunteers and freely give

of their time and expertise to keep our Bay and its surrounds as natural and unspoilt as possible.

### HOW DOES THE FORUM OPERATE?

The Forum holds monthly meetings at which any issue that might have a negative impact on the environment can be raised and debated.

Follow-up action could include site visits, negotiations with property owners and developers, approaches to relevant authorities and project initiation.

We prefer to negotiate when dealing with breaches of environmental legislation but we do initiate legal action as a last resort.

### NEWS UPDATE : SMALL BOAT HARBOUR DEVELOPMENT

The final scoping report on the proposed small boat harbour development has just been published. It is clear that the developer has not made any changes to his plans for high-rise buildings in the Central Beach area, despite a deluge of criticism after the draft scoping report. He has kept his plans exactly as is and added a list of 2 000 "YES" signatures from people in surrounding townships desperate for jobs.

## MAJOR ISSUES FACED DURING 2013

### Proposed Small Boat Harbour Development

The Forum actively supports the "Save Plett Alliance" established by the Ratepayers Association and concerned homeowners to spearhead legal challenges to this proposed development in the Piesang River Estuary.

We made available to the Alliance and their appointed attorneys, Edward Nathan Sonnenbergs, all our files which Elbie Burger, a local attorney, has compiled for over a decade.

Should the legal challenges not succeed the Forum will strongly oppose the development on environmental grounds.



The Plettenberg Bay community spelt out a decisive "NO" on Central Beach to the proposed small harbout development in the Piesang River Estuary. Photo: Christy Strever

### Bitou Spatial Development Framework (BSDF)

We continue to engage with the Bitou Municipality to ensure that environmentally sensitive areas are protected from development and an appropriate "Urban Edge" is created to avoid urban sprawl. Forum members regularly attend Integrated Development Plan (IDP) meetings with the council in order to monitor and comment on development and other plans.

### Anath Peninsula (between Keurbooms and Bitou rivers)

We actively support an NGO whose aim is to ensure that Anath is properly conserved and remains open to the public as an important area of biodiversity that should be used for recreational and educational purposes.

### Waste Recycling

The Forum has obtained Local Economic Development (LED) funding for the support of "Food for Waste" programmes in the form of Win Win Swop Shops.

The first shop has now operated for 12 months in the Industrial Area and serves the Qolweni community. The shop opens once a week and on an average day receives 1 000 kg of recyclable waste from the community, which is exchanged for food tokens and other useful items.

We are working with the communities of Kurland and Kranshoek in order to establish similar operations in their areas.

We continue to encourage the council to set up a recycling facility for garden refuse that would produce compost and mulch and are confident that this will happen in the near future.



The Win Win Swop Shop based in Qolweni involves the local community in waste recycling.

## Water

A proposal has recently been made for a dam to be built on a tributary of the Bitou River which, via a pipeline, would supply water to Knysna and Sedgefield.

This dam is to be filled by water pumped from the Keurbooms River, which is already under stress during periods of drought. We have insisted that a full and comprehensive Reserve Determination of water availability in the Keurbooms be made before this proposal is pursued.

In recent years the flow of the Keurbooms River has been greatly reduced by invasive vegetation along its course. We are now actively supporting a major alien clearing programme, which will be managed by Eden to Addo.



*The spectacular Keurbooms River is under threat from alien vegetation and possible over-exploitation.*

## Bitou Power Line

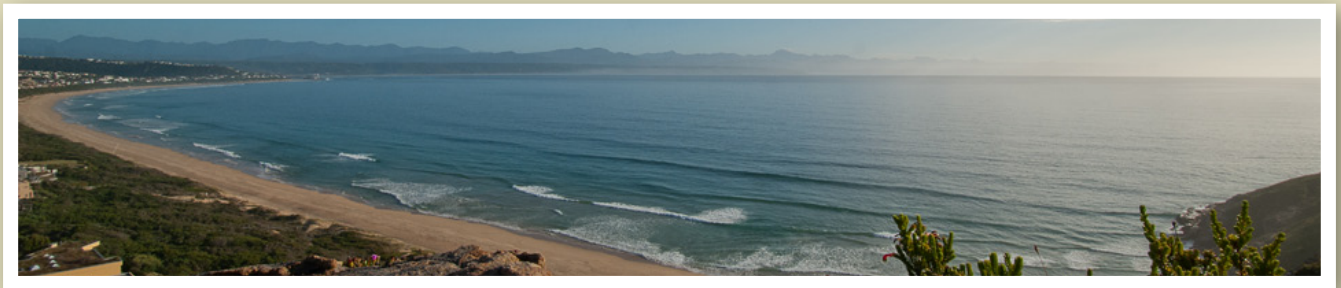
Eskom is proposing to erect power lines along the N2 which would cross the Bitou River to a new substation on the east bank. We have requested Eskom to consider alternative routes (including underground) in order to minimize the risks to the many bird species that visit the Bitou wetland.

## General

The Forum submits comments to the Bitou Municipality, Eden District Council and Provincial and National Government on many issues of environmental concern.

We also review many plans and proposals on which we comment positively as we are fully aware that we have a growing population and that job creation is vital.

We are in full support of sustainable development within the Urban Edge, the upgrade of Central Beach and the creation of a conference centre in town.



*Robberg Beach with the Tsitsikamma Mountains in the background.*

## WHAT CHALLENGES LIE AHEAD?

Apart from the many new and ongoing issues that the Forum deals with, we intend to focus some of our resources on longer term challenges to Bitou. These include the effects of climate change, improved rain water harvesting and waste recycling, removal of alien vegetation and the finalisation of an Urban Edge for Plettenberg Bay, all of which will help ensure the long-term protection of our natural assets.

## HOW IS THE FORUM FUNDED?

The Forum requires funds to monitor developments, implement projects and to cover our legal and admin expenses. We have a half-day coordinator, but all our other work is carried out by volunteers. If the Forum is to continue to fulfil its vital role as Bitou's community environmental watchdog, ongoing financial support is required. Please support us in our efforts to protect the environment and keep Bitou beautiful by making a tax deductible donation to the Forum.

# WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN MAKE A CONTRIBUTION

Apart from personal participation, which is always highly appreciated, the Forum also needs money to do its work. If you wish to help the Forum through a donation you can use any of the following methods:

## **1. Pay money directly into our bank account by Internet transfer or direct deposit**

Bank account details are as follows:

Account name: Plettenberg Bay Community Environment Forum  
Bank: Standard Bank of South Africa  
Branch: Plettenberg Bay  
Branch code: 050714  
Account number: 186861508

## **2. By cheque**

Cheques can be made out to Plettenberg Bay Community Environment Forum and posted to the postal address.

Please send the co-ordinator an email advice of your donation with your contact details.

## **Acknowledgement of contributions**

All contributions to the Forum will be acknowledged by the Forum.

## **Tax deductions**

Donations to the Forum are tax deductible and on request we will issue a receipt for tax purposes.

## CONTACT DETAILS

### **Co-ordinator**

Halszka Covarr  
072 594 1578  
eforum@mweb.co.za

### **Chairpersons**

Julie Carlisle  
082 322 2209  
ecovive@mweb.co.za

Paul Falla  
076 710 9277  
salpaul@mweb.co.za

Rudi Martin  
083 573 7266  
e.go@telkomsa.net

### **Treasurer**

Basil van Rooyen  
082 556 7244  
basil@bookstorm.co.za

### **Website**

[www.plettenenvironmentalforum.co.za](http://www.plettenenvironmentalforum.co.za)

### **Postal address:**

Postnet Suite #38; Private Bag X1006;  
Plettenberg Bay 6600

To join our mailing list, please send your email address to the co-ordinator