

2022/2023

Trustee and Management Annual Report



CEHOA MISSION

The development and maintenance of an environmentally sustainable residential estate that offers the advantages of service infrastructure and security, set within the natural beauty of the Central Drakensberg.

Management of an environmentally sensitive property in order to offer homeowners a variety of outdoor activities to enhance their experience while at the same time protecting the fauna and flora within the estate's boundaries.

THIS DOCUMENT CONSTITUTES A REPORT COVERING THE PERIOD 1 MARCH 2022 TO 28 FEBRUARY 2023

CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY OF THE 2022/2023 FINANCIAL YEAR

It was just over one year ago that I was asked whether I would consider standing as Chairman of the Estate. Every now and then you are devoid of excuses and find yourself just doing the right thing.

The past year has provided me with insight as to what a great job all the past directors and chairmen of Cathkin Estates have done; and to this end I would like to personally thank Butch Forester, John Cummins, and Ian McGough for pioneering the functioning of the board so that by the time I took the reins, the animal was well trained.

I have learnt on this estate not all expenses are equal. Any spend on improving security and safety has the highest priority, followed by spends on maintaining a reliable water supply and the hope of an electricity supply. Lastly cognisance must be taken of the fact that we are an eco-estate and therefore any decision must bear in mind the impact on the flora and fauna. Once you have a handle on the priorities, making the right decisions becomes easier.

The work done by Brad Mack and Nikki Thompson is tireless. There is never a month when Brad does not float an idea of how to improve the estate or make a saving. We, as a board, really appreciate your efforts.

In a year which is often described by expletives which cannot be published, it is heartening to note that the financial position of the estate has improved. This is thanks to strong controls over spending and to homeowners who have paid their levies. I would like to thank my favourite "Springbok" Francois Pienaar, from Gems for timeously providing excellent reliable feedback on the finances of the estate.

My fellow homeowner directors in all honesty do more work than I do. The lion-share of the day-to-day decisions affecting the estate are made by Jay Weeks, Brad Pillay, and James Newdigate. I am in awe at the impact that James manages to have on all decisions whilst residing in Saudi Arabia. Mention must be made of Dario Raciti who chairs the ARC Committee and although no longer a director, still avails us of his time and advice on an ad hoc basis.

The beauty of living permanently in the Berg is that you take no notice of the negativity pumped out in the daily news bulletins. This is the only explanation for the Developer's bold decision to develop Village 4. As a homeowner I am thankful to the Stockil's for sharing in their dream of living in the Drakensberg. Continue dreaming and I hope that the development of Village 4 is a huge success.

Every organisation needs a "Head-girl" who ensures that everyone tows the line and things get done. Cathkin Estate has been fortunate in having Denise Preiss as our head-girl. Unfortunately, all good things come to an end. We appreciate all the hard work that Denise has put in over all the years and we will miss her valuable input.

When I took on the role as Chairman, I was resolute that the board would embark on an initiative which would improve the estate, a "fun project". I am happy to share that plans are in progress to develop world-class mountain bike trails. Special thanks to Guy Carter for providing funding and his invaluable input in getting this project off the ground.

Brian Payne

Chairman of the Board of Directors

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

It is disheartening to report that another year has gone by with no new builds on the estate despite having reviewed several plans submitted to the committee for approval. Currently there are 70 complete houses of which 68 are occupied.

Additions/Alterations :

Again, a reminder to please let the ARC committee know if you are planning any kind of renovation or alteration, this includes solar installations, to avoid any issues relating to non-compliance of ARC rules and bulk. We can advise whether or not plans are required and whether the proposed alteration will have an impact on the bulk held.

ARC Administration :

The bulk register is up to date and the integrity of the content has been verified.

The ARC Rules and Guidelines are available on the HOA website www.cathkinhoa.co.za

OPERATIONS / ESTATE MANAGEMENT

All aspects of day to day running of the estate fall within this portfolio and this report presents separately various aspects covered by the portfolio during the period March 2022 to February 2023.

❖ **Alien plants**

Bracken fern – the application of Nikanor (herbicide that targets the weed only) has proven to be successful and we are now into the third year of application. There is still no regrowth of Bracken Fern in the areas that were sprayed first.

Wattle – a lightweight chainsaw specifically for this exercise was purchased and this has proved to be more effective compared to hacking or sawing the stem. Application of herbicide on a portion of land has been successful albeit labour intensive. The least expensive method is to burn the wattle which is done during the fire season.

Eucalyptus – Fortunately this year we were helped by Working on Water and a team came in and cut and poisoned a large stand of eucalyptus – no charge. The “commercial stands” are now becoming invasive because the coppice has expanded the initial plantation boundaries - in other words, the plantations are growing outwards. The coppice grows very close to each other forming a dense impenetrable layer. This growth has serious impact on our weed eradication cost and firebreak management – specifically around each plantation - and increases our fire risk overall.

❖ **Firebreaks**

Our estate team are equipped with all the necessary fire-fighting equipment. However, we hire the services of the Working on Fire team to assist us. The WOF team are trained individuals also kitted out with full fire-fighting gear. For insurance purposes and the approximately 30 km of firebreaks we have to complete before fire season ends – WOF is a necessity. We are a paid-up member of Okhahlamba Fire Protection Agency of which I am a Fire Warden for Champagne Valley. In 2022 we had two fires started by arsonists but fortunately were not an issue as we had our fire breaks in place. The Berg Grass species thrive if they are burnt once every 3 or 4 years.

❖ **Wildlife Management**

There have been no incidents of poaching. Salt blocks are still being purchased and placed to keep the animals in areas that are the least risk. Game blocks, which contain minerals etc, have also been strategically placed to hopefully deter the eland from feasting on aloes in gardens. The zebra numbers can be whittled down again in exchange for other species.

❖ **Water Reticulation**

The storm water issue was resolved with some assistance from a plumber. There has been, periodically, dirty water in the system and it is now time for the annual sand filter medium to be replaced. Furthermore, wear and tear is evident on some elements in the tanks and these items will need replacing as well.

Future planning looks to sourcing spring water which will remove the turbidity issue leaving the dam water as back-up. Future Planning also takes into account the need for additional water storage. It is hoped that these two projects can be combined.

❖ **Electrical Reticulation**

Solar PV Power

The need for Solar PV panels compelled the ARC committee to change the existing ARC rules to allow for panels to be placed on roof faces. Since changing rules and or adding to them is not to be taken lightly, a lot of home work was done on the legalities of installing Solar PV Panels and the associated systems including the batteries. The resultant rules on this topic are as per the Law and the aesthetic aspect of our rules are as per the rights and responsibilities of the ARC Committee members and ultimately the Board of Directors duty to maintain a theme of build. With regards to the panels – they must be black rimmed, contain non-reflective glass and not reflect sunlight into the neighbours' verandas.

Maintenance of Transformers

At a large but necessary cost the 5 yearly maintenance was carried out on the Estate transformers – note: the transformers and electrical reticulation is owned by the Estate. Various serious maintenance issues were found and rectified during this scheduled maintenance. Furthermore, we will be contracting this company to do annual checks on this aging infrastructure. We do have a Reserve Budget Line item in order to provision new transformers. The service provider has ensured us that they can bring in a new transformer at short notice if ever there was a need to do so.

❖ **Security**

There was a burglary in an unoccupied house in village 1 just before Easter and although unfortunate, it did highlight a weak link in the fence line. People were observed loitering in the same place a few nights later and the fence was cut again recently – albeit one strand - indicating that the perpetrator had most likely been interrupted by a security patrol.

Immediately after the theft incident, an extra guard was hired to patrol the risk fence line. In addition, solar lights to light up that corner (place of breach) were installed. We have since resumed our normal guard total but changed the guards patrol route to visit the risk fence more often. Our vehicle patrol also travels to that point more frequently.

A quote has been requested for a thermal camera to be positioned on that fence since we are getting recurring incidents there.

Another change this year was to free up the bottom gate guard and place him on the plateau with a patrol dog – nights only. The bottom gate is now operated via battery solar setup and there are two cameras monitoring the gate and surrounds.

❖ **Estate Staff**

We have an administrator a receptionist and 8 grounds staff, one of which is a supervisor. All of the staff are longstanding members, and absenteeism is low. Mandisa, our receptionist upskilled this year as did Nikki our Administrator. I have been to numerous workshops, one held in Durban by the Community Schemes Ombud Service - the regulator of all community schemes throughout South Africa. Our staff are equipped with safety gear and uniforms, work weekdays from 8 am until 4 pm with an hour's lunch. Staff morale is high and we work very well as a team. If we require additional staff on a temporary basis, we make use of individuals from families belonging to our employees. This system has proven to work well.

We have end-of-year functions with a few thrown in during the year – usually a braai with phutu and etc. I also allow firewood harvesting and help the staff where I can. We have had a happy harmonious year together.

Brad Mack

Estate Manager