

NAPIER HERITAGE AND CONSERVATION BODY
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT DELIVERED AT THE 2025 AGM

MUDDY WATERS, NAPIER

15 May 2025 AT 18:00

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, members of the NHCB as well as invited guests,

I am pleased to deliver my third report as chairperson of the Napier Heritage and Conservation Body for the year May 2024 to May 2025.

It was an eventful, challenging and inspiring year in which the NHCB moved a few steps closer towards our common goal: the preservation and conservation of Napier's heritage assets. May I start out by thanking the committee for their sterling efforts to promote, advocate for and protect the assets of our beautiful village for future generations. Each of the 10 committee members made a huge contribution through their different portfolios.

On an organisational level, we started working according to a strategic plan that guided our activities throughout the year. This ensured that we stay true to our core objectives, which are raising awareness, advocating for and protecting Napier's heritage and conservation assets.

The year 2024/2025 was in many ways a challenging year for the NHCB as it continued to clarify and strengthen its role as a heritage body responsible for monitoring and advocating for heritage assets on behalf of Heritage Western Cape. In this role we had to engage with a wide variety of stakeholders, including local and provincial government, other heritage and conservation bodies as well as interest groups in Napier.

The NHCB continues to actively support other heritage organisations in the CAM municipal area by sharing of information and promoting each other's events. We have a good relationship with the heritage organisations of L'Agulhas, Elim and Arniston as well as the Shipwreck Museum which we will build on in the coming year. We are also supporting residents of Bredasdorp with the founding of their own heritage organisation. Together we hope to find strength in numbers and create a strong voice for heritage. The ultimate goal is the creation of a Heritage Advisory Committee for the whole of CAM, as provided for in the National Heritage Resources Act.

The NHCB also sits on the Ward 1 committee, where we've been represented by our vice-chair, Okko de Jamaer. Okko has a very thorough understanding of the heritage assets of Napier as he served on the CAM aesthetics committee, the predecessor of the NHCB, for many years.

We have also worked in close cooperation with the Napier Residents Association and have coopted members onto each other's committees. This collaboration has borne fruit in many ways, from interrogating by-laws that affect municipal services and heritage

assets, providing input in municipal planning and budgets, and alerting the authorities to pollution of the Klippedrift and Elands Rivers. We look forward to strengthening the relationship between the NHCB and the NRA in the future as we believe that a strong citizen voice has in many ways forced our local authority to pay more attention to Napier.

Despite the frustrations and challenges we experienced with regard CAMs by-laws and regulations, we still managed to forge better understanding and cooperation with CAM on both administrative and political level.

A significant breakthrough in this regard was when our advocacy work with Cape Agulhas Municipality (under the guidance of committee member Adre Aggenbach) for the preservation of a central heritage precinct in Napier, bore fruit.

We were delighted when CAM appointed CTS Heritage Consultants in May last year to complete a Heritage Inventory and a Heritage Strategy for the municipality, including Napier. Since its inception, the NHCB and other heritage bodies within CAM, have expressed their concern about the lack of capacity, guidance and direction regarding the preservation of heritage assets, so this appointment was very good news.

By appointing CTS Heritage Consultants, CAM moved forward towards a more consistent and effective management of heritage assets as they are responsible for compiling a guiding Heritage Strategy and Action Plan for the municipality, highlighting the tasks and actions executed by designated stakeholders. All tasks and actions will have their own agreed timeline and schedule up to implementation.

During the project, CAM's current policies and guidelines as well as its Strategic Development Framework were evaluated against the proposed Heritage Strategy and Action Plan to enable CAM to phase in the process requirements of the National Heritage Resources Act and to provide a practical way to enhance the heritage elements within the municipal borders.

Napier had the honour to be chosen as the pilot project for this first phase and the consultants were appointed to identify a Draft Heritage Precinct for the town as well as related development guidelines. The Field Survey took place between 3 and 5 June 2024 with three teams of 2 people each. Approximately 600 sites were surveyed in the three days, equating to 70 sites per day per team.

The Draft Inventory Report was completed and submitted to CAM for their comments and approval. CAM scheduled a public participation session on 18 September 2024, inviting the community and stakeholders such as the NHCB to attend. As part of the public participation process, the NHCB also had an opportunity to further comment on the Draft Inventory Report, and we submitted our very thorough comment on 7 October 2024.

I would like to pause here to thank every member of the NHCB who participated in reviewing the Draft Inventory Report, ensuring its accuracy and integrity. In particular, I wish to thank every committee member for their dedication in setting aside days and nights to check facts and photos. Thanks also to Katherine Neelmeyer, one of our

members, for the personal footwork she did to ensure each and every conservation-worthy building was included in the inventory as well as our secretary Marina Richards for ensuring that our submission was submitted in time despite a tight deadline.

I am happy to report that the consultants thoroughly scrutinised comments received from the NHCB and that several were incorporated into the final draft submitted to Heritage Western Cape (HWC) for their approval.

One of the highlights of the year was when the Inventories, Grading and Interpretations Committee (IGIC) of Heritage Western Cape approved the submitted Inventory Report on 8 November 2024, only for our hopes to be dashed when an appeal was lodged by a single appellant citing 'a lack of sufficient public participation process' as the reason for his appeal. The matter was heard before the Heritage Western Cape Appeals Committee on 7 May 2025, with the Appeals Committee upholding the appeal and instructing CAM to extend the public participation process with another 60 days.

CAM had also extended comment on the Heritage Strategy and Plan for the whole of the CAM area to 8 April 2025.

We are deeply disappointed by these developments but remain confident that we will have an approved Heritage Inventory for Napier as well as an approved Heritage Strategy and Plan for the broader municipality before the end of the year. We will continue to push for Napier's heritage and conservation priorities to be included in CAMs Spatial Development Framework, the document which sets out its 5-year strategies, policies and implementation plans relating to land use, including heritage and environmental management.

As our heritage includes our natural surroundings, the NHCB is also concerned with the condition of the town's mountains, its rivers and fynbos areas. At our last AGM, we mentioned a number of local and provincial nature conservation initiatives with which we are making efforts to align and support.

One of our members, Lesley Richardson is involved in the Overberg Renosterveld Trust which is protecting the remaining renosterveld patches, the Cameron MacMaster Renosterveld Reserves, 4 of which are on CAM property around Napier. Another initiative is the Napier Mountain Conservancy which, together with the company Regenerative Space, is removing alien invasive pines and other species to turn them into products such as poles and pallets. After the start-up phase of the business, the plan is for some of the profits to come back to the Conservancy landowners to help prevent re-growth of the invasives. Over time clearing unwanted species from our catchments will reduce fire risk and ensure the water supply for Napier.

Two further projects were initiated in the past year. One is to rehabilitate the Klippedrift river, to restore areas of severe washaways after the last floods as well as remove alien species which regular stream flow. The Breede Olifants Catchment Management Agency's (BOCMA) plan for the river gives guidelines on the best way to go about this. Once success has been shown with the first phase, landowners along the river will be

invited to learn what to do and to join in. The other project is to put together guidelines for gardens, to encourage the use of indigenous plants and to plant in a water-wise way. We hope to publish these guidelines later this year.

During the year we also promoted the NHCB and the work that it does, more actively.

We had 2 outreaches at the Napier Village Market where the committee could engage with the broader Napier community. We improved the branding of our organisation in the form of banners as well as advertising material with an information brochure which was distributed during these interactions. We have some of the information brochures here tonight and invite our members to take one to promote the NHCB to friends and family and increase our membership.

We also engaged with local media such as Suidernuus and Radio Overberg to publicise our events and activities.

Amongst the events which drew attention in the media are the two Heritage Walks that were held under the capable guidance of committee member and local historian Ora Laubscher as well as engaging talks by Sean Privett of the Grootbos Foundation and Dr Helena Liebenberg of the Tracing History Trust. The walks and talks were part of our member events program which will continue in the coming year. We will alternate between heritage and conservation topics, with our next events in June and September this year. Please alert the committee to any speakers or topics you would like to see on the events program.

Our secretary, Marina Richards, needed a more exciting project than just keeping minutes and notes, and having prepared all the paperwork, presented a Photography Competition to the committee at rather short notice. The finals of the competition were planned to coincide with Creative Napier Weekend at the end of December 2024. Despite the tight schedule we received over 100 photos from 16 people which, considering the time allotted and the time of year, was not a bad effort. Thanks go to our two judges Andre de Koker and Herman van Bon who gave of their time and to all our sponsors for their prizes, among them Charlotte Rhys, Starke Ayres, Pickled Green, Vindigo, Plush Bazaar, Ronel and Cobus Visser and Martin Neethling.

We are repeating the competition this year but allowing more time for the taking of photos by launching the competition in May. The finals will be held to coincide with Heritage Week in September. Marina has entry forms available and I would like our members to encourage our community's amateur photographers to participate.

In the past year we have also reviewed our current website to make it more functional, affordable and accessible. We are currently redesigning it to include space for a virtual museum where our members can share stories, photographs and videos about the history of our town and its people. The new design will also make it possible for researchers, learners and students to access historical information about our town. We hope to launch the new website by June this year and we are grateful to every member who made this possible through their generous donations as well as the hard work of Ina

Georgala for putting together all the information. We are still R1000 short of our goal and we might just pass a hat around later tonight!

One of the administrative roles which the NHCB fulfils, it to ensure that heritage buildings and properties in Napier are protected as far as possible. In this regard, the committee reviews subdivision and rezoning applications as well as building plans for heritage properties submitted by CAM. Under the watchful eye of committee member Megum Reynecke, these applications are either supported by the NHCB or an objection lodged after thorough research and motivation for our decision. We also report back to Heritage Western Cape to ensure that they are kept informed of such issues.

Like many small towns in the Western Cape, Napier has seen steady development in the past year with a number of properties sold and restored and new houses built. We have been encouraged by the restoration efforts of many of the homeowners along Sarel Cilliers Street, which adds to the town's tourist appeal and contributes to the development of Napier as a tourism destination.

As a result, the NHCB received six subdivision applications from CAM. We lodged one objection, which was overturned by CAM. The rest were supported by the NHCB. We also received a rezoning application from CAM as well as an application to restore a property, both of which applications were supported by the NHCB.

In the coming year, we would like to engage with more of our registered property agents in town to keep them informed regarding the processes and procedures required for new buyers of heritage properties through our property portfolio member, Sharleen Lomey.

Several of the intended projects for this year, such as our Street Champion program, heritage plaques and entrance sign for Napier, could not be implemented because of a lack of funding. Although we had an increase in membership, membership fees alone are unable to fund such projects. We are appealing to our members to assist us where possible to find and engage with potential donors in this regard. We will also be launching fundraising projects during the year to urgently address the degradation of Napier's historic cemeteries, amongst others with our Napier Crinkle Rose project. Our treasurer Randall Fuller will report on our finances to give you some insight into how we are spending your money. Thanks to Randall's expertise our finances are in a much healthier position and we are very grateful to him for that.

Tonight I also have the great pleasure to request your approval for our first honorary membership and I would like to invite Randall to present the motivation.

This will be my last term as chair of the NHCB as I'm stepping down after a maximum term of three years allowed under our constitution. However, I will continue my involvement on the committee as coopted member. May I encourage all members present here tonight who feel that they have a contribution to make, to serve on the committee as coopted members?

We have received the following nominations for the 2025/2026 committee: (in alphabetical order)

Adre Aggenbach

Okko de Jamaer

Randall Fuller

Ina Georgala

Ora Laubscher

Sharleen Lomey

Megum Reynecke

Marina Richards

Lesley Richardson

As a founder member of the NHCB, I am proud of the fact that we now have a stable and sustainable organisation that will continue to grow from strength to strength and I wish the new committee all of the best. It has been a pleasure to serve the community of Napier with you. As a token of appreciation, I would like to present all of you with a small gift.

Thank you