



CITY OF CAPE TOWN
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GREATER HELDERBERG AREA QUARTERLY REPORT January - March 2026

SPATIAL PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT BRANCH

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Table of Contents	Page
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
2. HIGHLIGHTS & CHALLENGES	2
3. CONSERVATION PLANNING	3
4. FLORA	4
5. FAUNA	9
6. SOIL	11
7. WATER	13
8. FIRE	15
9. PEOPLE, TOURISM & EDUCATION	16
10. STAFF MATTERS	21
11. LAW ENFORCEMENT	22
12. INFRASTRUCTURE & EQUIPMENT	24
13. WASTE MANAGEMENT	26

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This quarterly report (January – March 2026) outlines the operational, conservation, and administrative activities across the Greater Helderberg Area, encompassing the Helderberg, Silwerboomkloof, Harmony Flats, Schapenberg, Morkel's Cottage and newly established Paardevlei Nature Reserves.

A major highlight for the quarter was the official conservation set-aside of Paardevlei Nature Reserve, accompanied by significant public support and capital funding to begin perimeter fencing. The cluster also saw immense community engagement, notably the successful return of the Friends of Helderberg Trail Run, which hosted 257 participants and served as a fundraising event. Furthermore, biodiversity monitoring yielded exceptional results, including observation of the data-deficient *Lobelia limosa* at Paardevlei and the recording of over 100 endangered *Merciera tetraloba* plants at Harmony Flats by the CREW team.

Despite these successes, reserve management faced notable operational challenges. Capacity constraints remain severe, particularly at Paardevlei, which currently relies entirely on shared staff and vehicles. Across the cluster, expired operational licenses for chainsaws and brushcutters drastically delayed essential trail maintenance and fire fuel reduction efforts. Infrastructure projects also experienced setbacks, most notably the termination of the non-compliant construction contractor for the Harmony Flats Multipurpose Centre, necessitating a site closure and contract handover process.

Law enforcement and compliance required substantial daily intervention. While joint operations successfully dismantled illegal overnight camps along the Lourens River and Helderberg Marine Protected Area, unfenced areas like the Morkel's Cottage Conservation Area continue to suffer from dumping, unauthorized access, and frequent fires.

Moving into the second quarter, management will prioritize finalizing vital capital fencing projects, reinstating machinery operator training, and closely monitoring early winter rainfall impacts on newly rehabilitated trail drainage systems. The Greater Helderberg conservation area benefits immensely from the unwavering support of dedicated volunteer and community organizations. The reserve teams are extremely grateful and appreciative for this support.

2. HIGHLIGHTS & CHALLENGES

Highlights

Paardevlei Nature Reserve

- The reserve has officially been set aside for conservation by the Biodiversity Management Branch, allowing expansion and proclamation processes to begin. There has been incredibly positive public support for the reserve's establishment, and capital funding has been successfully secured to implement fencing along one of the property perimeters this financial year. This is a massive step to effectively secure the site and its precious biodiversity.

Helderberg Nature Reserve

- Staffing transitions were managed smoothly, bidding farewell to Dante Wehr and welcoming Zizo Madolo as the new People and Conservation Officer intern. David Morris officially commenced his duties as the Reserve Supervisor for the newly established Paardevlei Nature Reserve on 5 January 2026. The Helderberg Area student, Heber-Cole Clarke was appointed for this calendar year. He is completing his 3rd and final year studying towards a National Diploma at CPUT. The contracts of the Trail workers, who were employed through the Friends of Helderberg Nature Reserve, came to an end on 17 February 2026.
- The Friends of Helderberg Fun Run took place on 21 March 2026, with approximately 257 registered participants enjoying the 3-, 5-and 7-kilometre routes offered on the day. A scavenger hunt was also on

Helderberg Nature Reserve
Quarterly Report – 1 January to 31 March 2026

offer for kids, facilitated by the Helderberg Nature Reserve People and Conservation interns. It was a beautiful morning, and all aspects of the event went very well. Reserve staff assisted in preparation and on the day, however a large amount of gratitude goes out to Steve Mendez (Friends of Helderberg Nature Reserve) for coordination throughout.

Harmony Flats Nature Reserve (HFNR)

- The old dilapidated wooden boardwalk, diagonally intersecting HFNR is in the process of being replaced. The new boardwalk is a Biomass Insulated Concrete (BIC) product incorporating various combinations of recycled fabric, plastics, glass, ceramics and various alien invasive species to produce an eco-friendly building material. The boardwalk will be completed during the 2nd quarter of 2026, if all goes well.

Schapenberg Nature Reserve (SNR)

- Capital funding was secured and committed towards fencing at Schapenberg Nature Reserve's northern boundary, adjacent to Morgenster farm. Securing this perimeter is a valuable step to further protect the special diversity on offer at this protected area.

Challenges

Staffing and Capacity Limitations

- Paardevlei is severely under-resourced for the time being, currently operating with only a Reserve Supervisor and relies entirely on resources from HNR and HFNR.
- At Helderberg NR, expired operator licenses for chainsaws and brush cutters have drastically delayed essential trail maintenance and vegetation clearing in high-traffic visitor areas. A solution is on the horizon, with urgent training needing to be actioned to address this shortfall.

Infrastructure and Contractor Delays

- Buildings at Paardevlei require substantial repairs before they can be utilised as operational offices, stores, and ablution facilities. At both HNR and HFNR there are various delays from contractors to complete required projects. Mitigation efforts are being implemented to minimise disruption and impact.

Security and Compliance Threats

- The Morkel's Cottage Conservation Area is experiencing severe issues due to unfenced boundaries and a lack of dedicated security. Sections of fencing have been stolen in the past. This situation compromises staff safety, severely limits conservation activities on-site, and has led to deteriorating conditions driven by increased dumping, vandalism of fencing, and frequent fires. Unfortunately, the locality of this site is at a high-intensity security risk area. Therefore, management thereof is complex.

3. CONSERVATION PLANNING

1. Strategic Meetings and Administration

Paardevlei Nature Reserve: Extensive operational planning and strategic administration were undertaken to formalize the new reserve. Key activities included the induction of the Reserve Supervisor, development of the reserve's organogram, and mapping out the Paardevlei "VISION". Engagements were held with Heritage representatives for building restorations and the Invasive Species Unit (ISU) for clearing planning. Administrative systems, including reporting templates and communication channels, were established, and planning began for the 2026 Visitor Survey.



Figure 1: Green polygon illustrating current reserved area for Paardevlei NR.

2. Footpath, Trails, and Infrastructure Maintenance

Helderberg and Silverboomkloof Nature Reserve: Significant progress was made on footpath and trails maintenance, driven by volunteer teams and reserve staff. The western section of the Protea jeep track was maintained, and general trail servicing occurred at Silverboomkloof as needed. However, the lack of certified brushcutter and chainsaw operators delayed full completion of the trails network. Looking ahead to the next quarter, False Bay Working on Fire (WOF) teams will assist with vegetation clearance and water bar maintenance.

3. Fire fuel load reduction and invasive species management

Harmony Flats Cluster & Schapenberg: The team focused heavily on reducing the fire fuel load at Schapenberg Nature Reserve. Biomass was collected by the Carbon Smart Unit to be repurposed as chipping material for the Harmony Flats boardwalk. For the upcoming quarter, fuel load reduction will continue at Schapenberg (with potential assistance from Boskloof Eco Estate), and herbaceous alien invasive species monitoring will remain a priority at Harmony Flats and Morkel's Cottage. Additionally, guidance will be provided to the newly appointed HFNR Reserve Supervisor who will be starting on the 1st of May 2026.

4. FLORA

4.1) Notable flora sightings this quarter:

Helderberg Nature Reserve

Helderberg Nature Reserve
Quarterly Report – 1 January to 31 March 2026



Figure 2 – 4 (from left): *Tritoniopsis triticea*, *Protea lorea* (photo credit: Dave Glass) and *Amaryllis belladonna*.

Harmony Flats Nature Reserve

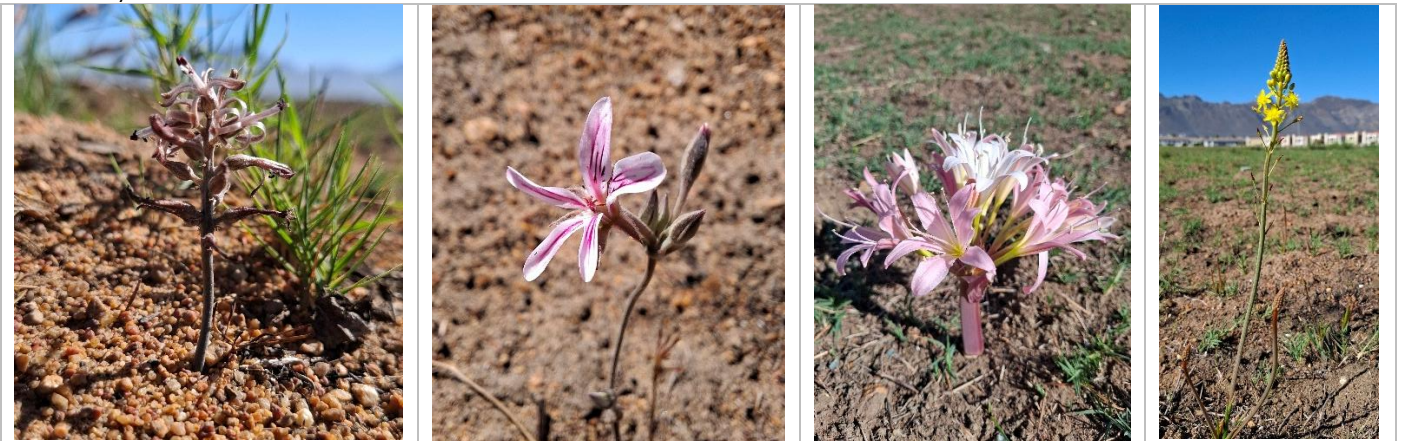


Figure 5 – 8 (from left): *Drimia elata*, *Hoarea* species, *Ammocharis longifolia* and *Bulbine* species.

Paardevlei Nature Reserve

On 13 February 2026 the reserve team along with some colleagues from the Biodiversity Management Branch visited Paardevlei and Clifford Dorse pointed out flowering Marsh Flats Lobelia (*Lobelia limosa*) within Paardevlei wetland. This was the first time for many of the other staff to observe this species and it is quite a special one. Its current conservation status is Data Deficient (Taxonomically Problematic). This tiny species has limited distribution occurring in the Western Cape on sandy and stony flats, as well as lower mountain slopes with a preference to freshwater systems.

Helderberg Nature Reserve
Quarterly Report – 1 January to 31 March 2026



Figure 9: Marsh Flats Lobelia (*Lobelia limosa*) identified at Paardevlei Nature Reserve

4.2) Restoration

Paardevlei Nature Reserve: Active restoration took place with the planting of *Leucadendron linifolium* (grown from seed collected from Faure farm, demonstrating an approximate 50% survival rate) and *Lachenalia corymbosa* bulbs sourced from the Macassar Sewerage Treatment Works.

Table 1: Restoration record

Date	Area	Species	Common	Action	Outcome
27 Feb	PNR	<i>Leucadendron linifolium</i>	Lineleaf Conebush	Restoration	Degraded alluvium Fynbos. Grown from seed collected from Faure farm, planted out last winter. Nearly 50 % still alive.
17 Mar	PNR 5	<i>Lachenalia corymbosa</i>	Cape cowslip	Restoration	Received box of bulbs from CSU from Macassar Sewerage Treatment Works.
20 Mar	PNR 5	<i>Lachenalia corymbosa</i>	Cape cowslip	Restoration	Planted bulbs out in PNR 5
23 Mar	PNR 5	<i>Lachenalia corymbosa</i>	Cape cowslip	Restoration	Planted bulbs out in PNR 5



Figure 10 – 12 (from left): *Leucadendron linifolium* establishing on site at Paardevlei, *Lachenalia corymbosa* before planting out and *L. corymbosa* bulbs rescued from Macassar Sewerage Treatment Works

4.4) Monitoring

Indigenous Species Monitoring:

Paardevlei Nature Reserve: Several indigenous species were documented during the drawdown, including *Lobelia limosa*, *Haemanthus coccineus* (Blood Lily), *Disa bracteata*, and *Elegia tectorum*.

Harmony Flats Nature Reserve: On the 7th of February the Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers visited Harmony Flats Nature Reserve for a summer botanical survey. Their main target species was the endangered *Merciera tetraloba*. Fortunately, the team found more than a 100 of these plants were located on the day. The team also observed *Aspalathus leckiioides* which is listed as vulnerable. It is always wonderful when CREW visits. Their expert eyes are massive assets to our sites and databases.



Figure 13: CREW team conducting a summer botanical survey at Harmony Flats. Figure 14: Team members identifying flora. Figure 15: The endangered *Merciera tetraloba* located on site.

4.5) Invasive Species Management

- **Helderberg Nature Reserve:** The ISU conducted alien vegetation clearing across management blocks HDB07, HDB012, and HDB013.
- **Paardevlei Nature Reserve:** Extensive mapping was submitted to the Invasive Species Unit (ISU), and it was resolved that management blocks PNR1 and PNR2 will be cleared of all acacias and small gums in 2026. The Conservation Services Unit (CSU) provided labor to cut *Acacia saligna* (Port Jackson) along the boundary. Through a collaborative special project, Vula Environmental Services was permitted to harvest invasive Port Jackson, Rooikrans, and Wattle from the coastal section to be repurposed for dune stabilization on Baden Powell Drive.



Figure 16: The Conservation Services Unit conducting alien vegetation clearing operations. Figure 17: Staff utilizing chainsaws and hand-pulling methods.

- **Schapenberg Nature Reserve:** The ISU completed essential follow-up clearing in blocks SPB002C, SPB002F, and SPB002, specifically treating remaining herbicide stumps and coppicing species that had regrown.

Helderberg Nature Reserve
Quarterly Report – 1 January to 31 March 2026

- **Harmony Flats Cluster & Morkel's Cottage (MCCA):** The in-house team actively removed *Acacia saligna* at both HFNR and MCCA, alongside clearing *Avena fatua* at HFNR. Regular monitoring is ongoing. Next quarter, the team will target herbaceous invasive species including *Echium plantagineum*, *Lupinus polyphyllus*, *Rapistrum rugosum*, and several *Vicia* species. However, clearing activities at MCCA will remain severely limited due to the absence of a permanent security component on-site.



Figure 18 & 19: Management units for Schapenberg- (left) and Helderberg (right) Nature Reserves for reference with section above.

Friends of Helderberg Nature Reserve - Volunteer hack group

A large patch of french broom had been discovered along the western boundary of Helderberg Nature Reserve. French broom (*Genista monspessulana*) is a highly invasive, woody shrub native to the Mediterranean, acting as a severe ecological hazard in many countries including South Africa. It degrades ecosystems by outcompeting native plants, creating dense stands, and creating severe wildfire risks by acting as "ladder fuel". Ladder fuel allows a fire to climb up from the landscape/ground up into heavier denser fuel/biomass i.e. shrubs and trees. This is a dense and substantial patch of this invasive species, and a few iterations of clearing will be required to bring this patch under control. Clearing methods applied were tree popping and handpulling. One small section was cut and had herbicide applied – to be monitored to see how effective the herbicide will be on this "new" species for the reserve. There were also some small pine and eucalypts that were removed.



Figure 20 - 22: The FoHNR hacking team busy clearing French broom at HNR (middle image credit: J. Silberbauer). French broom flowering in Spring (right).

5. FAUNA

Notable sightings within the Helderberg cluster sites

Birds:



Figure 23 – 30: Top row (from top left clockwise) – African hoopoe, Brimstone canary, Yellow bishop (male showing seasonal plumage transitioning), Speckled mousebird, Red-billed teal, African black duck, Forest buzzard & Karoo prinia.

Other fauna:



Figure 31 – 38: Top row (from top left clockwise) – Padloper tortoise, Red-rump baboon spider, Koppie foam grasshopper (Rooibaadjie), Robber fly, Crambid snout moth larvae, Alfred's shieldback, Boas rhinoceros beetle & Cape hawkmoth.

Helderberg Nature Reserve
Quarterly Report – 1 January to 31 March 2026



Figure 39 – 42 (From left): Clay monkey moth, Genus *Boerias* (Stink bug), Striped lesser-thicktail scorpion & Lily borer (cutworm)



Figure 43 – 46 (from left): Boomslang, Vlei rat, Mixed thorn moth & Short-legged sep.

5.1. Indigenous Fauna Sightings

- **Paardevlei Nature Reserve & Helderberg MPA:** A rich diversity of birdlife was recorded, including Greater Flamingos, Maccoa Ducks, Fish Eagles, and a Black Sparrowhawk. Mammal sightings were frequent, featuring springbok herds, caracals, honey badgers, and large grey mongooses. Various reptiles and arachnids were also documented, including a cape cobra and boomslang.
- **Helderberg & Schapenberg Nature Reserves:** Notable sightings included the Southern rock agama (*Agama atra*), boomslang (*Dispholidus typus*), and angulate tortoise (*Chersina angulata*).

5.2. Mortalities and Disease

- **Helderberg MPA:** A significant Avian Flu outbreak resulted in 76 recorded bird mortalities.
- **Helderberg Area:** An Angulate Tortoise was found dead along the Hillcrest boundary fence, with the condition of the remains indicating natural causes.

5.3. Human-Wildlife Conflict and Rescues

- **Snake Relocations:** Puffadders (*Bitis arietans*) were successfully captured and safely relocated on multiple occasions across the reserves. Rescues took place in Somerset West (released at Spanish Farm), near Silwerboomkloof NR, and at a residence (released at Helderberg NR).



Figure 47 – 50: Captured Puffadder ready for relocation and then releasing the Puffadders safely away from public areas.

- **Mammal Rescues:** An injured Common Duiker in the Sitari Estate area was successfully handed over to the SPCA Inspectorate for further investigation and care.

5.4. Restoration and Habitat Interventions

- **Paardevlei Nature Reserve:** The Conservation Services Unit (CSU) assisted management by cutting a dedicated nesting wall for European Bee-eaters in management block PNR1. This bank will be closely monitored for signs of breeding use.



Figure 51: CSU staff cutting a dedicated nesting wall for European Bee-eaters. Figure 52: The finalized nesting bank at Paardevlei.

5. Alien, Domestic, and Destructive Fauna

- **Harmony Flats Conservation Corridor:** A significant compliance and management issue was recorded involving a herd of approximately 30 domestic cattle illegally moving through and grazing within the conservation corridor from the Vlake Plaas area.



Figure 53 & 54: Herd of domestic cattle illegally grazing within the Harmony Flats conservation corridor.

- **Paardevlei & Helderberg MPA:** Management faces ongoing challenges with domestic pets, specifically visitors walking dogs off-lead, highlighting the need for stricter enforcement and signage. Signs of a feral cat were also noted in the MPA dunes. Furthermore, feral and extralimital bird species were reported, including a feral Peacock, Black Swans, and large flocks (70+) of Helmeted Guineafowl, which will require a permit and trap cage to manage.

6. SOIL

6.1. Footpath and Trail Maintenance

- **Helderberg Nature Reserve:** Throughout the quarter, the Helderberg reserve staff, with the assistance of the False Bay Working on Fire (WOF) team, conducted extensive general footpath and trail

Helderberg Nature Reserve
Quarterly Report – 1 January to 31 March 2026

maintenance. These efforts were prioritized to ensure visitor safety and accessibility, particularly in preparation for the successful Helderberg Fun Run that took place on 21 March 2026.



Figure 55: Water erosion damage on the reserve footpath. Figure 56 & 57: Staff grading the eroded path and clearing drainage lines. Figure 58 & 59: Stabilized path edges and newly maintained trail section.

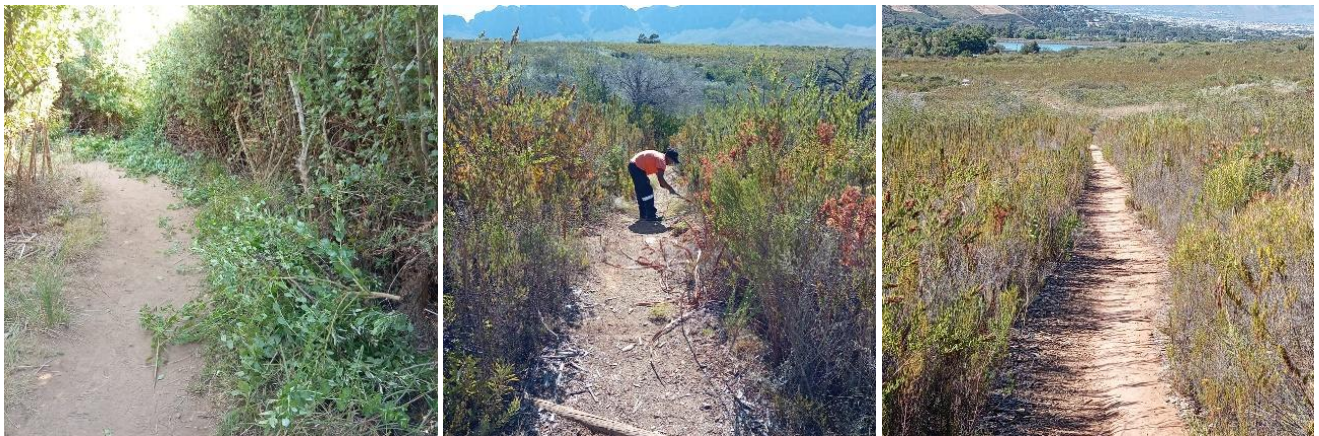


Figure 60 - 62: The trail workers team cutting back vegetation along the lower trails at HNR.

- **FoHNR trail maintenance volunteers:** Johannes Visser assisted with various aspects of trail maintenance throughout this quarter. However, he also constructed an improvised water bar/cross drain structure with wooden poles to divert water flow effectively into a canal along the White eye trail. A lot of work went into diverting water flow from this trail. In the past White eye trail had to be closed due to aggressive water flow down the trail.

In 2025 the trail was redeveloped to allow for better water drainage. This water bar will supplement efforts to ensure effective water drainage off the trail. This winter will be a big test for the redesigned trail and drainage infrastructure. Two HNR EPWP staff members assisted Johannes at various stages of this project. The altruistic effort by Johannes and other volunteers are worth gold to the reserve.

Helderberg Nature Reserve
Quarterly Report – 1 January to 31 March 2026



Figure 63 - 67: The construction of the water bar along White eye trail

- **Paardevlei Nature Reserve:** In February, Helderberg Nature Reserve (HNR) and EPWP staff collaborated to assist in cutting the Paardevlei walking path open and accessible. While the path is currently serviceable, management anticipates it will need further clearing throughout the winter months and will monitor it closely.

6.2. Road Repairs

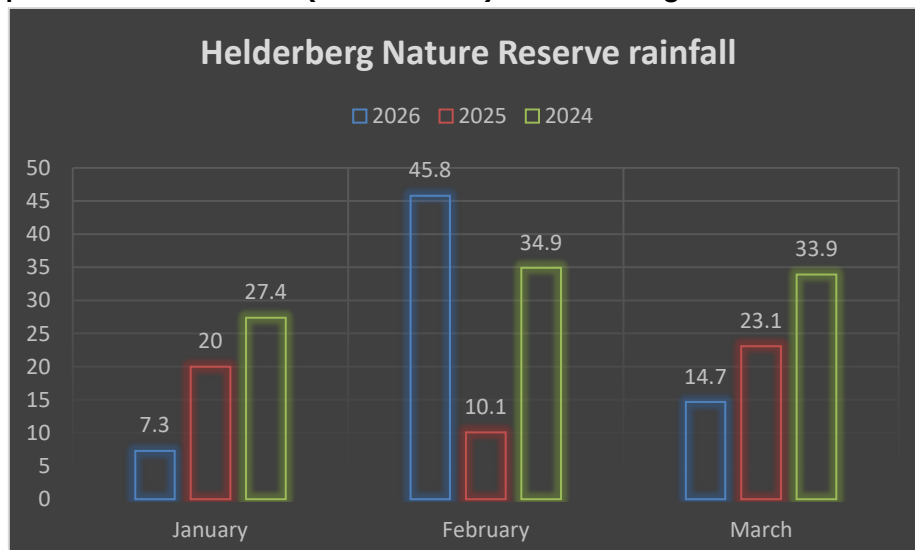
Paardevlei Nature Reserve: In early February, Quinan Property Service (QPS) successfully repaired the Paardevlei jeep track. Holes along the track were filled using crush material. The track remains serviceable as of the end of the quarter, with ongoing monitoring scheduled through the upcoming winter.

7. WATER

7.1 Rainfall

The Helderberg Nature Reserve manages an official weather station and statistics are submitted to the South African Weather Bureau on a monthly basis. See graph below comparing the rainfall received during the first quarter of the last 3 years. A total of 691.5mm of rainfall was recorded in 2025 at Helderberg Nature Reserve.

Graph 1: Rainfall recorded (in millimetres) at Helderberg Nature Reserve in 2026



7.2. Water Quality and Pollution Incidents

- **Paardevlei Nature Reserve/Langevlei:** On February 19, a sewer line running from the Trappies pump station to Macassar overflowed from a manhole directly into the Paardevlei canal. A C3 Notification was logged, and the overflow ceased upon the arrival of the City of Cape Town (CCT) Reticulation team. Additionally, thick, smelly foam was observed at the Paardevlei river mouth in late January 2026.



Figure 68 & 69: Observations following a sewer manhole overflow at Paardevlei canal

7.3. Water Infrastructure and Maintenance

- **Helderberg Nature Reserve:** In mid-to-late March, a major Distribution Services water pipeline burst, resulting in flooding across the picnic area. Reserve staff were initially unable to pinpoint the actual locality of the leak. The issue was escalated, leading to a site assessment by Distribution Services on 26 March 2026, followed by excavation and successful pipeline repairs on 27 March 2026.



Figure 70 - 73: A burst water pipe at the Helderberg Nature Reserve picnic area and subsequent repairs.

- **Paardevlei Nature Reserve:** A baseline assessment of water infrastructure indicates that the Paardevlei weir is currently serviceable. However, the Melksloot infrastructure still require a formal heritage assessment, and the ownership and primary purpose of the on-site pump house remain to be established.

7.4. Water Education and Awareness

- **Helderberg People and Conservation:** Water conservation was a major focal point for educational outreach this quarter. The team hosted Somerset House learners to celebrate World Wetlands Day, and presented a dedicated "Water Programme" to Beaumont Primary School learners, where students created posters focused on saving water.

7.5. Lourens River Protected Natural Environment (PNE) management

- Reserve Management (L. Van Wyk and D. Morris) have been attending dedicated workshops to discuss and draft the Lourens River Protected Natural Area Management Plan. These sessions are attended by numerous interested and affected parties from the local community.

Helderberg Nature Reserve
Quarterly Report – 1 January to 31 March 2026

- Strong community involvement remains a hallmark of the LRPNE's management. D. Morris actively participated in several community-led "Hacks" (alien clearing and clean-up events) throughout the quarter. These included interventions at Victoria Park (11 January), Reitz Park (8 February), and the Bizweni area (14 February). Management utilized these events to assist with site cleansing and compliance, while simultaneously promoting the newly established Paardevlei Nature Reserve.



Figure 74 & 75: Community and inter-departmental partnership along the Lourens river.

8. FIRE

8.1. Fire Planning and Fuel Load Reduction

- **Helderberg Nature Reserve:** Cape Nature assisted with a vegetation cut back and fuel reduction project along the Protea, Leopard's Loop and Watsonia trails. Vegetation along the trails were cut back to reduce vegetation density and to allow for a more effective fire break/defendable space. The current agreement is for this project to be replicated every 3 - 5 years.
- **Paardevlei Nature Reserve:** Grass fire risks were actively mitigated through tractor mowing operations conducted by Quinan Property Service.
- **Schapenberg Nature Reserve:** The reserve team actively removed fire fuel loads and collected excess biomass at Schapenberg Nature Reserve. Unfortunately, progress was frequently delayed by a lack of available transport vehicles and functional grabber trucks. The Carbon Smart Unit did collect some of this biomass to utilize as chipping material for boardwalk (Biomass Insulated Concrete) construction at Harmony Flats. For the upcoming quarter, fuel load reduction will continue, with management engaging the Boskloof Eco Estate team to potentially assist with moving excess biomass.

8.2. Controlled and Ecological Burns

- **Tygerberg Nature Reserve:** Helderberg area staff travelled off-site to assist with prescribed ecological burns on the 4th & 16th of March. The Paardevlei Reserve Supervisor served on Ignition crews Bravo and Charlie, and the Helderberg Area Student also attended to provide assistance and gain fire management experience.

8.3. Uncontrolled Fires and Incidents

- **Harmony Flats Nature Reserve:** A fire broke out on the evening of 10 March. On-duty Rangers successfully controlled the fire's spread until Fire & Rescue crews arrived on site to fully extinguish it.



Figure 76 - 78: Wildfire containment at Harmony Flats Nature Reserve.

- **Morkel's Cottage Conservation Area:** This site is experiencing too frequent fires, a severely deteriorating condition driven by the high-risk area and a lack of dedicated security and unfenced boundaries.
- **Paardevlei NR, Coastal Section & Helderberg MPA:** Numerous small fires were sparked by unauthorized human activities throughout the quarter. Suspected wood cutters caused multiple ignitions in the Coastal Section (15 & 23 January, and 19 March). Illegal overnighting and waste sorting led to recurrent fires in management block PNR 5 (11 February and 2 March) as well as a reed fire at the Paardevlei river mouth (24 January), which was brought under control with the help of CoCT Fire and Rescue. Additionally, management intercepted a visitor conducting a prayer ritual with open candles in the MPA dunes and instructed them that fires are strictly prohibited.



Figure 79 & 80: Illustrating illegal/accidental fire scars at Paardevlei

- **Off-Site Support:** Reserve staff also provided fire response support for external incidents at Witzand (18 January) and past Macassar Nature Reserve (14 January).

9. PEOPLE, TOURISM & EDUCATION

9.1 ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES

This quarter saw a robust schedule of environmental education programmes, school visits, and community engagements, primarily driven by the Helderberg Environmental Centre (HEC) team.

9.1.1. Primary and High School Educational Programmes

- **Somerset House (World Wetlands Day)**
On 2 February 2026, ninety-five Grade 6 and 7 learners from Somerset House visited the Helderberg Nature Reserve to celebrate World Wetlands Day. The group was divided by grade; one group hiked with reserve staff, while the other participated in a dedicated presentation and a fun debate activity. The team plans to adapt the programme next year to ensure returning Grade 7's experience new activities.

Helderberg Nature Reserve
Quarterly Report – 1 January to 31 March 2026



Figure 81 & 82: Somerset House world wetlands day programme underway at the HEC

- **Somerset College (Pollination & Seed Dispersal)**

On 3 February 2026, seventy-three Grade 5 learners visited for a collaborative programme on pollination and seed dispersal. Educators divided the learners into stations, and HEC staff led a hike focusing on various plant reproductive strategies. The school appreciated the flexibility to run their own activities alongside the reserve's guided education.

- **Beaumont Primary School (Water Programme)**

Over three days (17–19 March 2026), six Grade 2 classes (both Afrikaans and English) visited the reserve. The HEC team presented a comprehensive "Water Programme" featuring a hike, presentation, and educational activities. The learners created and presented group posters about water conservation and usage, garnering highly positive feedback from the educators.



Figure 82 & 83: Beaumont Primary water programme at the HEC

- **Bloubergrant High School (Sustainable Tourism)**

On 26 March 2026, Grade 10 tourism students visited for a programme focused on biodiversity and sustainable tourism. Following a guided hike and presentation, the students were split into groups for a debate addressing the issue of over-tourism at the Witzands Aquifer Nature Reserve. The programme was well-received by both learners and educators.



Figure 84 & 85: The Bloubergrant High programme focused on biodiversity and sustainable tourism

Helderberg Nature Reserve
Quarterly Report – 1 January to 31 March 2026

- **Fundi Rainbow Educare**

The educare centre visited in February and March for their annual picnic and hike, enjoying a 30-minute guided tour provided by HEC staff before enjoying lunch on the reserve.



Figure 86: Guided reserve walk facilitated by Zizo Madolo & Amy Stoffels

9.1.2. Off-Site and Paardevlei Engagements

- **Helderberg Ocean Awareness**

On 6 February a group of fifty-five learners participated in a 2-hour off-site beach cleanup in the Helderberg Marine Protected Area (MPA).



Figure 87: Helderberg Marine Protected Area clean up underway

- **Cheetah Outreach**

On 27 February a school group of 18 learners and their educators took a guided walk at Paardevlei Nature Reserve, receiving a general overview of the reserve and safety tips.



Figure 88: David Morris facilitated a talk to visitors at Paardevlei

Helderberg Nature Reserve
Quarterly Report – 1 January to 31 March 2026

- **Rotary Club**

On 30 March, Louis van Wyk facilitated a presentation at the Helderberg Sunrise Rotary Club evening event. He spoke about recent developments at Helderberg Nature Reserve and other protected areas in the management cluster. The Rotary club and Helderberg Nature Reserve have longstanding history and it is wonderful to keep that relationship healthy.

9.1.3. Private Events, Workshops, and Team Building

- Throughout the quarter, the HEC hosted numerous private events on Fridays for both City of Cape Town departments and external groups. Participating City departments included Environmental Management, Facilities Management, Library Services, Future Planning & Resilience, Urban Mobility, Development Management, and Community, Arts and Culture Development.
- The P&C team facilitated guided hikes and engaging activities for these groups, notably assisting with an "Amazing Race" team-building activity hosted by Development Management.



Figure 89 & 90: Illustrating some of the guided walks facilitated by the P&C team

9.1.4. Additional Bookings and Community Groups

- The HEC facilities were frequently utilized by dedicated environmental and community groups for regular meetings and training. This included multiple sessions hosted by the **SANParks Honorary Rangers**, **Eco-Rangers** (who ran their own lessons), and **Volunteer Wildfire Services (VWS)**.
- Other notable community bookings included the Greater Cape Water Fund, Mountain Community Project, Junior City Council, and various senior citizen and church programmes.

Table 2: HEC Bookings for January – March 2026

Date	School or Group	Number of learners/participants	Theme/ topic
16/01/2026	Western Cape Education Department	45	EE meeting
21/01/2026	SANParks Honorary Rangers	50	Monthly meeting
22/01/2026	Environmental Management Department	30	Workshop
24/01/2026	SANParks Honorary Rangers	70	Training
29/01/2026	Facilities Managements	50	Leadership Workshop
30/01/2026	Library Services	100	Library Communication Session
02/02/2026	Somerset House	101	EE programme
03/02/2026	Somerset College	78	Own programme
04/02/2026	Beaumont Primary School	188	EE programme
06/02/2026	Eco-Rangers	15	Own lesson
	VWS	50	Review and Discussion
07/02/2026	Private group	50	Workshop
11/02/2026	Greater Cape Water Fund	30	Meeting
12/02/2026	Future Planning & Resilience	15	Management Meeting
13/02/2026	Eco-Rangers	15	Own lesson
	Tino	25	Church hike
14/02/2026	Cotlands	47	Visit
16/02/2026	Fundiswa Rainbow Educare	20 learners + 3 educators	Picnic visit
17/02/2026	Biodiversity Stewardship	30	Reference meeting
	Biodiversity Stewardship	30-40	Facilitator training
18/02/2026	Fundiswa Rainbow Educare	27 learners + 3 educators	Picnic visit
	SANParks Honorary Rangers	50	Monthly meeting
19/02/2026	Community, Arts and Culture Development	100	Elderly Community Programme
20/02/2026	Recreation and Parks	10	Hike
	Eco-Rangers	15	Own lesson
21/02/2026	SANParks Honorary Rangers	55	Meeting
22/02/2026	Mountain Community Project	23	Mountain Community Project
23/02/2026	Fundiswa Rainbow Educare	24 learners + 3 educators	Picnic visit
	FoHNR		Meeting
24/02/2026	Spatial Planning and Environment	15	Strategic Meeting
	Boland Groot Winterhoek	30	Collective Quarterly Meeting
25/02/2026	Fundiswa Rainbow Educare	26 learners + 3 educators	Picnic visit
	Blackheath High School	65	Visit
26/02/2026	COJ Consulting (private)	25	Vision board activity
27/02/2026	Community, Arts and Culture Development	65	Senior's programme

Helderberg Nature Reserve

Quarterly Report – 1 January to 31 March 2026

	Stellenbosch Waldorf School	56	Picnic and hike
	Eco-Rangers	15	Own lesson
28/02/2026	SANParks Honorary Rangers	20	Training
02/03/2026	Fundiswa Rainbow Educare	20 learners, 3 educators	Picnic
04/03/2026	Fundiswa Rainbow Educare	31 learners, 3 educators	Picnic
05/03/2026	Indy Sana Educare	90 children + 19 adults	Picnic
05/03/2026	SmallTalk	30	Public talk
06/03/2026	Eco-Rangers	15	Own lesson
12/03/2026	Environmental Management Department	30	Workshop
13/03/2026	Eco-Rangers	15	Own lesson
14/03/2026	Ladies' ministry	10	Meeting
17/03/2026	Beaumont	60 learners + 2 educators	EE programme
18/03/2026	Beaumont	64 learners + 2 educators	EE programme
19/03/2026	Beaumont	64 learners + 2 educators	EE programme
24/03/2026	Future planning	15	Quarterly Workshop
25/03/2026	Bizweni Centre for Children with Disabilities	19	Visit
	Urban Mobility, Transport Shared Services	40	Team Building
26/03/2026	Bloubaerg High School	60 learners + 4 adults	EE programme
28/03/2026	Junior City Council	60	Class
	SANParks Honorary Rangers	25	Training
31/03/2026	VWS	60	Meeting

9.2 Events

- Friends of Helderberg Trail Run

On 21 March 2026, the Friends of Helderberg hosted a Fun Run at the Helderberg Nature Reserve. It was the first organised run since the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown. Two hundred and fifty-seven people registered for the run. The trail run consisted of three distances: 3km, 5km and 7km. Reserve staff assisted in preparation and on the day with various operational and logistical duties. There was also a "Bug Hunt" for the children, organised by the HEC team which involved a scavenger hunt around the pond. The trail run was hosted as a fundraiser so that the Friends of Helderberg can continue generously supporting the Helderberg Nature Reserve. The day was a huge success filled with music, food, enthusiasm and many prizes.



Figure 91 - 93: Friends of Helderberg hosted a Fun Run at the Helderberg Nature Reserve on 21 March 2026

Scout evening walk

On the 6th of February 2026 Volunteer Wildfire Services and the 2nd Somerset West Scout group collaborated with a fire debrief and awareness session at Helderberg Nature Reserve. The scout's evening also included an evening patrol, knowledge and skills training relating to wildfire prevention and response. The evening concluded with a sleepout under the stars in the reserve as well. It is wonderful to support these groups in the reserve as this is a wonderful space to facilitate training and awareness.



Figures 94 - 96: Illustrating the Scouts' activities on 6 February 2026

10. STAFF MATTERS

10.1 Positions and Vacancies

- In January 2026, People & Conservation intern, Dante Wehr, handed in her resignation to pursue a career in teaching English to foreign students. Dante worked with the City of Cape Town for 5 years from her WIL to her position as a People and Conservation Officer. On her last day, management organised a farewell party for her to celebrate her time at Helderberg where a few speeches were provided and photos were captured.



Figures 97 - 99: Farewell party for Dante Wehr on her final day at HNR

- On the 10th of February 2026 Helderberg Nature Reserve welcomed Zizo Madolo as the new People & Conservation intern. Zizo filled the vacancy left following Dante Wehr's departure. Zizo is no stranger to Helderberg Nature Reserve. She was employed as a Work Integrated Learning student in 2018 and graduated from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology the same year. She further did her Bachelor of Technology in 2019. For the previous years, she has been working as an online English Teacher where she facilitated lessons to adults from various countries all over the world. She is very excited to be back and settled in quickly.



Figures 100: Zizo Madolo started her role as P&C officer intern at HNR

- The recruitment process to fill the vacant role of Reserve Supervisor at Harmony Flats Nature Reserve has concluded. The successful candidate will start on the 1st of May 2026.

10.3 Meetings

A robust schedule of internal and cross-departmental meetings took place this quarter to ensure operational alignment across the cluster:

Helderberg Nature Reserve
Quarterly Report – 1 January to 31 March 2026

Strategic & Operational Planning: Management engaged in multiple planning sessions focusing on the Paardevlei NR reserve vision, Helderberg area vehicle needs, staffing solutions, and student experiential project planning.

Conservation & Fire: Staff actively participated in bi-monthly BMB operations meetings, a dedicated Cape Nature firebreak discussion, and planning meetings for the Tygerberg prescribed ecological burn.

Infrastructure & Project Management: The Helderberg area team attended numerous site meetings regarding the Harmony Flats Multipurpose Centre construction, trail volunteers and construction, Morkel's Cottage bulk water pipeline repairs, and various fencing snags across the reserves.

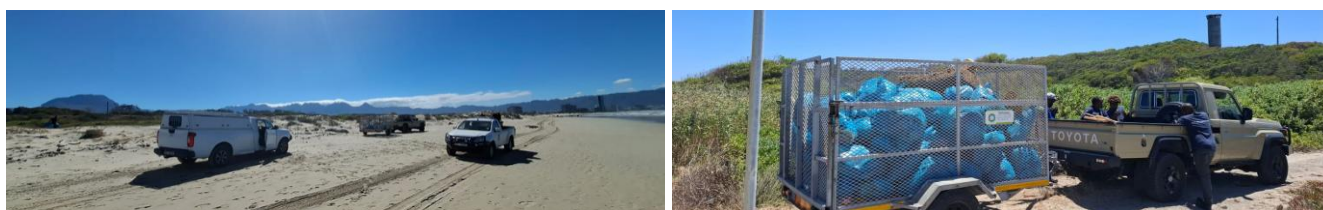
10.4 Training

- **Facilitation Skills:** With funding assistance from the Friends of Helderberg Nature Reserve, P&C Officer Amy Stoffels attended a 3-day Facilitation Skills training course from 18 – 20 February 2026. A highly valuable takeaway from this course was learning effective strategies to accommodate and include individuals with physical and mental disabilities in environmental education programmes.
- **Assessments & Outstanding Requirements:** While Work Capacity Tests (WCT) were successfully completed for incoming field staff, it was heavily noted that current Helderberg NR chainsaw and brushcutter operators urgently require refresher training to renew their expired operational licenses. Furthermore, management highlighted that corporate Waybill, Incapacity, and Chairperson training must be attended by relevant staff in the coming months.

11. LAW ENFORCEMENT

11.1.1 Land Invasion and Illegal Overnighting Illegal overnighting remains a persistent challenge, particularly along the coastal and river corridors:

- **Helderberg MPA & Lourens River:** Numerous overnight camps were detected. A major Joint Operation was executed on 6 February 2026 (involving Biodiversity Management, Law Enforcement, and Cleansing), resulting in three fines issued and three camps dismantled. Another joint operation on 20 March 2026 resulted in further fines and removals.
- **Paardevlei Nature Reserve:** Several active overnight structures were found in management blocks PNR 5 and 6, which were immediately dismantled and removed by reserve management.



Figures 101 - 102: Joint operation and clean up activity at Heldeberg MPA and coastal section

11.1.2 Uncontrolled Fires and Threats to Infrastructure

- **Overnighting and Waste Fires:** Illegal overnighting and waste sorting directly caused several fires. On 24 January 2026, suspected waste sorters sparked a reed fire at the Paardevlei mouth, which required CCT Fire and Rescue to extinguish. Attempted overnighting caused fires in block PNR 5 on 11 February and 2 March 2026.
- **Ritual Fires:** On 23 February 2026, a visitor was intercepted in the MPA dunes conducting a prayer ritual using open candles. The visitor was educated on the strict no-fire regulations in the dunes.
- **Pollution:** On 19 February 2026, a major sewer line overflowed from a manhole directly into the Paardevlei canal, requiring urgent intervention from the CCT Reticulation team.

Helderberg Nature Reserve
Quarterly Report – 1 January to 31 March 2026



Figures 103 - 105: Compliance patrols, engagements and clean up underway at Paardevlei

11.1.3 Poaching, Harvesting, and Environmental Non-Compliance

- **Snares and Poaching:** On 7 January 2026, five wire snares were detected and removed along the Langevlei and Denel fence lines.
- **Illegal Fishing:** On 23 January 2026, a fisherman was intercepted angling in the Lourens River mouth (within the MPA) and agreed to move. On 23 February 2026, two individuals were intercepted attempting to use a cast net to catch bait fish in the same river mouth.
- **Bark Stripping:** On 12 February 2026, severe bark stripping of Camphor trees was reported along the Lourens River PNE above Bridgewater.
- **Non-Compliant Domestic Animals:** Management dealt with numerous incidents of visitors walking dogs off-lead or bringing dogs into the restricted Helderberg MPA, as well as failing to clean up dog droppings on the Paardevlei trails. Furthermore, a herd of approximately 30 cattle repeatedly trespassed into the Harmony Flats Conservation Corridor from the Vlakke Plaas area, requiring engagement with the owners.

11.1.4 Dumping and Waste Sorting

- Significant dumping and illegal waste sorting (including copper burning) occurred at Reitz Park (Lourens River), the Paardevlei MPA mouth, and along the R44. Across the quarter, reserve staff transported five full bakkie-loads of dumped material and sorted waste to the Gordons Bay Waste Centre.

11.1.5 Boundary and Servitude Management

- **Paardevelei Boundary:** Management is actively addressing boundary and servitude compliance along the Paardevlei Nature Reserve perimeter. Recent interventions included resolving unauthorized structure extensions and addressing stormwater infrastructure issues with adjacent property occupants. These actions are part of ongoing, routine efforts to ensure the newly established reserve's boundaries remain secure and ecologically uncompromised.

11.2 Quemic statistics

- Throughout the quarter, visitor and staff safety management was supported by a dedicated Quemic Rangers deployed at Helderberg and Harmony Flats Nature Reserves on a 24/7 basis.
- To ensure compliance and visible security, these rangers proactively executed nature conservation law enforcement services, which heavily featured coordinated foot patrols at the reserves.
- During these routine patrols, rangers were mandated to liaise with the public regarding reserve rules, conduct additional surveillance on remote reserve infrastructure, and, when necessary, execute the searching of suspicious individuals and vehicles.

Helderberg Nature Reserve
Quarterly Report – 1 January to 31 March 2026

Table 3: Illustrating Quemic compliance records for January - March 2026

[illegible]

12. INFRASTRUCTURE & EQUIPMENT

12.1 Reserve Infrastructure and Maintenance

- Helderberg Nature Reserve: Routine maintenance was conducted throughout the quarter. Blocked drains at the Admin building were successfully cleared on 6 January 2026 and 5 February 2026. The Helderberg Environmental Centre (HEC) sliding door gate motor was repaired on 12 January 2026. Additionally, a water leak in the picnic area was detected on 19 March 2026 and fully repaired on 23 March 2026. A few picnic benches were replaced, and three shade structures were installed in the main picnic area. The old benches were a safety hazard and well weathered. The new benches were donated by the Friends of Helderberg Nature Reserve.



Figures 106 - 108: Shade structure construction and bench replacement at the HNR picnic area

- Paardevlei Nature Reserve Buildings & Gates: Most existing gates are in place and serviceable, with the south-eastern Estate gap gate scheduled for installation later in 2026. On 23 February 2026, the heritage buildings were photographed for a formal City of Cape Town Heritage assessment. It was determined that the Red Building will require a full heritage restoration plan, while the Green Building can be restored under a maintenance plan once the asbestos is treated.



Figures 109 & 110: Buildings at Paardevlei due for urgent maintenance work

Helderberg Nature Reserve
Quarterly Report – 1 January to 31 March 2026

- Paardevlei Boundary Fencing: The 1.5m Karoo wire fence along the R44 is earmarked for an upgrade to a 1.8m Clearview fence by the end of June. On 11 March 2026, the new fence line was GPS recorded to sit 10cm inside the old fence, and informal vendors along the R44 were warned of the impending works.



Figures 111: Surveying of Paardevlei property boundary underway

12.2 Capital projects

- **Fencing:**

As part of a capital project the Helderberg area were able to access the fencing tender to properly secure and replace old, dilapidated fencing. The reserve area is vast and proper perimeter fencing is extremely important to secure the property from ongoing and increasing threats. Initially the following fencing sites/sections were included and completed this financial year (phase 1):

1) Helderberg Nature Reserve

- Replacement of old, and burnt, game fence along the King's Kloof boundary
- Work yard perimeter
- Management house perimeter

2) Harmony Flats Nature Reserve

- Completion of eastern and southern boundaries. Budget constraints prevented completion in the previous financial year. The full perimeter will soon be secured.

3) Schapenberg Nature Reserve

- Perimeters along the southern boundaries



Figures 112 – 115: Installation of fencing at Harmony Flats & Schapenberg Nature Reserves

Phase 2: Through the mid-year adjustment budget process additional funds were secured to include and fence off additional perimeters at some of our sites. The new sections include Schapenberg Nature Reserve – northern (Morgenster) boundary and Paardevlei (along the R44). We are extremely fortunate to secure these perimeters. In Cape Town's complex urban-nature interface, a secure fence is often the first and most important line of defence in ensuring a conservation area remains ecologically viable and safe.

- **Harmony Flats Multi-purpose centre construction:**

Construction of the Harmony Flats Multipurpose Centre has been temporarily paused while the City undergoes a transition process to appoint a new contractor to complete the project. In the interim, reserve management has successfully secured the area by installing temporary fencing and deploying dedicated

security personnel to safeguard the site. The overall construction timeline will be extended to accommodate this handover process, and further updates will be provided to stakeholders once the new appointment is finalized.



Figures 116 – 118: Temporary fence installation at Harmony Flats to secure the multi-purpose construction site following termination of the construction contract.

12.2 Fleet Management (Vehicles)

12.2.1 Vehicle Incidents, Claims, and Maintenance

During the quarter, routine servicing and necessary minor repairs were required across the Helderberg area fleet. Several vehicles were sent to the workshop for maintenance and bodywork, which temporarily reduced overall fleet availability and caused some logistical delays in daily operations. The necessary insurance claims have been logged, and management is actively monitoring workshop turn-around times to ensure all vehicles are returned to active service as quickly as possible.

13. WASTE MANAGEMENT

13.1 Routine Biomass and Litter Operations

Continuous maintenance across the cluster necessitates the ongoing clearing and removal of significant quantities of biomass, primarily branches and grass clippings. This process is not only vital for general site upkeep but is a critical component of the reserve's fire risk mitigation strategy by actively reducing combustible fuel loads. All collected biomass is transported off-site to the Gordons Bay Waste Drop-off facility or the Swartklip waste depot.

13.2 Recycling and Diversion

The reserve maintains a dedicated focus on waste diversion. Waste collected across the Harmony Flats cluster sites is systematically separated into recyclable and non-recyclable streams. Additionally, recyclables from the designated bins at the Helderberg Administrative Building are routinely collected. All separated recycling is then transported to the Gordon's Bay Waste & Recycling Drop-off Facility for processing.

13.3 Strategic Waste Stream Assessment

To further improve environmental compliance, sustainability, and operational efficiency, a comprehensive waste stream assessment and management report will be completed for the Helderberg Nature Reserve in April 2026. The data and management recommendations derived from this extensive assessment will be utilized in the upcoming operational cycles to optimize current recycling protocols, improve site-wide waste diversion rates, and guide the strategic direction of the reserve's environmental footprint.