

Sustainable Seas Trust



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Joint PRESS RELEASE



Knysna Hope Spot inception

The Knysna Hope Spot Public Meeting was hosted in the Knysna Council Chambers on the 27th of May 2014. The Public Meeting was immediately followed by an inception meeting which led to the establishment of an open ended working group that will fall under of the auspices of the [Garden Route Initiative](#) (GRI).

GRI already consists of an inclusive audience representing the public, government, NGO's, Conservation, Organisations, business chambers, scientists /Yacht / Angling Club/Bird Clubs and more and as such meet one of the Hope Spot criteria. GRI further more seems an ideal home for the Hope Spot initiative as it is not solely be the project of any organisation but rather a collaborative effort of all who would like to be involved. While the ultimate aim is to appoint a candidate to champion the Hope Spot initiative, Vernon Gibbs-Hall will be the inter-mediatory representative of the working group assisted by Tracy Meintjies.

The Public Meeting was opened with a presentation by Vernon Gibbs-Hall who emphasised the fact that the Hope Spot initiative seemed add value to the [Naturally Knysna](#) "system blueprint for the town of Knysna based on ecosystem functioning and principles". Gibbs-Hall added that Hope Spots would promote:

- environmental protection to the lagoon and coast;
- tourism, skills development and job creation;
- education and awareness;
- add value to the [GRI](#) application for a Biosphere Reserve;
- and reinforce the Goukamma Marine Protected Area;
- and reinforce efforts to see Knysna become the Greenest Municipality;
- and assist with responsible economic development.

Dr Tony Ribbink, CEO of the Sustainable Seas Trust, the organisation facilitating the roll-out of Hope Spots in South Africa, emphasised the fact that Knysna may well be the only international Hope Spot focussed around an estuary.

Trustees: Robert Lowe (Chairman), Frederick Krohnert (representing Nedbank Trust), Richard Laing, Baldwin Ngubane, Frederick Oosthuizen, Anthony Ribbink, Michael Rodel, Louis van Vuren

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Quoting [Dr Sylvia Earle](#), the architect of the Hope Spot initiative and founder of the [Mission Blue](#) organisation, Dr Ribbink added that even a person in Johannesburg needs to realise that “with every breath you take you are connected to the ocean” and to realise that the “future is in our hands and that establishing a Hope Spot is an opportunity to harness the power of people in this sweet spot in time”.

“Hope Spots share research and knowledge, they develop pride and promote citizen science and offer enriching educational opportunities for all,” he said.

Sue Swain of [Biowise](#) inspired the public meeting with her Biomimicry presentation encapsulating a vision for Knysna “where the town functions like a forest and its socio-economic blueprint is based on biomimicry and ecosystem functioning”.

“This type of approach favours collaborative competition versus cut-throat competition; is resilient and like in nature suggests that we do a few things and we do them well”.

In his presentation Len du Plessis of SANParks' Knysna office emphasised the biodiversity found in Knysna, from the Cape Floristic kingdom to featuring the largest contiguous forest in South Africa as cases in point as to why Knysna should become an International Hope Spot, adding that “out of 297 estuaries in South Africa, the Knysna estuary is ranked number one”.

The Knysna Hope Spot initiative will be promoted during the upcoming Knysna Oyster Festival by the following organisations:

- Knysna Tourism Exhibition
- SANParks Exhibition
- Knysna Municipality Exhibition

While there is much work to be done Knysna can look forward to its launch as an international Hope Spot on the 7th of December 2014.