

# No help for birds

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WITH budgetary cuts, no mention was made in the Department of Environmental Affairs and Nature Conservation's budget debate on saving the flamingos who occupy the polluted waters of Kamfers Dam or the Houbara bustards whose survival is being threatened by a hunting project.

MEC Sylvia Lucas, during her budget speech yesterday, emphasised the challenges and constraints on service delivery and human resources.

"The department continues to struggle to achieve the requisite capacity levels, particularly in critical line function posts.

"The funding challenges are compounded by the fact that Environmental Management and Nature Conservation are specialist fields identified as scarce skills and it is extremely difficult to attract and retain qualified officials, especially from the Northern Cape Province.

"The budget does not adequately provide for expansion of the organisational capacity to deliver effectively and efficiently on its mandate.

"Despite the budgetary constraints that confront us, my department remains committed to

the good course of delivering a better and quality service to our people."

She said R3 million would go towards enforcing legislation regarding the indiscriminate disposal of medical and abattoir waste and municipal landfill sites.

She indicated that the Homevale sewerage works would be repaired and upgraded as a matter of urgency.

Lucas added that the Green Drop report regarding the poor waste water management in the Province was a matter of grave concern.

## Quality

She stated that five air quality monitoring stations were placed in all district municipalities to measure the type and quantity of particulate matter present in the ambient air.

The department will conduct 20 climate change awareness workshops at district municipalities during this year to minimise the adverse effects thereof through adaptation.

"We have identified 400 green jobs designed to mitigate the effects of climate change. These jobs will be created for youths, women and persons with disabilities through community-based

biodiversity and environmental projects such as waste recycling, cleaning and greening through the planting of trees as part of the township revitalisation project."

Lucas added that the department has entered into a partnership with key NGOs, including the Leslie Hill Succulent Karoo Trust, the Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Programme (SKEP), the Botanical Society of South Africa (BotSoc) and the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI). These partnerships are crucial in the success of the department's Protected Areas Expansion programme.

"These partners deserve a lot of credit for the enormous support that they give to the department considering their direct input into conservation of land under formal protection, presently a minimum amount of R18 million for four properties.

"The department remains hopeful that the Provincial Treasury will be able to match this amount over the next financial year for the management of our protected areas as well as providing fencing and infrastructure for Goegap Nature Reserve."

Lucas said the department intended proclaiming 38 635 hectares of public land and 121 300 hectares of private land as protected areas.