

# DA 'plastic roads' idea faces ANC dead stop



**PLASTIC ROAD:** Plastic is collected from rubbish dumps, packaged into bales and then melted down with bitumen to make a road

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"PLASTIC roads" may hold an answer to dealing with the Eastern Cape's R100-billion roads infrastructure backlog, the Democratic Alliance in the province believes.

The party says "plastic roads" had proven popular in countries such as the Netherlands, India and other parts of Europe.

In a motion tabled at the provincial legislature this week, the party wants the provincial government to investigate the possibility of adopting the plastic roads method instead of bitumen.

They said this was more reliable, cost-effective, easy to maintain and had a lifespan three times longer than that of a conventional road.

The party wants the provincial roads and public works department

to investigate whether such innovation could be used in the province.

Tabling the motion, DA MPL and shadow MEC for Roads and Public Works, Vicky Knoetze, told the legislature that time had come for the province to "think outside the box" and explore more innovative solutions to modern-day problems.

"Let's be a province of new opportunities and pioneering solution-driven initiatives. Let us be game-changers and be on the forefront of progress," Knoetze urged.

She said currently the province was faced with a roads construction and maintenance backlog of R100-billion.

She said the implementation of plastic roads would address thorny issues such as the backlog, poor quality of roads, lack of rural roads, lack of funds to provide and maintain

provincial roads, unemployment and the waste plastic epidemic.

"There are over 40 million kilometres of road in the world made from hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil. Normally roads comprise of a mix of rocks, sand, limestone and 10% bitumen which is extracted from crude oil.

"Waste plastic can replace a significant part of the bitumen. It makes construction and maintenance faster, simpler and more efficient compared to conventional road structures.

"It is made from recycled plastic, has a significantly smaller carbon footprint compared to conventional road structures.

"Its expected lifespan is three times longer than that of a conventional road, the expected construction time is 70% faster, and can cut construction cost up to 50%.

"It is environmentally friendly and

sustainable," Knoetze told the legislature. Knoetze said Cumbria in the United Kingdom was the first municipal council to have piloted the innovation, while India already had more than 33 790km of plastic roads, mostly in rural areas.

During subsequent debate of the motion, Knoetze's idea was shot down by the ruling ANC, with the party's MPL Vuyani Limba telling the sitting that plastic roads would not work in Africa.

Limba said the points raised by Knoetze were based on "pro-capitalist research from the UK".

He said it was an idea driven by environmentalists and would be "irresponsible" to support as it would make profit at the expense of the people.

"This would be at the expense of people's lives and a risk to our unpredictable weather patterns. If

there are protests and people burn tyres it would damage these roads," Limba said.

Knoetze said yesterday the reasons put forward by the ANC in not sustaining the motion, "were baseless".

"It is an indication of complete intellectual, political and constitutional bankruptcy," charged Knoetze.

UDM MPL Thando Mpulu said yesterday it was premature for his party to say whether Knoetze's idea was good or not.

He said the legislature was, instead of just shooting down the motion, supposed to have referred it to one of its portfolio committees, "preferably the roads and public works – one where the pros and cons of these plastic roads could have been thoroughly explored". — [asandan@dispatch.co.za](mailto:asandan@dispatch.co.za)