

Pilgrim's residents protest for service delivery

Frieda Paton

Despite rain and cold, many Pilgrim's Rest residents came out on March 23 to express their anger and frustration against the various Mpumalanga government departments responsible for service delivery in Pilgrim's Rest.

The outcome of the protest action was that the organisers would escalate the issues to national level due to the lack of response by provincial structures.

The ANC leadership of Ward 13A has deliberated for years, at various levels of the provincial political and government structures, concerning service delivery - but there has yet to be any positive response.

This was why members of the local branch of the ANC decided to organise the protest action.

The Office of the Premier of Mpumalanga was notified of the intent to hand over a memorandum more than a week



in advance.

The march was adjourned when no representative of the government had turned up to receive the memorandum by the stipulated time, and the organisers had also not received the promised feedback call.

"We will now proceed to send the memorandum on to the National Office" said Boysie Mdluli, organiser of the protest action.

As a living museum and heritage site, Pilgrim's Rest does not have a municipality, but is administered by the Mpumalanga Department of Public Works Roads and Transport.

Included in the memorandum was a demand for action by the Department of Economic Development and Tourism regarding the revitalisation of Pilgrim's Rest that it had been

tasked with more than a year ago. The opening of the closed businesses was another priority.

After five tender processes over the past six years, tenders for only nine out of 26 businesses premises - open and closed - have been successfully awarded.

Tenders for the remaining 17 premises were re-advertised two weeks ago.

Further demands included an 80% employment requirement for local residents as well as business opportunities for emerging local contractors; ownership of the houses in Newtown; the building of promised RDP houses – no new residential houses had been built in Pilgrim's Rest since the dawn of democracy in 1994; increased visible policing; greater assistance to talented local youth in culture and sports; and improved health services, especially ambulance response times.