

Poor roads threaten Lowveld's tourism

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MBOMBELA - Poor roads are ruining the Lowveld's economy. Businessman and KLCBT president Oupa Pilane, condemned the provincial government publicly this week for failing to maintain infrastructure.

"Poor road conditions and its affect on tourism is not being taken seriously," he said, and added that despite the protests that recently forced the Lowveld to it knees, the province's roads, especially the Panorama Route which is the jewel of tourism in the province, is being neglected. "Without addressing the infrastructure, no potential for growth can be unlocked," he said.

"This is not only one of the most popular tourist routes in Mpumalanga, it is also home to thousands of youth who are employed at various establishments along the route. It had the potential to create even more desperately needed jobs, especially for the youth in our province. It is a

low-hanging fruit that can be maximised to create new and inclusive enterprises that will see more of our previously disadvantaged people taking an active role in the tourism industry.

"However, despite its potential to create thousands of jobs, the route is one of the most neglected. Tourists do not want to come to the region because of these road conditions and those who are employed fear losing their jobs as the businesses they work for lose income as a result," Pilane explained.

The KLCBT has engaged government numerous times on this issue, especially the departments of economic development and tourism and public works, roads and transport (DPWRT).

"Our requests have fallen on deaf ears. Minor sub-standard interventions were attended to but due to the poor quality of work, the roads have become even more dangerous than they were before. We continue to receive negative feedback

from visitors - both domestic and international - about the conditions of our roads," he said.

Many bicycle and motorsport events have been cancelled or put on hold due to the roads, which is also having a detrimental effect on job creation in the area.

"Our province's reputation as the country's inland tourism destination of choice is being jeopardised by the inability of the Mpumalanga Provincial Government to play their part. This has to be corrected," Pilane stressed.

"We cannot do this alone, and therefore urgently request the Mpumalanga Provincial Government to step up and partner with us to create a shared vision that will see our province grow and flourish and not stagnate," Pilane concluded.

The DPWRT was approached for comment, but by the time of going to press, had not responded.

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