

SANParks to fix fence at last

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CROCODILE BRIDGE - Repair of the fence on the south-eastern border of the Kruger National Park (KNP) has commenced, six weeks after *Lowvelder* started questioning the park about it.

The newspaper reported a month ago how a number of elephants were driven through a gap in the KNP fence approximately two kilometres in length, at the confluence of the Komati and Crocodile rivers, which was confirmed by a source close to the newspaper.

“Our general manager of technical services has submitted the specifications and work has begun on some sections of the fence,” the general manager of communications at the KNP, Ike Phaahla, told *Lowvelder* this week.

After weeks of being unclear about who is responsible, it was confirmed that SANParks is performing the work, and that it is funded by the national Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI).

The department acknowledged that the borderline fencing project is managed through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the DPWI, Department of Environment,

Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) and SANParks.

According to the DPWI’s Thami Mchunu, SANParks is “the implementing agent for the construction and maintenance of borderline fencing between KNP and Mozambique”.

He stated that the DPWI provides funding for the project and the DEFF

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assists in developing the specifications for the projects.

Phaahla confirmed on October 26 that SANParks would be fixing the missing fence.

Yet on September 13, SANParks denied accountability by stating that the Animal Health Directorate for Disease Control should send their teams to repair the dilapidated and broken-down fence.

Dr Marietta Bronkhorst, deputy director at the DEFF’s animal health division, confirmed that they are

mandated only to prevent and control infectious diseases in terms of Regulation 20A of the Animal Diseases Regulations.

“Officials are primarily involved with the maintenance of some of the fences on the western and southern boundaries of KNP, where these fences serve a disease control purpose,” Bronkhorst explained.

Phaahla again confirmed that the funding of the fence on the eastern boundary between the KNP and Mozambique is primarily the responsibility of the DPWI, without indicating who actually usurps the responsibility to fix the fence.

He indicated that poaching incidents can be ascribed to multiple factors, which are not necessarily fence related. “SANParks ranger services follow an integrated compliance programme to promote area integrity, not limited to fence matters,” he said.

Mchunu specified that according the MoU between the DPWI, DEFF and SANParks, the function of SANParks is to compile the specifications for the construction and maintenance of border roads and maintenance of existing fences and to compile and implement the project execution plan, that entails construction and maintenance programmes.



The fence in tatters near the border with Mozambique