

Disintegrating R404 to be repaired in summer

Alida de Beer

Repairs to the disintegrating R404 between Blanco and the George Airport should start by mid-summer, according to the Department of Transport and Public Works.

This is a temporary measure until such time as the R404 is upgraded as part of the proposed link road between the N2 and N9/12.

According to Jandré Bakker, head of communications, a new road alignment for the R404 between Blanco and George Airport is currently in the preliminary design phase. This new road forms part of the proposed link, also known as the George Western Bypass.

The department responded to a query from *George Herald* regarding the poor condition of the R404, which was rehabilitated a few years ago (completed in 2015) at a cost of more than R90-million. The newspaper reported on this last year, but at the time, efforts to obtain the department's

comment were unsuccessful.

In the latest communication with the department, it did not respond directly to a question whether the contractor would be held accountable for the repair of the road.

Bakker said, "The Department of Transport and Public Works is aware of what could be considered a premature failing in this section of the road. While a road is planned and constructed with a design life, external factors may influence such failure."

Last year, Kayleigh Brogneri of Baseline Civil Contractors, the company that did the rehabilitation, said the director, DC Geldenhuys, would not be commenting. The paper's latest e-mail queries also received no response.

Phased approach for Western bypass

Bakker said a phased design approach for the George Western Bypass is underway.

"The current key focus of this project is addressing the safety concerns in close vicinity



Repairs to the road surface on the R404 should start by mid-summer, according to the Department of Transport and Public Works. *Photo: Alida de Beer*

to George Airport. In this first phase the first portion of the R404 is rerouted, as well as a new intersection between TR2/9 (R102) and MR347 (R404) constructed. The department is however cognisant of the time this will take to implement and therefore work to repair the road where current failures are evident is expected to be advertised towards the end of May. If all goes according to plan, an appointed team will be on site by

mid-summer."

Fancourt resident Sal Marsilio, a regular user of the R404, said ratepayers' money was spent on its rehabilitation. "It is unheard of for an almost new road to disintegrate so fast. Besides the fact that the crumbling surface is dangerous, it is a very busy route that is used by visitors arriving at the George Airport and those travelling from the north through Blanco. It should receive urgent attention."