



**Publication:** Pretoria News - Main

**Title:** Public works blamed for Bushbuckridge flooded bridge

**Publish date:** 13 Dec 2022

**Page:** 5

**Reach:** 12532

**AVE:** R 8845.41

**Author:** Tshwarelo Hunter Mogakane

## Public works blamed for Bushbuckridge flooded bridge

TSHWARELO HUNTER MOGAKANE

THE Bushbuckridge Local Municipality in Mpumalanga has blamed the provincial Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport for an unreliable bridge that has been keeping motorists from going to work during flash floods.

Bushbuckridge mayor Sylvia Nxumalo was accused of allowing ANC tenders to pocket R5 million for the upgrade of the main bridge between Acornhoek and Hluvukani Village along the R40.

DA councillor Samuel Mlisi said the party had watched public infrastructure deteriorate under Nxumalo's leadership at the council.

"Following heavy rains in Mpumalanga, the condition of this road and bridge has become worse. As a result, community members cannot travel via this bridge to get to work or town.

"The bridge was built by a local businessman 30 years ago. The municipality's top brass and ANC cadres are having a field day with tenders aimed at improving the bridge.

"It is understood that, in 2015, a sum of R5m was set aside for this project. However, the usual prevailed as the contractor did little work and the rest of the money was channelled to individuals who lack integrity.

Mlisi said it was unacceptable that on several occasions residents had taken it upon themselves to fix the bridge using rocks and sand.

He accused the ANC in the municipality of neglecting residents.

"ANC councillors in this ward have also failed to represent the community at large. Various pleas from the community have fallen on deaf ears. There is no communication link between them and the council. These individuals purporting to be councillors do not care if capital projects planned in the IDP (independent development planning) are realised.

"Once again, mayor Nxumalo failed to consider the well-being and interests of the residents and, most importantly, provide adequate service delivery," Mlisi said.

He said Hluvukani Road was due for upgrades and repairs as the project was scheduled to start in September, yet nothing had been done to date.

A Hluvukani resident told the *Pretoria News* motorists were forced to take unsafe routes to get to work.

Spokesperson for the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality, Phumolani Thovakhale, said it was not the municipality's fault the project had not taken off.

"The bridge they are talking about is for our sister department (public works), and upon enquiring I was informed that somewhere around 2015 public works allocated some funds to upgrade/fix the bridge," Thovakhale said, indicating she did not have the exact figures and scope of work.

"I did not get an answer from public works. Remember, there are some roads and bridges that are supposed to be maintained by the municipality and some by (public works). I request you check with (public works) because they are the ones who implemented the project."

Thovakhale said if the municipality tried to spend money to fix the bridge, it would be flagged as irregular expenditure as the asset "does not belong to the municipality".

"The director of technical services instructed the manager of roads and bridges in my presence (on Thursday) to go and do the assessment of the damage and recommend what needs to be done. Thereafter, (public works) and the municipality will have to find a way of attending to the problem for the safety of the community members who use that bridge every day and not continue to be inconvenienced by who does what and where," she said.

The Mpumalanga Department of Public Works, Roads and Transportation is under the political leadership of MEC Mandla Ndlovu, who is from Bushbuckridge. He is also the provincial chairperson of the ANC and was in charge of the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, which monitored the performance of Mpumalanga municipalities.

The communication team in Ndlovu's office did not respond to a media enquiry sent on Friday.