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DFW resorts to DIY pothole fixes

Earlier this month, the commander of the Drakenstein Farm Watch (DFW) boasted about the group's DIY efforts in repairing potholes in Paarl's rural areas and mentioned collaborating with the Cape Winelands District Municipality (CWDM).

In a statement posted on Facebook on 5 April, DFW said: "CWDM and Private DFW Fire and Rescue groups jointly fix potholes in Paarl rural area. The DFW Fire and Rescue group started a public road-repair project of one of the roads leading to the DFW headquarters, which was badly damaged."

The volunteer organisation said heavy rains, trucks and farm tractors had incurred heavy wear-and-tear on the road over the years.

"The DFW commanders decided to take the job of repairing the public road surface and potholes on themselves and started the tar and bitumen process to fill the holes on the side of Sonstraal Road."

The general commander, Daan van Leeuwen Boomkamp, added that halfway through its DIY process "the inspector of the Cape Winelands Road Maintenance Services had come to see what was going on, so called for by the DFW chairperson.

"Willingly and ready to assist

with a CWDM road repair team, now two teams jointly repaired the remaining part of this important road. Daily hundreds of school children from the rural area use this stretch [of road] to get to school."

Van Leeuwen Boomkamp added that the DFW found the responsible authorities "most cooperative and appreciative. It's all a matter of how the issue is presented. We thank CWDM's inspector, Jacobus Abrahams, for his positive input and assistance."

In the feedback to *Paarl Post's* inquiry, the CWDM confirmed its Technical Services team in Paarl noticed that a team of community members were attempting to fill potholes on the Knolvlei Road, Klein Nederburg.

The team, who had been trimming trees and other vegetation, were concerned for the safety of the community members and commuters and made arrangements to complete the repair tasks themselves.

"While we recognise we have faced a few challenges in fulfilling our maintenance schedule, rural road maintenance remains the responsibility of the CWDM's Technical Services," shared the Executive Mayor of the Cape Winelands Dr Elna von Schlicht.

"During the last few months, we have, as is the case with many industries, experienced



CWDM and DFW is seen jointly fixing potholes in the Paarl rural area.

difficulty in sourcing materials such as bitumen, and our schedules were set back quite a bit by the heavy downpours received in February, which also resulted in damage that required emergency repairs. However, our teams are quickly catching up, and roads are prioritized according to the severity of the damage and threat to public safety."

While the District Municipality applauded the DFW's initiatives in alerting the CWDM to their situation, they wish to appeal to members of the public to avoid taking matters into their own hands. The most important reason for this is road user safety, not only during repair but also after the repairs have been affected.

Reasons for this is explained as follows:

1. The CWDM has the

resources to ensure road repairs take place in accordance with road safety legislation, i.e., the use of necessary signage and barricading to prevent accidents.

2. The CWDM has road engineers who can ensure repairs are correctly executed, that materials and techniques applied ultimately lead to a road safe for all.

Furthermore, the district municipality's Technical Services is mandated to perform road maintenance work on 3 200 km of rural and gravel roads. The CWDM, together with the Western Cape Department of Transport and Public Works, has a programme in place for public partnerships with landowners wishing to improve the roads leading to and from their properties. This has been

successfully implemented in several areas.

The municipality said it is aware of the bleak situation in other provinces, where insurance organisations have contracted professional contractors to maintain roads. This too is the result of collaboration and has had several successful outcomes.

It is, however, illegal in terms of the National Road Safety Act for private organisations or citizens to undertake road works of any kind on public roads without the written permission of the responsible municipality.

"We would like to encourage citizens to alert us to any problems that are being experienced on the roads that fall into our jurisdiction," said Mayor Dr Elna von Schlicht, "but to keep in mind our resources are limited and we are addressing issues as speedily as we can."

In conclusion, the DFW expressed this sentiment: "We urge everyone not only to complain, but become proactive in actually assisting in uplifting and repairing in one's area."

However, the CWDM warns those who wish to take matters into their hands, firstly, to report lacking or broken-cum-non-intact infrastructure to the relevant departments and await feedback before rolling up their sleeves simply to do it themselves.