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Title: Henley Dam Bridge reopening hailed as milestone for safety

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Henley Dam Bridge reopening hailed as milestone for safety



FROM LEFT: Ward councillor Milungisi Zondi, Msunduzi Deputy Mayor Mxolisi Mkhize, KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport and Human Settlement MEC Siboniso Duma, Inkosi Vusizwe Zondi and the Department of Transport and Human Settlement acting HOD Smanga Ngubo, during the opening of Welisizwe Rural Henley Dam Bridge last Friday. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

NTOMBIZETHU NGCOBO

The long-awaited completion of the Welisizwe Rural Henley Dam Bridge was officially marked last Friday, with the construction hailed as a step towards ensuring the safety of residents.

Department of Transport and Human Settlement MEC Siboniso Duma opened the new 42-metre, five-ton Bailey Bridge in Henley Dam, Pietermaritzburg.

The project was launched in response to the devastating 2022 floods that claimed lives in the area, and was carried out by the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), in collaboration with the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure and the Department of Transport. The construction cost R17 million.

As part of the Welisizwe Rural Bridges Programme, the bridge was prioritised

following a series of incidents in which residents lost their lives while attempting to cross the river to access the Pietermaritzburg city centre.

The goal is to provide safe and accessible crossings for pupils and communities near dangerous rivers.

Duma said many lives had been lost during summer. "This project started last year and created employment for 74 local community members, boosting both livelihoods and the local economy.

"We are pleased to hear that the community is happy about this bridge. They have started using it," said Duma.

He urged residents to prevent damage to the structure. "We want to urge them to protect it. A bridge is a means and source of interaction," he said.

Msunduzi Municipality Deputy Mayor Mxolisi Mkhize said residents would no

longer fear for their safety when crossing during the rainy season.

"There will be interaction between the old Henley and the new one. It will greatly improve safety and access for residents. They will also be able to take a shorter route when going to town," he said.

Ward councillor Mlungisi Zondi said he was grateful that the bridge had finally been completed. "I want to express gratitude for the partnership between all these departments. Residents are happy. So many lives have been lost here, now they are going to be saved.

"We are concerned about trucks carrying building material passing here and ignoring signs that indicate they are not allowed to use this bridge," he said.

He added that this would be a setback for the community.

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