

Publication: District Mail - Main

Title: SLP- school build restarts

Publish date: 27 Aug 2025

Page: 2

Reach: 36000

AVE: R 52195.00

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SLP-school build restarts

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The multi-million rand high school construction project in Sir Lowry's Pass has resumed after being stalled as a result of a labour dispute for over two years.

Last Tuesday (19 August), Ward 84 councillor Norman McFarlane expressed the community's shared elation, announcing the joyous development after the construction project's two-and-a-half-year hiatus.

"At long last, the difficulties with finding high school placements for learners from Sir Lowry's Pass Village, and the attendant transport problems that plagued learners and parents will soon be a thing of the past."

He reported that the site was formally handed over to the contractor with completion scheduled for November 2026, in time for the 2027 academic year.

Jandré Bakker, spokesperson for the provincial Department of Infrastructure, confirmed that the site was handed over to the new contractor on Monday 18 August.

This, he said, came after the contract with the original contractor was terminated, which resulted in a dispute and subsequent legal challenges. Bakker explained the dispute had to reach a level of resolution before progress could be made in terms of going to market with a new open tender to complete the works.

PROCUREMENT PROCESS

"The urgency of completing the school has always been a priority for the Western Cape Government. To resume construction a new contractor had to be appointed. An open tender procurement process was followed for the Sir Lowry's Pass High School completion project to select this contractor.



Construction of the brand-new high school in Sir Lowry's Pass is back on track.

Photo: Norman McFarlane/Facebook

With the process now complete the site has been handed over to the new contractor."

He said Rapid Builders was awarded the contract to complete the school construction project following the provincial government's stringent tender process.

Bakker added that no modifications to the original approved building plans for the facility had been undertaken. It will be a large school that is expected to accommodate 1 110 learners.

The school building will include an administrative block, 30 classrooms, one physical science or chemistry laboratory, one biology or life-sciences laboratory, one computer room, one multipurpose classroom, one multimedia centre, a hall, ablution facilities and a sports field with two exercise slabs.

Bakker said volunteers from the broader community are engaged by the Project Liaison Committee (PLC) and their details accepted in consultation with appointed social facilitator and Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) representatives. The PLC was established on Monday, in line with the EPWP policies and procedures.

The committee acts as a bridge between

the contractor, government departments and local community, facilitating communication, problem solving, and helping residents access job and business opportunities created by the infrastructure project.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Bakker emphasised the establishment of the PLC to ensure transparent and structured engagement with the community as well as strengthened project management and contract monitoring mechanisms to keep the project on track.

Open communication and community involvement will be ensured in collaboration with local residents. The department used formal community meetings to announce the project's resumption.

"A formal pre-site handover meeting took place on 29 July to communicate the restart of the project and introduce the newly-appointed contractor to the community," Bakker said. "Concerns raised during these engagements were formally addressed, and the communities' support for the project was confirmed at the site handover meeting on 18 August."

He said the primary goal is to provide a safe, modern and well-equipped learning environment that will not only alleviate the current shortage of schools, but also grant easier access to quality education closer to home, reduce travel burdens and foster a stronger sense of local community.

More educational resources, ones that were easily accessed, has long been advocated for many in the Helderberg.

"It is intended to be a hub for community activities and a symbol of investment in the future. By accommodating 1 100 learners we aim to reduce the pressure on existing schools significantly and ensure more children in the Helderberg have access to excellent education."