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# Residents demand action after years of road neglect

**Tumelo Waga Dibakwane**

MBOMBELA - Residents and business owners are beyond fed up with the state of a road they claim have not been maintained in 15 years.

The Sterkspruit Road connecting Alkmaar to the N4, D194, D957 and D1175, have them tearing their hair out. Despite countless written requests, phone calls and in-person visits to the provincial Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport (DPWRT), nothing has been done.

The deteriorating infrastructure is not just an inconvenience, but causes significant damage to vehicles and is crippling local business.

Johan Nel, a businessman in the tourism industry who has been operating in the area for 25 years, recalls a time when the road was regularly maintained. "For the past 15 years, we haven't seen any action," he said.

According to Nel, rain turns the road into an impassable mud pit. During dry spells it is pockmarked with potholes and ditches. "We are not asking for a tarred road, only a repair of the road," he pleads.

Nel is now even considering laying off staff due to the negative financial impact on his business. Guests who booked a camping week cancelled because of the road's condition. "I am losing business and people are going to lose their jobs. I urge the department to please maintain the road. While a tarred road would be preferable, if there is no budget, it would help if the municipality regraded and regavelled it."

Another frustrated resident, Marius van Zyl, wrote to the DPWRT about the poor



Some of the potholes on the Sterkspruit Road. > Photo: Tumelo Waga Dibakwane

condition of the Sterkspruit Road, a crucial artery connecting the area to the N4.

He emphasised the road's disrepair poses "serious challenges, risks and costs to motorists, pedestrians and local residents."

Van Zyl stresses the road is "virtually impassable for standard vehicles" and increases the risk of accidents and vehicle damage. He has urgently requested a clear response from the department, outlining measures the DPWRT could undertake to rectify the situation.

Even an international tourist voiced her dismay. Karen Pereira described a harrowing experience, having to "crawl along the road, often driving on the opposite side, because of its shocking condition. Exposed rock,

deep corrugated ruts and water seepage through the middle of the road, as well as holes and narrowing of the road, make it impossible to visit the area". Pereira also remembers a time when the road was professionally maintained.

Now, desperate taxpaying individuals have resorted to attempting repairs themselves. The community's patience has worn thin. They are united in their demand for urgent intervention from the authorities to restore their roads, and in turn, their livelihoods.

The spokesperson of the DPWRT, Bongani Dhlamini, acknowledged receiving Lowvelder's enquiry. He promised to revert back, but he had not responded by time of going to press.