



public works
& infrastructure

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STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE, PATRICIA DE LILLE

Oversight visit to inspect progress on DPWI flood intervention projects in KwaZulu Natal

In April this year, following the devastating flooding in the KwaZulu Natal province, Deputy Minister, Noxolo Kiviet and I led a visit to the flood affected areas to inspect damage to State-owned properties and other areas of work where the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure's (DPWI) assistance was needed.

Working together with other spheres of government, one of the key interventions and forms of support by DPWI was the provision of built environment professionals through the State-Owned Entities that fall within the ambit of the Department, as well as support provided through the regional office on behalf of national - and provincial departments.

A volunteer database of 304 built environment professionals was developed to form part of teams that were made available to COGTA to assess, scope, cost, design and implement critical reconstruction and building work associated with bridges, roads, storm water and other critical infrastructure.

Internal departmental resources focussed on the 53 government owned buildings in the KZN province and the 12 government owned buildings in Eastern Cape province that were damaged through both emergency facilities management services – and construction projects in order for them to be made fit for purpose and usable by client departments in the shortest possible time.

The department also identified suitable land parcels to be used for the resettlement of households that have been left homeless with the focus also being placed on alternative building solutions to mitigate climate change and provide for safe living spaces.

Prior to the resettlement, scientific information collected was applied to establish issues such as flood lines and to identify soil types that are unstable and fail during as a result of severe precipitation in order to ensure that resettlement households and new housing development projects are not exposed to same risks of the past. This process is undertaken in collaboration with key role players in human settlements development. The process of verification for suitability of land parcels by the Housing Development Agency (HDA) is currently in the final stages.

DURBAN AIR FORCE BASE

One of the key sites which DPWI had to repair was the Durban Air Force Base. This work is now 100% completed. The work at the Air Force Base included: repairing damaged roofs, floors, walls, downpipes and gutters. Other work now completed, included: replacing generators, repairing blocked sewerage drains and removing mud sludge from the hanger room at the base. Scoping for further critical construction works is under way in order to secure the required funding. This process is projected to be completed by the end of August 2022.

DPWI/STATE-OWNED ASSETS

Numerous other State-owned buildings in KZN were damaged in the floods where repair work was needed on 23 courts, 18 SANDF facilities and five SAPS facilities. Work has been completed at several courts including the Pietermaritzburg, Mtunzini, Glencoe Magistrates courts where repairs were done to leaking roofs, electrical faults repaired, pump repairs and drainage of water. Roof leaks were also repaired at the Phungashe, Msinga, Ezakheni, Pinetown and Port Shepstone Magistrates courts amongst other court buildings. All repairs projects at 23 damaged courts in KwaZulu Natal have now been completed by DPWI.

Work to repair leaking roofs has also been completed at Msombomvu SAPS, Mthatha Police Academy, Bolotwa SAPS, Cedarville SAPS, Wellington Prison, Mount Ayliff Prison and Mount Ayliff Labour Centre.

LAND PARCELS

A desktop analysis undertaken by HDA to 258 land parcels which was subjected to Geo physical analysis in May 2022.

Further verification to determine land suitability was undertaken by HDA.

On the 1st June 2022, a request was received from HDA to process 14 land parcels that have been determined suitable for housing solutions, including availability of Bulk Engineering Services.

Further ownership verification undertaken on 3 June 2022 revealed that, out of 14 land parcels: 6 are under DPWI; and 8 are under KZN Provincial Government.

Further verification of the land parcels revealed that some of the DPWI owned land parcels were allocated for government departments' needs and three DPWI owned land parcels are available for the resettlement of communities.

The HDA has identified additional five (5) DPWI land parcels that may be suitable for relocation and support for housing solutions and verification took place to confirm if these properties are available for release to accommodate displaced residents.

In total, 5 land parcels were confirmed available noting further engagements with the DPWI Regional Office was needed.

DPWI is currently processing 5 properties to be released in KZN and these will be finalised as soon as possible to allow the HDA and local authorities to commence the processes to resettle displaced communities.

RURAL BRIDGES

One of the key interventions by the DPWI is the coordination of installing modular steel bridges, known as the Welisizwe Rural Bridges Programme.

These bridges are installed mostly in rural areas, with the expertise and support of SANDF soldiers, the DPWI coordinating the project and the provincial Department of Transport allocating the Funding for the bridges to be installed.

The installation of the bridges also provides work opportunities for residents in affected communities through EPWP while artisans are also appointed through the DPWI's artisan development programme.

For the 23 bridges to be installed in KwaZulu Natal, the programme will see 80 community members employed through EPWP for each bridge.

In the KZN province, 18 bridges were planned for construction for the current financial year. However, due to the severe flooding, an additional 5 areas were identified in need of bridges. This brings the total number of bridges to be installed in KZN to 23 for this financial year.

The DPWI has commenced with the preparations for the installation of the bridges and SANDF soldiers were deployed in July this year.

Teams were deployed to the 23 sites to enable the simultaneous installation of all bridges at the 23 sites.

Preparatory work has begun at a number of sites such as camp site establishment, site clearance and the arrival of construction plant material.

The bridges are to be constructed in the Nongoma, Abaqulusi, Umvoti, Ndwedwe, eThekwini, Msunduzi and Impendle municipalities in KwaZulu Natal.

The KZN Department of Transport has approved a budget of just over R242million for the 23 bridges. The installation of the bridges will commence in the coming weeks as soon as the funds are released from the provincial department.

Coordination at a National, Provincial and Local Government level under the leadership of Ministers, MECs and office bearers/officials of local government is very effective and efficient, proving government's ability to deliver diverse integrated solutions to the disaster.

Additional construction projects are currently in the process of planning towards procurement and sourcing of funds is projected to be complete at the end of August 2022. Work in all other work streams is progressing well.

The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure is participating actively in the provincial and national reporting structures and the National Joint Flood Coordination Committee.

The Deputy Minister and I were pleased with the progress made over the past few months however there are areas where more urgency is needed to complete repair work quicker, especially the installation of the rural bridges. We will continue working with all spheres of government to ensure that projects are completed and that service delivery is achieved to the many communities in need.

We continue to track the progress of these projects through receiving weekly reports but Deputy Minister Kiviet and I thought it was important that we came back to the province to see the progress first hand on the various projects.

We will return to the province in the coming months to hand over bridges to communities in need and ensure that they have proper access to schools, places of work and other amenities.

ENDS

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