

Plett Tourism AGM 2019

Welcome

I would like to Welcome you all to the Plett Tourism AGM for 2019 and thank you for taking the time to attend this very important meeting which is not only a normal AGM but the end of a 3 year period and, therefore, the end of the period in office of the existing Plett Tourism Board and the election of a new board for the next 3 year period.

Without in any way detracting from this welcome, I would like to recognise, and welcome the following:-

1. Peter Wallington – the inaugural chairman of PT under whose chairmanship PT rapidly blossomed into probably the most successful tourism board in the country widely recognised for its outstanding achievements which resulted in a never before seen growth in the number of tourists visiting our town. Sadly Peter has been lost to us but I am sure that we can count on his help as and when needed. On the positive side, he has left behind a well trained, highly competent and dedicated team that are carrying on the excellent work initiated by Peter. I am sure you will all want to join me in thanking Peter for his dedication and hard work under often trying circumstances.

One of Peter's most notable endeavors for which he has not received due and proper recognition, is his ongoing and persistent attempts to develop tourism initiatives within the townships. Unfortunately, most of the more significant projects, all of which are thoroughly researched and ready to fly, fell on deaf ears within the corridors of power and those who control and can access the funding for such development and have as yet to come to fruition. I believe that we need to honor Peter's considerable work in this regard and ensure that his work is brought to fruition and to this end, I have already entered into very positive and proactive discussions with the Economic Development department of the municipality and sincerely hope and expect that the incoming board will lobby and work with Economic Development to bring these developments to fruition.

2. Sivu Nkomo from the Bitou Township Forum and his team whose support and input are much needed to achieve what I have just spoken of and that is to help create and support opportunities for a more inclusive tourism industry. I thank you for being here and we look forward to receiving your positive input later during the meeting.

3. Senior representatives of the Municipality
4. The Chairman of the PAA, Peter Lloyd from which organisation we have enjoyed unstinting support.
5. The Chairman of the ratepayers association from whom we have also enjoyed so much support
- 6.
- 7.
8. Ian Hunter and Tony Lubner who have been there from the formative stages of Plett Tourism and worked long and hard hours well beyond the call of duty to ensure that Plett Tourism became and continues to be a highly effective instrument for the furtherance of tourism and, consequently, the economy of Plett with a stable base from which to operate. Tony and Ian have decided not to stand for re-election and although we wave them goodbye and thank them very sincerely for their efforts, both have offered to avail the new board of their considerable experience and knowledge of the tourism industry on an ongoing basis.
9. All the other outgoing board members who have worked so hard to maintain the momentum of Plett Tourism in very difficult circumstances, some of whom we hope to see on the new board.
10. I hope that I have not forgotten anyone who should be specifically recognised but if I have please put it down to age as opposed to any intention to leave you out.

We should never underestimate the importance of the tourism industry in our town and our need to nurture, protect and develop the industry and that is why you are all here – and I laud you for that.

Chairman's Annual Report

It was my hope that Peter would give this address as outgoing chairman as he has so much to offer, but he has indicated that for various reasons, he would prefer not to and I must respect that. Trouble is that I do not have Peter's knowledge and skills and so will be adopting a somewhat different format this year commencing with some opening comments from me followed by an address from the manager of Plett Tourism, Cindy Trollip, who you all know well. She is the lady on the ground – unlike Peter who was the executive chairman and effective CEO and driving force behind Plett Tourism, I am a non-executive chairman who chairs meetings, makes sure everything remains on track, compliant, orderly and tries to guide the process to ensure that optimum outcomes are achieved at the end of the day.

Asking Cindy to do the presentation, which will be relatively brief but instructive, was motivated by a presentation before the existing board by the Plett Tourism Team a couple of weeks back. I am sure that all other board members would join me in saying that we were blown away by the knowledge, attention to detail, commitment, technical skills and outstanding achievements of the team who are highly regarded amongst tourism organisations for how advanced they are in their approach. I fairly regard them as the best tourism team in the country. I would love you all to hear the entire presentation but that took some hours and we simply do not have the time. I am hoping, however, that you will get a glimpse of what was presented to us through Cindy's presentation.

Before handing over to Cindy, I would like to say two things that impact on the future of Plett Tourism and although this will take a bit of time, I really hope that you will bear with me as there is much misunderstanding that abounds about what PT's primary function and capacity is:-

- The first is to answer the question of what Plett Tourism is and what its primary function is as I constantly come across conflicting questions and suggestions regarding this issue. Plett Tourism is what is known as a DMO – a destination marketing organisation. It's primary function, therefore, is to market Plett and the Bitou area generally as a prime destination for tourists i.e. to get tourism feet into the town. To do this, a lot of research is carried out by the team to determine what our primary tourism assets are and to build a brand and marketing plan around those assets to try and achieve the maximum number of tourism feet in the town. Once the tourist is brought to a stage of planning a trip to Plett, it is then up to the individual tourism operator to produce and market a suitably attractive product so that the tourist favors and

patronizes their product. It is not within Plett Tourism's ambit or in the best interests of the town to either:-

- Market the individual tourism offering; or
- Try to attract tourists on the basis of tourism products that are not uppermost in the tourists mind when looking for a tourism destination. In other words it does not work for PT to market street racing when tourists look to places like Plett to provide beautiful beaches, sporting opportunities, security and peace.

It may be that certain activities such as whale-watching, trail running, wine festivals etc. are used as marketing tools by PT to encourage tourists to visit the town and those conducting such activities will inevitably benefit as a result but the primary intention is to get tourism feet into the town as opposed to marketing such activities. Tourist are certainly not going to come to Plett to stay at Bruce Richardson's B&B (not that I have one). It is up to me to have a website and market my product to benefit from the tourists visiting the town. My experience from my own recent travels – Booking.com

I regularly get asked as to why PT does not market certain products. I trust that I have given you the answer. This does not mean that the team do not seek to depict a wide range of products but the tourist is the customer – we need to market the town on the basis of what market research reveals that tourists are looking for and not what we think they should be buying.

This does not mean that we cannot brainstorm these things and try and modify and improve the approach but it must, of need be, be within the constraints of what the tourist is looking for.

PT has also been criticized for failing to develop more inclusive tourism. It has tried valiantly and with a lot of hard work to do this but this is not its core function and nor does it have the budget – that is why we have a dept of economic development in the municipality. They have both the mandate and access to the funding to undertake this task. PT can only play a supporting and guiding role to ensure that tourism products, when developed, are marketable within the Plett brand and this it has done. I don't want to point fingers here as a very proactive and cooperative environment is actively being worked on with ED to achieve the desired outcomes but it is necessary that people do understand which organisation is supposed to be carrying out the various tasks.

- The second issue is that PT cannot rely solely on the municipality for funding. So much energy and time has been spent on this issue and the net outcome in the 2019/20 year is that we have had our presented budget cut by 80% and our

previous budgetary allocation cut by 50%. As I stand here, the budgetary allocation for the ongoing work of PT promised to be in the PT bank account by the last Friday in June has still not been paid across. No tourism organisation can be effective on the basis of short-term uncertain funding. Tourism is, in essence, a long-term industry based on consistency and reliability. If, for example, you are trying to attract a sponsor, they are not interested to hear that you have 6 months of funding at a certain level and then who knows. If you tell them that they will take their sponsorship money elsewhere.

My involvement in tourism commenced with a lengthy stint in Zimbabwe where, in addition to being directly involved in the industry, I sat on the Zimbabwe Council of Tourism exco which was funded by contributions from the private sector and subsequently I was an inaugural member of the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority board which was effectively a parastatal solely funded by a levy charged against tourists – a levy of 2% was added to all tourism related bills and was paid over to the ZTA.

Every single resident of this town benefits from the tourism industry either directly or indirectly – even someone like myself who does not in any way rely on this town for my income. Although there are other supporting industries in town, take away tourism and they will all collapse in time. The reason why we have a Woolworths, a Chequers, a Pick and Pay, hardware shops, hairdressers and so on ultimately is dependent on the tourism industry as are the vast bulk of employment opportunities. As a town we need to all make some sort of contribution towards supporting the activities of PT. You will all recall those first Halcyon days of PT when PT had a 3-year mandate and the massive growth in tourism arrivals achieved during that period. Imagine what we could achieve in terms of accelerating the economy with a permanent mandate underpinned by private sector funding. Imagine how all the businesses in town would prosper as a result and the benefit spread throughout the economy. If we want prosperity, we need to invest in it. If we spread the load widely, the cost to each contributor will be very small for the huge benefits we receive in living in this beautiful town.

I will be urging the incoming board to embrace this issue with vigour.

Any questions

Cindy over to you.