

## Plett Tourism AGM 2023

### Chairman's Address

I would like to welcome Counsellors Bill Nel and Jessica Kam Kam, Bitou Municipal LED officer Afrika Sebezo, Media Representatives, Representation from Natures Valley Trust, Cape Nature and San Parks, Board Members of the Plett Tourism Association and lastly but not but not by any means least the Plett Tourism members in attendance to the 2023 AGM, as without all of your support Plett Tourism would not be what it is today.

The Board has successfully discharged its oversight mandate during the past 12 months and has met at approximately 3-month intervals as required in the PT constitution. I would like to thank all Board members for their time and commitment in support of our hard-working CEO and PT team.

Looking back to the 2022 AGM, I find it difficult to believe the extent to which the face of Plett has changed in the past 12 months. Plett is now a busy town most of the time with many more permanent residents and I believe that this is in no small measure due to the constant hard work and innovation of our Plett Tourism team and I am going to share a personal example of “making a difference”

On Monday I went out with the Ocean Safaris whale viewing boat to accompany some political dignitaries. We enjoyed an amazing time and spent a lengthy period of time in the close proximity of about 6 Southern Right Whales before returning to shore.

But the enduringly significant part of the experience was the answers to some questions that I posed to our very knowledgeable guide and the boat captain who revealed the following information:

- There are currently about 24 to 27 adult Southern Right Whales in the bay at the moment with about 6 calves.
- As the genetic pool improves after many years of slaughter of the larger whales, the size of the whales visiting our bay are increasing notably in size with some massive females evident.
- The declaring of Plett as a Whale Viewing World Heritage Site has notably increased interest in viewing whales in Plett and this has been the busiest season for the whale viewing operators in the past 10 year.

This is amazingly good news for our town which is now one of only 7 Whale Viewing World Heritage sites in the world, one of only 3 such sites in South

Africa and the current no1 whale viewing site in South Africa.

Amazing that this all is, these things seldom happen as a matter of coincidence and there is a deeper story to tell.

In 2022, Plett Tourism held the First “Ocean Festival” which attracted a great deal of interest arising from the amazing presentations by the contributing speakers.

After the 2022 Ocean Festival a local resident, Rob Smith called me and told me that after attending and greatly enjoying the festival, he was motivated to launch an application to have Plett declared a World Whale Viewing Heritage site and he wanted to know if Plett Tourism would support such an initiative. I said “of course” and put him in touch with Patty Butterworth. They formed a team to process what was a considerable and time consuming application and the rest is history. We received the appointment and it has given Plett a significant boost to our tourism industry and is already making a difference.

You see that is what a tourism association should be doing – making a difference and Plett Tourism has made a massive difference to our tourism industry during the years in office.

Considerable gratitude to Rob who is a great demonstration of what our residents can contribute to the prosperity of our town.

I like to think that the whales are also aware of Plett’s new status and have arrived in numbers not seen in recent years in support but maybe that is just wishful thinking. Whichever way you seek to interpret the arrival of all the whales, it has given considerable credibility and momentum to our new found recognition as a premier whale viewing area.

Another item of very good news is that Plett Tourism now has been granted a 3 year contract by Bitou Municipality to act as the local tourism organisation in the Bitlou area. Recognition that has been too long in coming.

Our relationship with our Bitou Municipality partners continues to be strengthened and consolidated into a mutually supportive and cooperative team which is so important in tourism space in which we all need to be singing from the same song sheet.

In closing, I would like to very sincerely thank Bitou Municipality for their support and commitment to funding over the next 3 years, all our members and others who recognise the positive impact of the work being done and lend their weight and resources in support of Plett Tourism. We value each and every one

of you as you are also an essential component of the success story that is Plett Tourism.

But perhaps most of all I would like to extend the gratitude of you all for the extraordinary hard work and achievements of Patty and her hardworking and committed team under what have often been very trying circumstances.