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- Mobile police station for Kwambo crime fight** 2
- Human remains found in Bay greenbelt** 3
- Decrease in rhino poaching achieved** 4
- 8-page Let's Go tourism feature inside this issue**

Odour outrage

Residents kick up a stink as city's failing infrastructure sees raw sewage spilling over into environment

Dave Savides

ARBORETUM residents are smelling the stench of raw sewage in their nostrils daily as the poor state of the city's waste water treatment infrastructure worsens.

So bad has the situation deteriorated that the odour is now being captured as gas on the Richards Bay Clean Air Association's (RBCAA) data monitoring network.

The source of the problem is not difficult to detect: the blame lies at the shocking state of the pump station located near the old Bundu Nursery, which borders Arboretum and Lake Mzingazi.

Raw sewage, some of it having lain exposed for so long that it has solidified, has spilt into the receiving environment, and ultimately Mzingazi Canal, where residents catch fish.

Both the RBCAA and Ward 3 Councillor Henning de Wet are being inundated with complaints citing the nauseating smell and physical health impacts.

"I had visitors, and the smell was so bad that they were nauseous and on the verge of vomiting," said one complainant in Olienhoutkoppie.

Others spoke of tight chests, coughing and headaches.

"Raw sewage is not only polluting our water and the environment, but we are now starting to see extremely high TRS [total reduced sulphur] levels being recorded at the Richardia monitoring station," said RBCAA public officer Sandy Camminga.

She explained that TRS is a mixture of gases, including hydrogen sulphide, which gives that rotten egg smell - aligning with the complaints logged with the RBCAA.

"So now air quality is being affected, with residents reporting health effects.

This is a shocking state of affairs requiring immediate intervention."

When the ZO visited the scene on Friday, municipal staff could be seen pouring lime into the stream in an attempt to reduce the stench.

"This is not a solution.

The city must address the root cause, which is their collapsing waste water treatment works infrastructure," said Camminga.

Continued on page 2



Ward 3 Councillor Henning de Wet at the uncovered Arboretum sump where sewage has solidified, posing both odour and potential health risks

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