

# Toll road company to build R54m luxury office block on Chapman's Peak Drive

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THE authorities have carved out a piece of Table Mountain National Park on Chapman's Peak Drive to build a luxury two-storey office for a private company.

The multi-million rand office will be used by Entilini, the company that operates the toll road.

It will be one of the most exclusive offices in the country, in a national park, with views overlooking Hout Bay and the Atlantic.

Entilini has spent R1.6 million on the preliminary design, and has been reimbursed by the province. Final design fees will be R5.7m. The exter-

nal lighting will cost R1.8m. The public will pay R25m of the total R54m for the office and toll plaza.

Hout Bay residents are outraged and say building the office on park land is unlawful. They have called on Sanparks chief David Mabunda and Environment Minister Edna Molewa to halt construction immediately or they will go to court.

National parks are protected by tough laws and only a resolution by Parliament can withdraw any section of one. In this case, the Western Cape government changed the boundary of the Chapman's Peak Drive road reserve to include over 2000m<sup>2</sup> of Table Mountain National Park. The office will be built on part of this land

– rubber-stamped by SanParks.

There are construction huts on site and building is to start soon.

Entilini calls the office a "control building" to be built alongside the proposed four-lane toll plaza on Chapman's Peak Drive. However, residents say the 500m<sup>2</sup> building designed to accommodate 60 staff members is far more than that.

"It's massive. They've got an HR office and a boardroom and an auditor's office – what for? And why do we need four lanes for the toll? This isn't Las Vegas. The existing toll booths are entirely adequate and should be left as is," said Hout Bay Residents' Association chairman Len Swimmer.

"They're building this office for

their own aggrandisement. Nobody can build in a national park, but they've been handed it on a platter. It's on public land and the benefit to the public is zilch."

The ground floor contains a reception area and offices for the plaza manager, secretaries, a foreman, internal auditor and human resources manager. It has a staff room with a television and kitchen, a large "control room", cash room, technician's workshop, archive, two cloakrooms with lavatories and showers, and two other lavatories. There is a "cash collection garage", a large storeroom and a workshop. The office has its own sewerage plant.

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## CASUALTY OF NEW AGREEMENT

# Free day pass to Chappies sites to be scrapped

Melanie Gosling

THE public is to lose the free day pass to reach picnic sites and hiking spots in Chapman's Peak Drive.

They will soon have to pay the R31 toll fee if they drive a car past the tolling booth, even if they are going to park just beyond it at one of the picnic sites along the scenic drive or at one of the popular hiking starting points.

This is part of the renegotiated concession agreement between the Western Cape Government and toll road concessionaires Entilini Concessions.

The free day pass was given at the toll booth to anyone who asked for it, provided they were travelling from the Hout Bay side of Chapman's Peak Drive, and that they did not drive beyond the checkpoint closer to the Noordhoek end of the road.

This exemption was made in 2003 to allow Capetonians to continue using the picnic and hiking spots along the drive without having to pay the toll. It was not available to anyone using Chapman's Peak from the Noordhoek side.

The renegotiated agreement states that the province and Entilini "have agreed to discontinue the day pass system simultaneously with the commissioning of the Hout Bay Toll Plaza".

Entilini has asked the province to get approval from the Minister of Transport to do

so, and the province has agreed.

The free pass was authorised by then Environment Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk.

The province and Entilini agreed to co-operate to "manage any public relations exercise required to deal with the discontinued day pass system".

Hout Bay Residents' Association chairman Len Swimmer said the loss of the free pass would make Chapman's Peak into "an elitist thing", as many residents, particularly from the poorer areas, used the free pass for recreation and, traditionally, for wedding parties.

Pedestrians and cyclists do not pay. The toll for motorbikes is R20 one way, cars R31, minibuses R42; trucks R124 and buses R311.

Transport MEC Robin Carlisle said that he free day pass was an "informal agreement" with Entilini which had never been in the original agreement.

He added that the site of the proposed permanent toll would be further along the road than the temporary toll booths, which meant the toll would have less impact on people wanting to use the road to reach hiking and picnic spots.

Carlisle said the renegotiated agreement was a great improvement on the original.

"In 2009, Murray and Roberts bought out Concor and that brought a respectable element into the contract. Murray

and Roberts are ethical and honourable. I said we either renegotiated the contract or we look for a way out. We were successful," Carlisle said.

In the old agreement the public paid to use – and not use – the road. If the company closed the road because of bad weather or rockfalls, the agreement was that the province then pay it compensation. The company could unilaterally decide to close the road for any length of time. The agreement called these "designated events".

"It was an atrocious agreement. We spent R60m on 'designated events' for all sorts of spurious reasons.

"We also had to pay the difference between (the toll fees from) their projected vehicle numbers and what actually went through the toll. And for repairing and replacing the catch nets, so we were R60m out of pocket.

"Now we will recover all of that, and closing the road is no longer unilateral," Carlisle said.

Both parties now agree that the proposed toll plaza at the Noordhoek end is unnecessary. The approval granted for this would eventually lapse, he said.

However, the new agreement states that the province may be entitled to build the proposed Noordhoek plaza "at any time in the future", or erect a temporary toll facility at any time.

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**A VIEW WITH ROOMS:** SANParks has given consent for a two-storey office block, with large offices and sliding doors on to terraces, to be built on Table Mountain National Park land to house the staff of Entilini, which runs the toll road.  
Picture: MICHAEL WALKER

## Upper storey of block designed for parties, say residents

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The upper storey has a lobby/display area, kitchen, two cloakrooms and a store-room, and offices for the general manager, a personal assistant and concessions manager.

Residents say the upper storey is designed for parties and functions. The concessions manager's office has sliding doors that open into a large meeting room. This opens on to a covered terrace with a skylight. There is a "service" area. Sliding doors open on to a second terrace, covered by a pergola, that overlooks a landscaped roof terrace. There is another terrace on the roof.

Residents say allowing the block on park land was a "sweetener" from the province to Entilini for agreeing to renegotiate the concession agreement to make it less onerous on the provincial government. The office building plans have been stamped by Table Mountain National Park. Although the building will be on disturbed land, it is nevertheless in the national park.

Swimmer said: "There is plenty of vacant office space in Hout Bay they can occupy. Few people have seen these plans and when they do they will be shocked."

Although the 2 100m<sup>2</sup> of

national park land was carved away by the stroke of a pen, this was not so when engineers wanted national park land to upgrade Hospital Bend on De Waal Drive. Then, BKS project manager Preek van Renssen told the Cape Times they had wanted to get only 75m<sup>2</sup> of land from Table Mountain National Park to build the new Anglo Road bridge. Van Renssen said then: "We tried to get it, but the Table Mountain National Park is protected by two acts of Parliament, and to get just one square metre of national park land you have to go to Parliament and change two acts. So we abandoned that."

The Cape Times asked Transport and Public Works MEC Robin Carlisle why this was the case for national park land on one side of the peninsula but not the other. Carlisle knew no details of the Hospital Bend upgrade but said "nothing will make me believe" the proposed building was unlawful. Constructing the office required a "small incursion" into Table Mountain National Park "which was signed off by the CEO so it's all above board".

Lawyers acting for residents have written to authorities to say that national parks are protected at the highest level by the National Environment Manage-

ment: Protected Areas Act, that a resolution of the National Assembly is required to withdraw any portion of land from a national park and that, because this has not happened, the proposed construction is unlawful.

Sanparks legal manager Sibusiso Nyembe said it was "looking at the issues", while the Western Cape Premier's Office wrote that it was obtaining legal advice.

Robert Pomario of Entilini Concessions did not want to comment.

● There will be a public protest march on January 22 starting at 10am from both ends of Chapman's Peak Drive.