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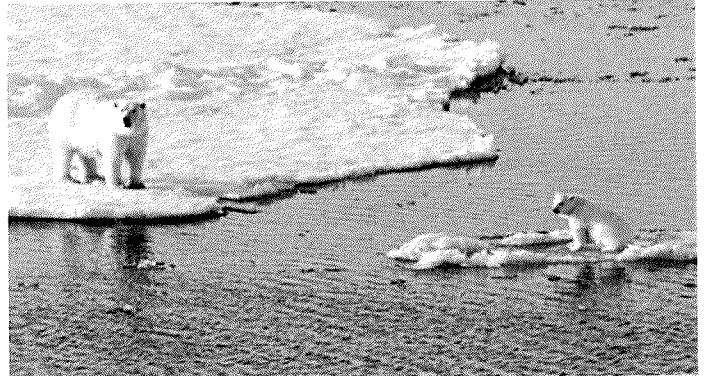
A Vision for Prince Albert: The Road to Becoming a Sustainable Town

Phila Ngwilikane

Climate change is a topic that has been discussed for many years and is still going to be discussed for many years to come. People are being advised to find ways to become more “green”/sustainable. This is to create an environmentally, socially and economically resilient place for residents without compromising the needs of future generations to thrive in the same environment.

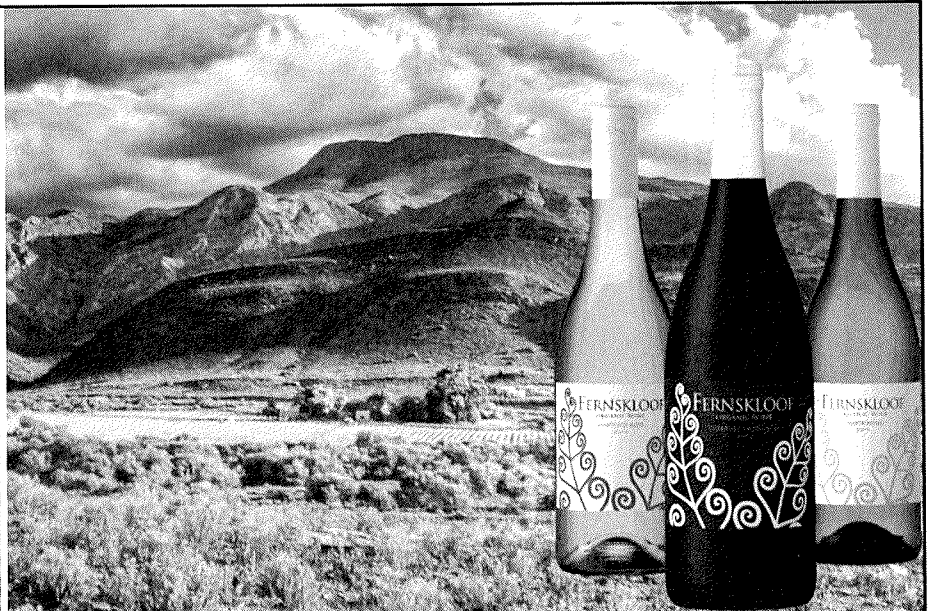
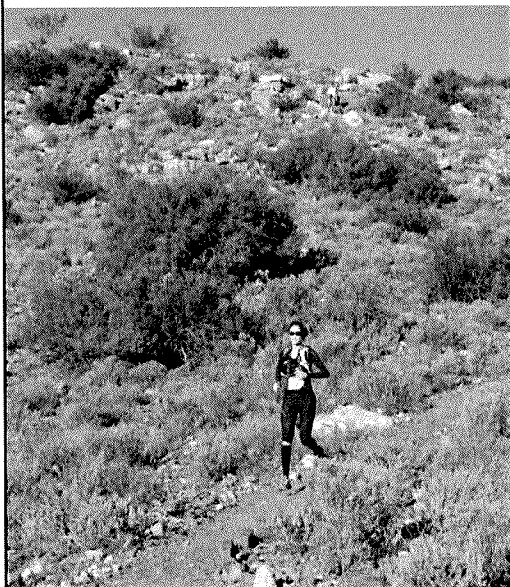
The effects of climate change can be seen on a global and local scale. Experts are finding it more challenging to predict weather patterns and extreme natural events are becoming more common. There are more wildfires like the ones in California and Knysna, there are prolonged droughts like the one we are experiencing now in Prince Albert and there are extreme flood events like the one that recently occurred in Mozambique.

Temperatures are increasing to a point where the heat is becoming unbearable. India reached a maximum of 50°C recently. Multiple people and animals died because of heat stroke and water even had to be poured on the tarred roads to keep them from melting. Prince Albert reached a new record temperature of 46 °C this year and trends indicate that temperatures might keep



Polar bear cub stranded on a patch of sea ice which is a result of snow caps melting. Photo: Defenders of Wildlife

increasing. Arctic sea ice and glaciers are melting which has led to the displacement of wildlife, a common example being that of polar bears. Sea levels are rising faster than ever before and if
cont. pg. 33...



Maandae – Saterdag: 10:00 – 16:00 Sondag: 10:00 – 14:00 per afspraak

023 5411 702

Wandelpad hardloop/staproetes: 7km / 10km / 16km

Geleë 16km buite Prince Albert op die R407, op pad na Klaarstroom

from pg. 32... A vision for Prince Albert

this continues at the current rate it will lead to the displacement of people living in coastal areas.

Seasonal changes are not happening when they should, and this affects plant growth patterns as well as animal migration patterns. When one aspect of nature (such as temperature) changes, this has a cascading effect on the rest of the system. Some species will start to migrate to areas with suitable habitats, others will adapt and those that can't, will start to disappear.

On 28 May 2019 a presentation was held at the Fransie Pienaar Museum where Dr Sue Milton-Dean spoke about climate change and the effects it had on the town of Prince Albert. The talk covered some of the points mentioned above and it was clear that there had to be a vision for the town that leads it in the direction of sustainability.

Prince Albert has the potential to become a resilient and sustainable town that could create a benchmark for towns in the rest of the country. The question is what steps need to be taken for the town to start heading in this direction?

The streets are visibly cleaner than those of most towns, but just because litter it is out of sight does not mean it should be out of mind. We need to manage our landfills responsibly and recycle as far as possible.

To save water, residents should look into water-wise gardens/karoo gardens. This refers to gardens with mostly indigenous plants. These plants are adapted to local conditions and don't need as much water as "European" gardens. Instead of grass

lawns, stone lawns could also be seen as a viable option. The use of greywater is another great way to save water. This refers to reusing relatively clean waste water from your shower, sink or washing machine to water your garden.

We can also make informed decisions when it comes to day-to-day activities. For example, try to avoid purchasing single-use plastics, instead of a Styrofoam take-away container, bring your own container when ordering food at a café/restaurant. Reusable cloth and paper bags are sold at most supermarkets and can be used instead of plastic bags. We are fortunate that almost everything in Prince Albert is in walking distance so instead of driving around town, walk to save fuel and reduce your carbon footprint. Support local farmers, buy local products, grow your own herbs and vegetables and make sure the products you use were produced in a sustainable manner.

These are just a few steps but there are more ways in which each household and thus the town can become more sustainable. Residents need to come together to have a conversation and plan for the future of Prince Albert. What has worked for many years might not be suitable for the present environment, let alone that of the future. We need to start being more adaptable and open to new ways of doing things. The most basic premise for change starts at the root of the town: the desire or determination of local people for change. People are the key drivers and ambassadors of the change process. The road to resilience and sustainability is a long one and it might take some effort but it is not impossible. ■



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