

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING OF THE CYCAD SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA HELD AT 09:00 ON SATURDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2016 AT EXCLUSIVE CYCADS PRETORIA

1. OPENING AND WELCOME

After members and interested parties had enjoyed refreshments, the meeting was opened and the Chairperson welcomed all present.

2. COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

Chairperson: Dirk van der Walt - President

Secretary-Treasurer: Ian Bassingthwaighte (IB)

Co-opted member (webmaster): Pieter van der Walt (PvdW)

Editor of Encephalartos: Wynand van Eeden (WvE)

Council Regional Branch Representatives:

Central: John Kloppers (JK)

KZN: Gerald Schofield (GS)

Lowveld: Jan Joubert (JJ)

Western Cape: Johan Kotze (JKotze)

Northern Working Group: Piet de Bruyn (PdB)

Representatives of the Eastern-Cape, North-West, Free State and Northern Cape did not attend the meeting.

3. APOLOGIES

None

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The previous minutes were approved.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Chairperson indicated that he had not placed all the matters for discussion on the agenda as they will be discussed under "new matters".

The Constitution

(a) Processing of language: The new Constitution was approved with the identified "holes". IB had the linguistic errors corrected.

(b) The Constitution is available to members. PvdW placed the amended Constitution on the web page and WvE confirmed that it has also been published in *Encephalartos*.

Proposal: To send an electronic version to members in future. IB confirmed that a booklet will be given to new members and that he will have more documents printed.

6. FEEDBACK FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS

(a) Communication from the Regional Branches by the Regional Branch Representatives

JK (Central) -: The Branch had a good year with an increase in turn-out (functions and excursions) despite a decrease in membership. The visit to KZN was very successful and we wish to thank the KZN-members (Avis and Danie) who assisted with the arrangements. The Branch made some money with the tombola during its AGM and also had a lamb barbeque. Expensive and high-quality DVDs were produced and the Branch also envisages a cycad auction in order to collect funds.

GS (KZN) -: The Branch had a good year with four meetings attended by 35-45 people per meeting. A Christmas function was held at Brian Boswell's place and 50 people attended. The Branch also had a stall at the *Witness Garden Show* and received a gold medal. The Branch also intends to have a stall at the *Green Lifestyle* in Pietermaritzburg during March 2016, where members will sell plants and where 10% of the income will be donated to the Branch. The Branch also had an excursion to the Durban Botanical Gardens to view, amongst others, Avis en Danie Nel's work with the plants donated by Transnet and which they are planting. The AGM was held on 7 February 2016.

Chairperson - : congratulated GS for the sound management of the Branch where very little actually happened a couple of years ago.

JKotze (Western-Cape)- : The Branch has reached maturity, is having fun and people are positive and willing to assist financially. Membership stands at 109, of which only 25-30 are actively involved. The Branch had six activities in 2015, amongst others, a tour of the Eastern Cape where Allan Tait's expertise was enjoyed. Members are looking forward to more such excursions. The Branch has some funds, but

not enough to do what is envisaged. Seven activities are planned for 2016, amongst others, wine tasting (very successful in 2015) and *Vink se Tuin (Weaver's Garden)*, where WvE will take the initiative.

PdB (Northern Working Group) - : Active members have sold their collections and the Branch has no new members. This really is a big concern.

JJ (Lowveld) - : The Branch had a good year with four meetings attended by approximately 20 members per meeting. The Branch currently has 80 members and the finances are sound.

(b) Encephalartos (WvE)

Despite the few contributions received from interested parties, everything is going well. Most readers prefer travel tales such as the articles received from Branches relating to their excursions and attendance of conferences, e.g. Colombia. The journal is preferred by foreign cycad societies to their own journals and it appears as if the SA journal is also more available to them. The "Focus on X- specie" article can be reworked and republished and be submitted to certain members for additions.

The journal must be limited to 36 pages in order to receive the special tariff for bulk mail. The journal should also not weigh more than 300g.

Comment: According to Japie Steenkamp the journal is nice and interesting, but the affordability thereof should be reviewed.

The journal uses 80% of its budget namely R122 000 and every single journal actually costs R45.72 to create. The joint magazine envisaged by Media24 has already been discussed and may include contributions on bromelias, aloes, orchids and succulents. Costs can be covered by advertisements. Dr Piet Vorster proposed that we start an annual magazine where every Branch can have its 10 best articles published. He also wanted to know whether electronic versions can be made available. Software can then prevent a subscriber from forwarding the magazine free of charge. The electronic version will cost 2/3 of the price of the printed version.

PvdW mentioned that Media24 has an electronic section and proposed that the chairpersons of the Regional Branches meet with Media24. A full-page cycad-related advertisement currently costs R500 and may probably be increased to R2000.

Decision: JKotze and WvE to further investigate.

(c) Website (PvdW)

Visitors to the website have increased by approximately 2000 since 2014. The total visitors now stands at 9700. During 2015 61% new visitors and 39 % previous visitors visited the website. We have visitors

from the RSA (68 %), USA (9%), France (2.5%), UK (1.48%), Brazil (1.37%) Japan 1.33%) and even Russia in 10th place with 1%. It further appears as if 33% women and 66% men visit the website.

Regarding payment options with PayPal, PvdW and IB have still not found a solution for electronic payments.

Facebook: Lots of inter-action between readers and thousands have read the articles. The most read articles and also the ones that attracted the most reaction were the ones relating to the death of Prof Nat Grobbelaar and Phillip Rousseau. "Cycads under attack" by Jolanda Roux also attracted a lot of attention as well as any article relating to cycad poachers/thieves.

Louis from Cycad Friends (a non-profit organisation) always publishes notices of the Society. Dr Piet Vorster proposed that one member of Cycad Friends be co-opted in every Regional Branch and on the Council. JKotze indicated that the Society and Cycad Friends have a very good relationship due to the fact that Cycad Friends knows how the Society operates. Unfortunately, the 10% discount that Cycad Friends tried to negotiate for their members, could not be granted as the cost of the journal comes to 80% of its budget.

Decision: according to the Constitution, the Council may co-opt additional members for specific purposes.

(d) **Review of species (WvE)**

WvE mentioned that very little has happened in this regard. A dam is being built in Uganda and *E.whitelockii* that were removed are being rehabilitated. WvE needs photo material for the project. PvdW mentioned that the quality of the photos are not good enough for publication.

"Fokus op / Focus on" must be reviewed and new photos and inscriptions must be added. WvE mentioned that Dr. Piet Vorster does not have the time to do so and we should therefore find someone who wants to do so. Mans Kemp did it in the past. It should not be a repeat of 30 years ago, but there is a proposal that it be placed on Facebook and then be reviewed by members of the Society as with Wikipedia. PvdW indicated that he will be able to provide the Wikipedia technology. There is a proposal to do one specie per journal.

Decision: Wait for PvdW to create the necessary platform.

(e) **Legislation (Japie Steenkamp)**

Japie indicated that he had a very positive meeting with Michelle Farb and the *Cycad Survivor*-project was well received. Not many people is aware of Government's views on cycads. The "new" document is actually the current document and the document was submitted to the provinces for comment. The fact that Government and the provinces are not always communicating and not always saying the same

things on a specific matter such as cycads, is a cause for concern. There was the matter of plants that had to be legally moved from KZN to Gauteng. KZN then micro-chipped all the plants, even plants as small as a potato. Those plants will die. You may actually believe that the provinces use different source documents.

Cornia Hugo also mentioned at the AGM of the Central Branch that she had proposed that certain species be exempted from the permit system, but that the rare species should never be exempted from transfer permits. Japie and Adolf Fanfoni envisage to discuss the matter with Magdeld Boshoff soon.

Japie confirmed that he will act on a mandate only. However, Japie indicated that where no reaction has been received on his memos to the Council within a specified period, he will just assume that he may proceed.

PdB mentioned that the Society is now being recognised by SANBI at meetings, such as the one in Polokwane. This is a positive sign. However, PdB is worried about the publication of misleading articles by SANBI /Michelle, e.g. that less than 80 Albany Cycads (*E.latifrons*) remain in nature. These kind of articles is just what UNESCO needs to start acting drastically. UNESCO's guideline is that "you may not release a plant if that plant can be confused with another plant". The Society must demand the withdrawal of the misleading article by SANBI and the correction of the facts and also mention that more than a million *E.latifrons* currently exists. The article also appeared in Beeld and this misrepresentation was sent out to the world. A similar article appeared in the Lowvelder. However, the newspaper later retracted the article and apologised.

Decision: Japie must track the false reporting and request SANBI to withdraw such. Japie must also inform SANBI about the huge amount of seeds germinated by Society members and should also accompany Michelle to nurseries to notice the scale of germination. This action just confirms how our members release the pressure on the plants in nature.

7. NEW MATTERS

(a) Right to vote(JK)

Section 7.1.2 of the Constitution. What is the situation with an out-going President where he still has a seat on the Council for a year? Can he vote?

Decision: Yes. He can vote as he will stay on as a Council member for another year.

(b) Vice-President (JK)

Section 7.1.3 of the Constitution. "The Chairperson of the Council will have a deciding vote". The President normally acts as the Chairperson. However, this is not compulsory. The position of "Vice-

President" who would also act as President where the President is not available, was proposed in 2015 as an amendment to the Constitution.

Decision: Not necessary to create a post for a "Vice-President" as the President can delegate his functions.

(c) Constitution of the Council (JK)

The Council elects the President.

According to the Chairperson the Regional Branch Council Member represents the members of his region.

(d) Alteration of Constitution (JK)

Section 12 of the Constitution provides that no changes shall be made to the Constitution without the consent of two-thirds of those members who cast their votes on the matter. Written notification of all proposed changes, and an invitation to vote on the matter, shall be sent to all the members of the Society at least thirty days prior to making the proposed changes.

(e) Duty sheet of Council Members (JK)

Decision: The Society is a voluntary organisation and if anyone is not doing what he is supposed to do the system will indicate such. It is therefore not necessary to draft duty sheets.

(f) Geographical area of Regional Branches (JK)

The Free State members form part of the Central Branch. However, the Central Branch is not in receipt of the 10% benefit.

Decision: The amount is small. Leave as is.

(g) Life Membership (JK)

Members 65 years and older, who have been an uninterrupted paid-up member of the Society for 20 years, will be considered for life membership by the Council after receipt of written requests for such membership.

(h) Part-time Secretary (JK)

In exchange for four advertisements in the journal per annum, Exclusive Cycads has offered to pay for a part-time secretary for the Society. The Secretary will be able to assist with the journal where necessary, with bulk messages and with the updating of the membership list.

(i) Member Database (JK)

JK mentioned a software program where you can choose which information you wish to withdraw. IB currently uses another program.

Decision: Run with both programmes and request the retraction of IB's data. The database should remain private and the provisions of the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 must be adhered to.

Comment:

Will the almost permanent use of one nursery's facilities not be questioned?

IB requested assistance with the disposal of old journals.

GS requested journals for the KZN-branch.

Decision: Any person or nursery may offer assistance and request that their facilities be used. Such request will be considered. An agreement then needs to be drafted which should, amongst others, provide for the working relationship between the parties. Currently, the Society will accept assistance from Exclusive Cycads regarding the journals. PvdW will advertise the old journals on the website and on Facebook, but will wait for IB to do a survey of what is available. GS can have 50 journals for the stalls of the KZN-branch.

(j) Travel and Subsistence of Council Members for attendance of meetings (JK)

JK proposes that each Branch pays for the travelling costs of its Council Member. The Society will pay for the travelling costs of co-opted members only.

There was also a proposal that Council meetings should rotate throughout the country. JK indicated that the said rotation will have huge cost implications. However, it is important that the President visits all Branches annually.

Decision: In 2015 the cost to have a meeting was approximately R23 000. Due to the fact that transport costs are sometimes more than air tickets, the Society has decided to pay R3.50 per km plus actual expenses such as e-toll fees. Rental vehicles must be shared as far as possible and where it is possible to stay with family or friends, it should be done.

(k) Academic Committee to invite certain members to adjudicate applications for funding (WvE)

WvE proposes three persons with international exposure and who are familiar with the relevant literature and research needs to adjudicate applications for research funding. These persons are internationally recognised cycad experts in the fields of taxonomy, biology, ecology and physiology.

Dr Piet Vorster: University of Stellenbosch

Dr Patrick Griffith: Montgomery Botanical Center, Miami, Florida, USA

Prof Christina Lopez-Gellego: University of Antioch, Medellin, Colombia

Decision: No recommendation was made.

(l) Application for funding for Cycad Garden in Vink se Arboretum – R20 000 (WvE)

WvE mentioned that the Western Cape Branch wants to buy some land in Cape Town that is situated in a green belt and surrounded by a two-meter high security fence. The Branch wants to plant 130 cycads initially and get a cycad garden going. The Branch will also try to get more plant donations. The Branch will try to obtain sponsorships, but requests an amount of R20 000 from the Society.

Comment: Japie Steenkamp supports the project, but is a bit concerned about security and mentions that 50% of the budget of the Nelspruit Botanical Garden is spent on security.

IB mentions that funds are available in the "Donation Fund".

Decision: Funding is approved. Although this is not a loan, the money may be paid back as and when the Branch collects funds. This money can then be used for the financing of other Society projects.

(m) Mandate of Media Liaison Officer (WvE)

WvE wanted to know with whom the media liaison officer, Japie Steenkamp, is talking and about what. Japie responded by saying that he only talks to others when he has a mandate to do so.

Decision: Japie should put whatever is discussed with Government/institutions in writing, even if it is only one paragraph. He must then submit his memo to PvdW who will place the memo on the website or on Facebook.

8. WORLD CONGRESS ON CYCADS IN 2018

The Management of the Society will establish a committee with WvE as convenor to decide on the following issues:

- (a) Where will the Congress be held?
- (b) Funding - will the Society receive funds from Government (SANBI)/Nature Conservation?
- (c) Local tours/excursions - whether any tours/excursions will take place prior to or after the congress?
- (d) When will the Congress take place?

The Congress will mainly be an academic congress. However, the Society envisages to find other speakers to address the public from Friday to Sunday. It also appears as if delegates would like to visit two habitats. WvE then referred to the letter from Dr Piet Vorster where he warned that "these kind of congresses have a set structure and nature from which cannot be deviated". Further "that delegates must receive the best hospitality and maximum value for their money". Further also that "we would like to present a range of informal presentations on subjects such as seed germination, pollination, feeding, plagues, etc.". Dr Vorster is also of the opinion that the Society will not make money from holding the Congress, but should rather take care that it does not suffer a financial loss. A 10–20% premium should rather be added on the services rendered, such as housing, transport, food and excursions.

Decision: Wynand van Eeden will be the Chairperson of the World Congress and will together with John Kloppers appoint the members of the committee.

9. ELECTION OF COUNCIL FOR NEXT TERM

John Kloppers was elected as President. The other posts and officials remain the same.

JK thanked all for having faith in him.

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