

Arniston Spatial Development Framework

Arniston lies at the interface between two principal domains. The delta spreading from the Bredasdorp foothills and the tailing of the Indian ocean, bounded on the south by the De Mond and on the north by the De Hoop nature reserves, with the village perched on a slightly raised land platform, a relative short walk from the former and a long walk from the latter. The traces of its beginnings are evidenced not only by the fynbos floral kingdom heritage, but also that of the water courses and mangrove swamps which remain to be found in the riverine boulders and pebbles that sprinkle the beaches immediate to the village and the fossilised circular captured mangrove root forms that touch the sandstone rocks with residual evidence in concert with occasional fossilised root sections, exposed by wind and tidal action, in the waterside embankments. The several thousand year old sea shell middens that litter the sea edge evidence the presence of early man at what were fresh spring, if likely brack, water points. The fish vywers, still in existence either side of the village, reinforce the known, active, long term presence of early man.

Beyond the land, the second domain, the southern tail end of the Indian ocean. A tidal water front with an ever moving huge mass of sand measured in hundreds of thousands of tons driven by a sea action up the coast. A long slow and shallow shelf of sand informs the nature of the immediate bay and creates a sun reflective surface below water level, translating into an expanse of visually sparkling water in myriad shades of marine blues and greens, tempered by the shade and shadows of passing cloud formations. A unique seascape of great beauty. This same shallow water shelf had, in the past, the obverse attribute of making a graveyard for a host of storm driven sail ships, including in late in May 1815, the Arniston . Its timber shipwreck skeleton remains to be seen a walk north of the village.

The, in particular, man-habitat-friendly nature of the interface, is the principal concern of this submission. The inter-face between the two domains informs the then and the now fascination with Arniston as a destination, short and long term. Commencing, in early times, with the sheltering natural caves and land-side rock inclines, together with the presence of natural spring water and an abundant and relatively easily accessed inter-tidal captive marine food resource. These same natural resources were those that attracted the early settler families. Bathing and sea edge active sports and passive relaxation were more latterly added with the advent of relative affluent middle class holiday makers. The modern tourist visitors are now drawn by the world renowned land and seascape beauty of the 'Arniston experience' in combination with its inherent natural resources.

It is these natural resources that are being undermined, diminished, degraded and denuded for the want of a sustainable management regime, the other principal concern of this submission. There follows some tentative related planning proposals.

The De Hoop Nature reserve to the north in combination with the OTB Missile Test

Range, coupled to the De Mond Nature Reserve should be actively encouraged to continue to serve as secure natural book ends, bounding the land-side domain. To this should be added an extension of the present Marine Reserve edging the De Hoop Reserve, embracing the Arniston bay, down to the De Mond Nature reserve. This to act as a sea-side buffer zone. This zone should be given over to the Arniston Fisherman's Union for management and policing in partnership with the National Government in exchange for sole fishing and sea farming rights. This exchange to include for the management of endangered species and the long term reinstatement of the pristine inter-tidal resources so abundantly present some thirty years back. The De Hoop Marine Reserve has demonstrated the efficacy of such a managed and monitored waterside regime. This has the potential to sustain the working harbour if coupled to suggestions with regard to smaller manhandle-able fishing boats, sufficient to patrol and exploit the new reserve. This has the potential to regenerate the village fishing community in a viable and sustainable manner. A rich inter-tidal zone will enhance the potential tourist 'Arniston experience' by adding further layers of accessible marine interests. The fascination that all working harbours offer, will be enhanced without dangerous launch and retrieval mechanisms and will make the harbour workings much more accessible. The licensing of all fishing rights including rock fishing and fees for vehicular access to fishing spots should become the management responsibility of the Fisherman's Union. Resident sea-side management is imperative.

Over the past thirty years Roman Beach has experienced a slow attrition of sand, year by year and equally slowly, greater and greater rock exposure. This has been attributed to the now denigrated past actions of dune stabilisation in response to the settlers complaints of sand inundation of their holiday homes between visits. The importance of maintaining a balance between the windblown sand replenishment of the cover to Roman Beach and the erosive act of the immediate traversing sea has been established. A programme of denuding the dunes south and west of Roman Beach is vital to the recovery of the Roman beach amenity. This beach has in recent times become an important weekend summer recreation site for the several Bredasdorp communities.

The physical 'Arniston experience' should be one of unfettered pedestrian access to the inter-tidal and, beyond the high watermark, the immediate Admiralty Reserve access zones. This should be people friendly, for the old and young, the passive and active, above all else vehicular, moving or parked, traffic free. A determined one-road-back parking policy, interfacing with a series of cul-de-sacs would transform the present car dominated waters edge, and create a positive pedestrian dominated shared public domain. A similar interested-only cul-de-sac policy would transform the Oudorp to a child, bicycle and pedestrian friendly townscape, enhancing its tourist and pedestrian exploration and enjoyment potential. A linked system of sensitive boardwalks, allowing access around the various headlands, would enable tourist, visitor and residents access to the waters edge at both high and low tides. An increased access policy should be interfaced with an Admiralty Reserve landscape programme, composed mainly of fynbos and milkwood trees. This would greatly enhance and make tidy the, at present rough waters edge landscape. The

importance of the protection of the shared waterside public domain cannot be overemphasised.

The issue of the vehicular entrance to Arniston needs to be addressed. The green buffer zone has an obvious potential and could be managed to emerge at a new village centre, located about the harbour, a natural gathering point and historic focus for the community, recognising the importance of the Kassiesbaai settlement in a revised demographic mapping of a new understanding of the settlement as a whole. Simple finger connections would give access to the existing settlement access ways.

It is diffidently suggested that the Shipwreck Museum could be advantageously relocated to Arniston. An institutional element that could be sensitive located on the eastern edge of Kassiesbaai, touching a newly landscaped waterside embankment, further layering and enhancing the local tourist attractions close to much of its source material.

Finally the issue of poverty. It has been said that the solution to poverty will and can only be addressed by the poor. Several feasible suggestions for subdividing Kassiesbaai to enable personal or family ownership have been muted in the immediate past. The suggestions have rightly been aimed at empowering the home owners by realising the market value of their homes, at very least enabling first time home ownership subsidies. Given clear ownership rights Kassiesbaai house owners would be empowered to raise finance to initiate upgrading efforts and participate through B&B rights, amongst others, in a growing Arniston tourism economy. Individual Kassiesbaai houses would range in value starting at a quarter million Rands. Paternalism and concerned thinking has stifled action for the want of some tempering mechanism. This not be beyond the means and measure of the collective local community. Enabling and recognising market values would bring a new sustainable rate an taxes base. Enriching the Arniston community will have an inevitable spin off in small scale entrepreneurial endeavours furthering the cycle of benefits both local and municipal. Creating and or enhancing existing values is a valid alternative to new development as a means to expand the local tax base.

Ron Kirby, Arniston, April 2009.