

**Briefing session spells out plans to avert water failures in
ILembe during festive season**

At the height of the summer recess last year, chronic water failures were experienced in Ballito and surrounding areas, beginning mid-December. This resulted in households and businesses being without water for prolonged periods, mainly in the evenings. Consequently, there were several complaints which were directed at Umgeni Water, SembCorp Siza Water and ILembe District Municipality. Umgeni Water is the bulk Water Service Provider to the ILembe District Municipality while SembCorp Siza Water does the reticulation of water services on behalf of ILembe District Municipality.

The situation also attracted widespread publicity in the print media, radio and television which residents and visitors used to vent their frustration over the impact of the water supply interruptions on their lives and businesses. Both in the midst of and in the aftermath of the supply failures, which were caused by unprecedented increases in demand, Umgeni Water held a series of engagements with the ILembe District Municipality and SembCorp Siza Water to try to stabilise the situation through urgent intervention measures.

A multi-stakeholder task team, comprising Umgeni Water, ILembe District Municipality and SembCorp Siza Water, was later formed to develop solutions and implement rapid-result actions that would minimise water supply failures. One of the measures adopted as part of the operational plan for the present and future holiday seasons, when water usage and demand peak, was the implementation of a new 10.4 kilometre pipeline, from the Hazelmere Water Works to La Mercy Bifurcation near the toll plaza on the N2, to augment supply to the Avondale Reservoir which supplies Ballito. Construction of this pipeline lasted 10 months, and the estimated cost to date is R55 million. This project is 99% complete, with testing and commissioning remaining as the last of the outstanding work.

Other aspects of the operational plan for the festive season are:

- Daily and weekly volume trending and reporting

- Reporting of unusual trends in demand to ensure timeous investigation and resolution
- Timeous reporting of power failures to Eskom, eThekweni and Kwa Dukuza electricity departments
- All Umgeni Water operations and maintenance staff in the Northern Area will be on duty during the coming festive season
- A package plant has been installed and commissioned to augment existing plant capacity
- An additional back-up pump has been procured and installed to provide dedicated feed to the Avondale Reservoir
- Standby generators have been procured and installed to provide back-up power supply when electricity outages occur

On 28th November 2012 the Executive Management of Umgeni Water, Political Leadership of ILembe District Municipality and SembCorp Siza Water's Executive Management presented to stakeholders in ILembe District and the media the progress to date with regards to the Hazelmere to La Mercy Bifurcation Pipeline project. The audience comprised, among others, property owners, businesses, management of local shopping complexes and staff from Netcare Alberlito Hospital. The response to the provision of information by all three entities (Umgeni Water, ILembe District Municipality and SembCorp Siza Water) suggested it was warmly received. Stakeholders in the audience said they were happy that a permanent solution was now in place. The new pipeline will augment supply to the Avondale Reservoir, and in this way avert the possibility of water shortages and interruptions in supply during the peak holiday season.

In his opening remarks, the Chief Executive of Umgeni Water, Cyril Gamede, said that during the course of the year several bottlenecks in the system had been rectified. He also noted that through the combined efforts of Umgeni Water and ILembe District Municipality water losses had been reduced.

SembCorp Siza Water's Managing Director, Shyam Misra, said that the reticulation infrastructure was currently operating at optimum. He further stated that the capacity of the reservoirs had stabilised to marginally above 70% over the past six months.

Questions were asked by some stakeholders regarding the capacity of the waste water treatment systems to deal with an expected increase in in-fall during the festive season. In his response, the General Manager of SembCorp Siza Water said the waste water treatment works infrastructure has been upgraded and additional precautionary measures were in place to avert any problems that may occur.

The briefing also provided an opportunity for ILembe District Municipality to unveil some of its proposed developmental projects and future growth initiatives planned for the North Coast Corridor. The Mayor of ILembe DM said that the region was strategically placed, therefore, expansion was inevitable. In response to this, there has been an increase in infrastructure spend relating to water services and electricity provision to underpin and sustain expansion and growth and also avert future water shortages. This includes projected investment of R2.2 billion in water and sanitation over the next two years.