

Kruger Lowveld sets out its tourism priorities for the year

Kruger Lowveld Tourism (KLT) has its sights set on various strategic priorities for 2018.

The regional tourism body's president and executive management recently announced that roads and the revitalisation of Pilgrim's Rest were priorities.

Lisa Sheard, Kruger Lowveld Tourism executive director and marketing consultant,



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said that the urgent upgrading of the region's public attractions and setting up a think tank were also top of mind.

"We believe these are all salient issues that need to be prioritised this year to ensure that we are able to grow tourism to the Kruger Lowveld region," she said.

The president of Kruger Lowveld Tourism, Oupa Pilane, said that good roads were essential for growing tourism numbers and tourism employment in the region.

"There is a huge backlog and government budget urgently needs to be reallocated to improve the main access routes into the region," he said.

He cited the R540 between Belfast and Dullstroom, the R36 out of Lydenburg/Mashishing and roads in and around the Panorama Route as needing urgent improvement.

The body also noted that no progress has been made in finding a solution to the dire situation in Pilgrim's Rest, despite engagement of another set of consultants recently.

"We need to find an inclusive long-term solution that will not only benefit tourism but will also ensure that previously

disadvantaged people are brought in as active participants and owners," Pilane said.

"An innovative approach will put the town on a sustainable road to prosperity, reinvention, vastly improved numbers and quality tourism offerings that will ultimately result in increased tourist numbers. If no local solution is forthcoming, Kruger Lowveld Tourism will again have to elevate the matter to national level," he said.

Sheard added that Mpumalanga is in desperate need of a tourism think-tank, comprised of experienced tourism practitioners, to elevate the tourism agenda and bring meaningful benefits to communities.

She added that the region's public attractions need urgent upgrading and revitalisation.

"The lowest hanging fruit is the Panorama Route where existing tourism numbers are high, but facilities are outdated and crusty," she said. "One could follow the example of the new Graskop Gorge viewing lift, which is bound to increase the length of stays in the region.

"It is imperative that we get the so-called flagship projects such as the Skywalk and

Cable Car near God's Window and the Cable Car in Blyde River Canyon beyond the drawing board and into the development phase. These projects have been in the pipeline for far too long," she concluded.



Oupa Pilane.