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Freezzzzzing



PICTURE: KAREN WATKINS

Kaskazi Kayak Club provided moral support and hot tea to those who braved the icy water of Clifton's 4th beach on Saturday June 20 to take part in the annual Polar Bear swim. This is an annual event and normally takes place on the Saturday closest to the winter solstice (June 21). The idea of swimming in winter is crazy but it is a way to raise funds for charity through donations and the sale of branded "Polar Bear Swim" T-shirts and thermal skins. Swimmers had to stay in the water for 30 minutes. Meadowridge swimmer Deon van Zyl had a tactic of swimming further out to sea among the kelp beds. **More pictures on page 11.**

Thumbs up for fibre optics

KAREN WATKINS

Tamsin Nel has been waiting four hours to download 76 pictures to the SA Mass Animal Sterilisation Trust (SA.MAST) website.

Director of this not-for-profit organisation, she works from her Plumstead home, or is trying to.

A few weeks ago she was at the end of her tether after continually experiencing dropped ADSL (asymmetric digital subscriber line) connection. She phoned the Bulletin looking for someone to help make a banner.

A few days later she hung the banner, which read, "Telkom why won't you fix our ADSL line faults", with her phone number and the SA.MAST website address, from a bridge over the M5 and then moved to Ladies Mile and Spaanschemat junction.

Her phone was soon ringing off

the hook with Telkom staff falling all over themselves to help.

Recounting her story each time she eventually gave up as they confessed the only way she could get quicker upload speed was to install fibre optics. Asking about the cost she was reportedly told: "Only if you have millions like the people in Bishopscourt. It's being installed in your area but will take a few years".

The ADSL speed, reliability and effectiveness and mobile phone connectivity is not what she is paying for. Ms Nel pays R538 per month for DSL (digital subscriber line) fastest bundle.

Another unhappy resident is Bel Ombre "geek" Martin Diessner.

Originally living on the Atlantic seaboard where internet connection was good, he moved to Constantia when family came along.

Continued on page 4

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Bandwidth available on fibre far outstrips wireless

From page 1

Finding internet connection was bad, he started researching fibre to the home and has gone on to create a website paying the way and reducing the legwork for other residents ("Bold plan for valley", Bulletin February 19).

Speaking about fibre to the home at a meeting hosted by Bergvliet Meadowridge Ratepayers' Association on Wednesday June 17, Mr Diessner introduced a unique model to bring fibre to the home in Constantia.

About 54 people packed a room at Bergvliet Sports Club to watch the marketing pitch by LinkAfrica sales executive Michael Veldhuis and Hannes Pieterse of Frogfoot networks.

LinkAfrica and Frogfoot have partnered with the City of Cape Town on a possible pilot project, deploying 2 000km of fibre optic cable in the 40 000km stormwater and sewer systems.

Mayco member for corporate services, Xanthea Limberg said the City's water and sanitation and transport departments have agreed in principle.

"We welcome the innovative method being explored to increase the availability of broadband infrastructure in the city, however, no agreement/contract has been concluded as matters such as the rate/tariff to be charged for the leasing of the sewer and stormwater pipes from



Finer than a hair, a single glass fibre can carry all of South Africa's internet traffic along the 150 000km of cable running throughout the country.

the City, hydraulic analysis, operational responsibilities and indemnities are still being negotiated," said Ms Limberg.

LinkAfrica will be providing dark fibre (unused fibre-optic) cable to Frogfoot who will provide services to numerous internet service providers (ISPs), who then ultimately offer services to the consumers, such as Vox, CyberSmart,

WebAfrica, MWeb, and more. Each ISP will break out to the world wide web in their own manner based on their network.

Craig Carthy, director of LinkAfrica, said the City is aware of and supportive of this method as it reduces the damage to pavements, roads, water pipes and electricity cables buried underground. Research has even shown that the

cables improve the flow conditions in the pipes.

Mr Veldhuis said the pipes will be surveyed to verify their integrity and condition.

"Should we encounter a problem we will notify council and then either they, or we, clear the problem or look for an alternative routing. The last few metres from the nearest manhole to your home is the only digging we anticipate, except where the existing sewer or stormwater pipes are not suitable for our cables," said Mr Carthy.

Fibre infrastructure is already available along the Main Road to Muizenberg and in Westlake Business Park.

LinkAfrica plan to do this in phases with Constantia being divided into 15 sub-sections or "zones" and aim to have the fibre infrastructure in homes by the end of December.

Ms Limberg said that construction has not started but the City has issued way-leaves to facilitate the necessary investigations and no construction approval has been granted to date. A wayleave is a contractual licence granting the operator of an electronic communications network using overhead distribution lines to carry fibre optic cables.

But Mr Veldhuis said they have already started laying the cable. Now they are asking everyone to sign up.

"It's not a binding contract but the more people who do the more our competitors will step back," he said,

Mike Vortman of Verifier security systems and chairperson of Constantia Watch said they have pre-negotiated with LinkAfrica and Frogfoot for all traffic carried by its licence recognition plate cameras to its control room free.

At the moment they have problems with camera drop-off due to losing cell reception despite having the best networks.

Mr Vortman said people have been complaining about health risks of cellphone towers. Reduced power transmitters on street lamp poles will replace high powered and somewhat unsightly cell masts. They will be closely spaced to provide overlapping coverage with much reduced to negligible radiation.

The Bulletin contacted various organisations to comment on fibre optic technology, including the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, the University of Cape Town, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa, the Department of Communications and Telkom, however, they either said this falls outside their scope, they do not have academics who are experts in fibre optics, or passed us on to someone else.

In discussion with numerous information technology (IT) specialists they disagree, saying cellphones use different technology and will stay in place to enable users to receive and make calls while on the go.

Matthew Quinton of Strawberry Lane Association and representing

Electromagnetic Radiation South Africa (Ermsa) told the Bulletin that we are presently on 3G technology and are rolling out LTE (long term evolution) 4G. "And even this is already too slow for many users. By comparison the bandwidth available presently on fibre far outstrips that which can be provided wirelessly."

Also in terms of "future-proofing" our neighbourhoods, fibre allows for integrated camera systems, VOIP (voice over internet protocol), video streaming and various other bandwidth heavy activities.

And with wireless constantly running out of bandwidth requiring upgrading and the need for more towers and stronger transmitters, increasing the radiation, it will still not meet the bandwidth demands. Investing in fibre has a real future and there is no radiation associated with a fibre connection, said Mr Quinton.

Someone at the meeting said that Bergvliet High School have looked into having fibre optics but cannot afford it. Stephen Price, principal of the school, said the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) is talking about installing fibre optics.

He said the cost of renewing their existing cables would cost between R300 000 to R400 000 while fibre optics would cost 50% more.

He said the school's IT staff attended the meeting and having discussed the issue with him, he said they would be interested in sharing the fibre optic infrastructure as this would make it more affordable.

Mr Veldhuis said Norman Henshilwood High School falls within zone 1 which will have 250 homes connected by the end of July.

David Millar, principal of the school, said they have invested over R3 million over the past five years in their information and communication technology project to integrate this into teaching and learning and have already done their own fibre optic two years ago at great cost (R25 000 per month).

"The province's fibre optic 'connection' will save us some money but will not be enough to connect our 1 200 people on campus onto the e-superhighway without major traffic jams hence the school governing body's vision to have 100 megs up and down, as opposed to the 10 megs up and down being offered by the initial roll-out phase," said Mr Millar.

Mr Veldhuis said they would be prepared to offer a group rate to schools if all them sign up.

At the meeting cost was a major concern. Mr Veldhuis said each ISP offers different installation charges (about R1 750) as well as packages of free phones, routers and other, thereafter a choice of 50 to 60 packages ranging from 10 MBPS (megabits per second) at R649 up to 1 GSPS (gigasample-per-second) at R2 599.

Meanwhile, Ms Nel, who rents her home, continues to watch pictures downloading, "Like watching paint dry".

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