

Jamms meeting tackles Western Cape water crisis, impact on tourism

The Joint Association Members Meetings Sessions (Jamms) recently convened at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) to give concerned tourism businesses and individuals the chance to ask questions about the current state of the drought in the Western Cape and its impact on the sector.



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On hand to field queries was Sisa Ntshona, South Africa Tourism CEO, Alan Winde, Western Cape minister of economic opportunities, Alderman Ian Neilson, City of Cape Town deputy mayor and Peter Flower, City of Cape Town's director of water and sanitation.

The chairperson of Cape Town Tourism and lead chair of JAMMS, Enver Mally opened the meeting by stressing the importance of partnerships in the tourism industry: "We all do better if we collaborate but in times of crisis, these relationships are critical. We need to work together if we want to beat Day Zero and ensure the sustainability of Cape Town as a destination."

Day Zero measures vital

All speakers were adamant that the industry must do everything it can to rally together and avoid Day Zero at all costs.

“It will rain again, but at this stage, it cannot be predicted when the rain will come. Monitoring dam levels (inflow, evaporation and withdrawals) and managing dam withdrawals is a key to maintaining the integrity of the system and getting through the drought. We cannot build our way out of the drought – driving down the demand and stretching what is left in the dams is the main component to getting through this,” said Flower.

“We have to cut down on our consumption if we are to get through this period and not get to Day Zero. We are determined that we should not allow this water crisis to also result in an economic crisis,” reiterated Nelson.

Winde emphasised the contribution of the sector to the economy: “We must avoid Day Zero because our businesses cannot afford to move into that next stage - this region cannot afford to lose those jobs. Jobs depend on keeping this sector going, but we need to do this in a sustainable way. We need to have a concise and clear message on being open for business to maintain the status quo of the economy.”

Ntshona spoke of the importance of fiercely guarding Cape Town as a destination: “We need to protect our brand – it’s under attack. For the next three weeks, South African Tourism will be travelling around the world, spreading the message that Cape Town is open for business. We commit to equipping the tourism sector with knowledge and facts of running businesses within this context of a water crisis. We all need to build and protect the space, and we’re picking up this fight from different angles. The challenge is to remain clear and calm in what we’re doing to achieve productive results.”

The main takeaway from the session was that the entire sector needs to collaborate at this critical time to ensure long-term sustainability in tourism.

Joint water-saving efforts needed

With this in mind, Jamms has committed to finding innovative ways to avoid Day Zero by encouraging their members and tourists to save and drive down consumption of potable water through collective sharing of ideas.

Jamms will also create local area water committees where members can engage regularly to share information and resources to get through the water crisis by supporting themselves, fellow members and the communities they operate in.

Jamms will continue meeting regularly and communicate up-to-date facts, field questions from local and global trade, and position Cape Town as being open and welcoming to all tourists - while being mindful of water restrictions - to ensure that the Mother City will be enjoyed by generations of tourists for many more years to come.

Field questions included:

- **What are the borders of the CBD?** The City is currently defining the borders of the various economic hubs, a complex task, and hopes to have these available within the next ten days.
- **How long will restrictions last?** The length of restrictions is dependent on the performance of the dams, when we get rain, how much goes out, augmentation programmes and other factors. Restrictions will not be removed for a very long time until dams recover.
- **Has the City done any research on whether 25L per person per day is a fair amount to live off?** The World Health Organisation (WHO) has done the research, it’s a commonly-accepted level. It is not luxurious or comfortable, but these are critical times. We need to think about just how uncomfortable living with 25L of water would be so that we can do everything we can now to avoid that scenario.
- **What help is there for small businesses such as guesthouses to keep operating if we hit Day Zero?** Neilson stated that it is very difficult to help individual businesses due to entire water networks having to shut down. Businesses must look at supplementing water supply, contingency plans and innovative business continuity plans.

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