

To: Mayor Dan Plato
City of Cape Town

09/09/2020

Dear Mayor Plato,

I write to you on behalf of the Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI). We are a multi-faith organisation committed to supporting faith leaders and their communities in Southern Africa to increase awareness, understanding and action on issues of eco-justice, sustainable living and climate change. (You may be aware of our successful legal action in 2017 in blocking the unlawful and unconstitutional actions of the South African government in its nuclear deal.)

For some time, we have been following with concern the increasingly polarised situation regarding the management of baboons on the Cape Peninsula. In recent years, members of the public have raised the alarm over the aggressive management tools employed by the service provider, and the number of baboons that are being killed¹ under the City of Cape Town (CoCT) protocols. The relocation of the male baboon Kataza from his troop in Kommetjie to the Tokai plantation, near to where our offices are based, a few weeks ago, has reportedly caused considerable emotional distress to the baboon, and outrage amongst concerned residents, local businesses and members of civil society, and has brought to light the current unsustainable practices of baboon management being employed.

Around the world, there are potential conflict situations at the intersections of human urban settlements and wildlife. In many places, these challenges have been overcome through negotiation, collaboration, careful management and exercising best practice in the interests of all parties.

Regarding the management of human-baboon interactions on the Cape Peninsula, we are concerned that, in the current situation, some views are not being considered and there is a lack of trust, which has created a breakdown in communication. There is also a growing and unhelpful polarisation between concerned and affected parties, and those responsible for baboon management. There are allegations of a lack of transparency and broader engagement requests being ignored in decision making.

We are concerned about both human and animal wellbeing, and because baboons are endemic, having lived in harmony with humans in the past within traditional knowledge systems, and as baboons are an essential component of our celebrated biodiversity on the Cape peninsula, there needs to be greater transparency and an opportunity for rational, facilitated dialogue.

1. ¹ We use 'killed' purposefully, rather than the more sanitised term 'euthanized'. The latter is an act of putting to death painlessly, animals suffering from an incurable, especially a painful disease or condition.


We therefore respectfully request that the CoCT provides us with the following information.

1. The Terms of reference, including list of members, of the Baboon Task Team (BTT)
2. The minutes of all the BTT meetings, since its inception.
3. The Terms of reference, including list of members, of the recently created Councillor Appointed Reps for Baboons of the South (CARBS) – recently set up by the CoCT.
4. The minutes of all the CARBS meetings.
5. The minutes of the meetings of the councillors of the CoCT for June, July and August 2020.
6. The figures of the annual baboon count (census), presented to the CoCT in June of this year, with a breakdown of age and gender categories.
7. A civil society representation on the BTT or CARBS, we respectfully request that a representative such as SAFCEI be considered if there is no currently such a representative.
8. Any reports held by the CoCT regarding the 40 Constantia baboons allegedly killed by authorities in June/July 2018. To date, no report has been made public.

It is in all of our interests that an amicable resolution that assures the long term flourishing of our primate cousins alongside the human communities is found. We are all God's creatures. With this in mind, we trust we will not need to apply for these documents via a PAIA process.

We look forward to your urgent response to our request.

With thanks and best wishes,



Francesca de Gasparis
Executive Director
SAFCEI