

Attention: Cape Peninsula Joint Task Team

**Cc: BAG representatives
Coastal Management
Sharks Spotters**

28 July 2025

OPEN LETTER

Dear JTT, Members of the Baboon Advisory Group and Service Providers,

Procedural Concerns and Request for Equitable and Transparent Engagement and Fair Process

1. The [Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute](#) (SAFCEI) and [Green Group Simonstown](#) (GGST) are [elected members of the BAG](#). We write to you with serious concerns about the functioning, transparency, and procedural integrity of the JTT/BAG engagement. While the BAG was ostensibly established as a platform for reciprocal engagement between authorities and community representatives, our experience thus far raises grave questions about the legitimacy and inclusiveness of this process.
2. The [Terms of Reference](#) (ToR) for the Baboon Advisory Group (BAG) clearly establish, in its *Purpose* and *Objectives*, its role as an advisory body to the Joint Task Team (JTT), and, in clause 3.2, explicitly mandate it as a channel for two-way communication between the JTT and community stakeholders. This commitment to inclusive, reciprocal engagement has been reiterated by the JTT in public meetings and public communications, including media statements in which the JTT claimed to have consulted with animal welfare organisations. We must place on record that this claim does not reflect the reality. From our direct experience, the stated commitment to two-way dialogue has not been honoured in practice, and meaningful engagement remains absent.
3. To date, the JTT and the BAG convened only twice. The first meeting was introductory in nature and focused solely on finalising membership. At the second meeting, the JTT BAG presented in a top-down manner a highly consequential proposal: the removal of five baboon troops from the Cape Peninsula. This proposal carries significant ecological, ethical, and legal implications. Despite its gravity, the BAG was given no opportunity to interrogate, challenge, advise, or meaningfully respond to the proposal. The process appeared largely performative rather than genuinely consultative, with key decisions seemingly predetermined or taken outside of the formal engagement platform.



4. GGST has submitted written input proposing mitigation measures and strategies for improved baboon management. These submissions have received no formal acknowledgment or response. Furthermore, GGST formally requested the opportunity to present at a BAG meeting and provide input directly to the JTT and the BAG; this request was likewise met with complete silence. Instead, a new agenda was then issued by JTT for the July meeting, which once again provided a packed schedule dominated by JTT presentations, leaving no room for BAG members to present or discuss. This would once again be a mere one-directional flow of information that fails to honour the participatory ethos the BAG is meant to embody.
5. The JTT publicly claims to have consulted with welfare organisations, but we must clarify that this does not [reflect the reality of the situation](#). GGST is aware that at least 78 animal welfare organisations have formally objected, some through official letters, others through [cease and desist](#) communications, to the proposed removal of the five baboon troops. To date, no meaningful response has been provided by the JTT to the questions raised in such submissions.

Expert Consultation and Procedural Integrity

6. We are also compelled to raise serious objections regarding the process used to establish the panel of experts advising the JTT on the proposed troop removals.
7. In South Africa, the establishment of expert panels by government departments or public entities is expected to follow principles present in constitutional and administrative law. These principles **are not optional**; they form the foundation of legitimate, fair, and transparent public decision-making.
8. At the heart of this framework is [Section 195](#) of the Constitution, which outlines the values governing public administration. These include five crucial elements: transparency, accountability, fairness, responsiveness, and public participation, as well as the requirement for ethical and professional conduct. Any process initiated by a public authority, including the appointment of an expert panel, must reflect these constitutional values. A failure to do so is not simply poor practice; it is inconsistent with the fundamental expectations of public governance in a democratic State.
9. This is reinforced by the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (PAJA) of 2000, which gives legal effect to the constitutional right to just administrative action. [PAJA, s 33](#), stipulates that all administrative decisions must be lawful, reasonable, and procedurally fair. It requires that affected parties are allowed to be heard (the *audi alteram partem* principle), that reasons for decisions are provided, and that such decisions are open to judicial review (accountability). When an expert panel is constituted to advise on or influence decisions, such as those relating to the management or removal of wildlife, its formation and operation must adhere strictly to these legal requirements.
10. We note that the JTT, as currently constituted, is not a legally accountable entity. It is not a statutory body, government department, or registered legal entity, but rather an inter-agency agreement between parties. As such, it lacks formal legal standing, defined governance structures, and public accountability mechanisms. In



light of this, **it is inappropriate for the JTT to initiate or lead the establishment of a panel of experts**, particularly on matters as serious and impactful as the proposed removal of five entire baboon troops from the Cape Peninsula.

11. Furthermore, for a panel of experts to be selected and established, government bodies are compelled to follow a structured and transparent process, particularly when the decisions to be informed by such panels carry environmental, social, or ethical weight.
12. The first step is [a public announcement of intention](#). A government department or agency must publicly declare its intention to establish an expert advisory panel. The announcement usually outlines the issue at hand, defines the nature of expertise required, such as ecological, legal, social science, welfare, etc., and sets out the preliminary terms of reference for the panel.
13. Following this, the government body will issue a public call for nominations or submissions of CVs. This step is crucial, as it allows for the broad participation of qualified professionals and institutions. Interested individuals or organisations are invited to submit their credentials, along with statements of independence, non-conflictual interests, expertise, and motivations for participation.
14. Once submissions of CVs are received, the government proceeds with the evaluation and appointment of panel members. Selection is typically carried out by a review committee within government, using clear criteria such as professional expertise and absence of conflicts of interest. Those selected are then formally appointed, and their names and institutional affiliations are published for public scrutiny.
15. Upon appointment, the panel is provided with a clearly defined Terms of Reference (ToR). The ToR outlines the panel's scope and objectives, the timeline for their work, methodological expectations, and ethical standards. It also sets out the deliverables expected from the panel, typically including a detailed report, findings, and evidence-based recommendations.

No proper steps have been followed

16. Instead, the panel of experts has been selected behind closed doors without any opportunity for broader scientific or public participation. The process lacked transparency, failed to invite multi-disciplinary input (as required by the complex socio-ecological nature of baboon management), and excluded key stakeholders. The process [was irregular](#).
17. As UCT scientist [Dr Bentley Kaplan](#) has emphasised in [his PHD on the chacma baboons](#) and human conflict on the Cape Peninsula, managing baboon populations requires the integration of multiple fields, including anthropology, sociology, animal behaviour, welfare science, conservation biology, psychology, ethics, and urban planning, among others. The selection of a narrow, secretive expert panel is wholly inadequate and procedurally unacceptable.



18. Further, we were informed that the selected experts were given only a few working days to produce their assessments, an unreasonably short period given the gravity and complexity of the issue and to inform a decision that will irreversibly affect entire troops of sentient beings and the communities living alongside them.
19. To compound these concerns, the expert reports themselves have not been shared with the BAG. Instead, the JTT has announced its intention to compile a second-layer report based on these expert submissions, again without transparency, scrutiny, or input from BAG members. The refusal to share the original reports, even with the advisory group itself, undermines all principles of good governance, procedural justice, and public accountability.
20. We strongly support calls from other BAG members demanding a fair and legally compliant process.
21. So long, the BAG must be allowed to access the raw expert reports received by JTT to this point, before any discussion or decision takes place. To engage meaningfully, we must be given access to the same information being used to justify any decisions and have an opportunity to review the science and give our feedback.

Requests for Procedural Rectification

22. In light of the above, we submit the following procedural requests to restore integrity and fairness to this process:
 - 22.1. A dedicated BAG meeting must be convened (JTT proposed the 18th of August 2025) in which the primary purpose is to hear the views, questions, and recommendations of BAG members. This is essential to fulfill the two-way communication function defined in the ToR.
 - 22.2. The JTT must follow proper South African governmental procedures for constituting an expert advisory panel. This includes:
 - 22.2.1. appointing one JTT member as the government body to run the process of selecting the panel of experts. This body cannot be an *agreement* and must exist in law to grant accountability
 - 22.2.2. the body must publicly announce the intent to form a panel of experts and define a multidisciplinary scope of expertise
 - 22.2.3. inviting CVs and statements of interest from the public and academic institutions
 - 22.2.4. disclosing the selected panellists and allowing for public comment
 - 22.2.5. allocating adequate time for research, consultation, and deliberation.
23. BAG members, in the meantime, could be provided with the full, unredacted expert reports relied upon by the JTT so far.



24. Any scientific claims used to support proposed management interventions should be accompanied by peer-reviewed publications or ethically approved research (e.g., UCT ethics clearance numbers). The use of “science” in public decision-making and proposed actions must meet the standards of academic transparency and ethical accountability.
25. Once expert reports are released, the BAG and wider community should be given sufficient time to review and comment. Thereafter, the JTT must provide written explanations for why specific comments were accepted or rejected, prior to proceeding with any action.

Conclusion

26. We reiterate our commitment to constructive engagement and evidence-based policy. However, we cannot support or participate in a process that is procedurally flawed, non-transparent, and selectively participatory. We call on the JTT to restore credibility to the BAG by upholding its founding principles and engaging with all stakeholders in good faith.

We look forward to your response and to the immediate scheduling of a meeting dedicated to hearing the voices of BAG members and resolving the issues presented above. Kindly acknowledge receipt of this submission.

Kind regards,

