



Chairman' Report 2026

Oyster Bay Dune Field

Work on the Oyster Bay Dune Field (OBDF) conservation initiative will continue on into 2026, despite renewed attention on the proposed Nuclear Power Station at Thyspunt. Efforts to secure protection for this nationally significant natural asset remain ongoing.

The initiative began in late 2023 with the submission of a proposal aimed at protecting all or part of the 16 km Oyster Bay Dune Field from future human interference, particularly sand mining and prospecting. The project has been driven by Dr Wentzel Coetzer, Biodiversity Stewardship Facilitator for the Greater Kromme Stewardship, in collaboration with Eskom as landowner.

As this long-term initiative continues, it is important to remind our viewers of the importance of the dune field and why it should be protected for the future. The Oyster Bay Dune Field is the longest headland bypass dune field in South Africa and one of the largest globally. It is a unique system of significant environmental, archaeological, and heritage value, supported by a distinctive underground hydrological network. Its protection is considered critical at local, regional, and national levels.

Parallel heritage protection efforts led by Trudi Malan of the Thyspunt Alliance resulted in the Eskom-owned Thyspunt site, including the OBDF, being granted Provisional Protection by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) in 2024 for a period of two years. During this time, work continues toward the declaration of the greater Thyspunt area as a Grade 1 Cultural Landscape of National Importance. Approximately one year remains on the provisional protection period.

Despite renewed development pressures, further engagements with Eskom and Greater Kromme Stewardship are scheduled for early 2026 to progress the original protection proposal.

In May, we hosted the inaugural **Save Our Dunes Pentathlon** at the beautiful Dune Ridge Country House under sunny skies and high spirits. The event proved to be a resounding success, drawing a wonderfully diverse mix of participants — from seasoned athletes to teams embracing the fun in full fancy dress.

Despite testing conditions, including a breezy cycle, a longer-than-anticipated walk, and a demanding 10km run through sand and fynbos, every team completed the course with enthusiasm and determination. The day was further enriched by strong spectator support, a vibrant atmosphere, and excellent catering and safety support.

Our sincere thanks go to St Francis Sport and their dedicated marshals, to the National Sea Rescue Institute and GuardMed Ambulance Service for first aid cover, to all our sponsors and volunteers, and to every participant who made the event such a memorable occasion.

Importantly, beyond being an enjoyable community gathering, the Pentathlon served a far greater purpose — raising awareness of the threat facing the Oyster Bay Headland Bypass Dune System (the “Sand River”), South Africa’s last functioning headland bypass dune system. Protecting this ecologically and archaeologically significant landscape remains a key priority for the Trust, and work continues toward securing its declaration as a nature reserve.

Again, we are planning a similar event for the 2nd May ‘26, at Dune Ridge Country House in support of the dune field and are hoping for another bumper turnout of teams and participants.

Wildlife Sanctuary

The year began as 2024 ended, with several grounded Cape Cormorants. In most cases, grounding is a survival response to exhaustion and starvation, driven by climate-related ocean changes, overfishing, and shifts within the Benguela ecosystem. Injuries from fishing line entanglement and weakened condition further compound the problem. All viable rescues were assessed and stabilised before being transferred to SANCCOB in Gqeberha.

Throughout the year, the Sanctuary received a high volume of calls from members of the public regarding fledglings. In many instances, these birds were not injured but simply in the natural fledging stage. Public education remains critical: fledglings should only be moved out of immediate danger and left for their parents, who continue feeding them for approximately 72 hours. Birds should only be handled if visibly injured and after professional assessment. Incorrect feeding or hydration by well-meaning individuals has unfortunately resulted in preventable losses. Awareness stickers and educational messaging have been developed to address this ongoing issue.

Avian Influenza (HPAI) saw a marked increase in early 2025, primarily affecting seabirds including African Penguins, Terns and Cape Gannets. While species such as Herons and Egrets can act as carriers without obvious symptoms, several dying and deceased birds were reported locally. The situation required ongoing monitoring and coordination with relevant authorities and wildlife professionals.

Due to facility constraints and an unexpected health setback, the Sanctuary operated from three temporary venues to allow for effective stabilisation and short-term rehabilitation. The planned 2025 rebuild was postponed, with a consolidated, fully compliant facility proposal to be submitted in 2026. Current DEDEAT and TOPS permits authorise the handling, stabilisation, short-term rehabilitation and transport of wildlife and endangered species for release or transfer to SANCCOB, specialist veterinarians, or species-specific sanctuaries.

Routine rescues continued alongside these broader challenges. These included relocating juvenile tortoises to safer habitat areas, responding to bird window-strike fatalities along the Kromme River, reconstructing swallow nests, monitoring minor antelope injuries, and addressing vervet monkey concerns with specialist guidance. Most interventions resulted in successful outcomes.

Grateful acknowledgement is extended to Dr Nerine Botha, Dr Anthony Davis and Dr Annelise Barker for their continued professional support, as well as to specialist advisors who assist in decision-making when required.

Owls and their Protection

At the end of October, at least ten owls in St Francis Bay died as a direct result of secondary rodenticide poisoning. These deaths were not isolated incidents, but a stark warning sign of a much wider and deeply troubling problem. In response, a community awareness campaign was launched to highlight the devastating and often unseen consequences of rat poison on wildlife.

Secondary poisoning occurs when a rodent consumes poison and takes anywhere between two and fourteen days to die. During this prolonged period, the animal becomes slow, disoriented, and easy prey. Owls, other birds of prey, mongooses, genets, as well as domestic animals such as cats and dogs, readily catch and consume these poisoned rodents. In doing so, they ingest the toxin themselves — frequently with fatal results.

Crucially, this threat is not limited to rat poison alone. Many commonly used household and garden poisons — including snail bait, ant and cockroach poisons, and certain weed killers — have similar cascading effects. These chemicals do not stop with their intended target. Instead, they move silently through the food chain. Birds, frogs, and lizards consume poisoned insects, while herbicides reduce or eliminate the insect populations that birds depend on for survival. The result is a gradual but profound weakening of the entire ecosystem.

Recognising this danger, veterinary practices in St Francis Bay, Humansdorp, and Jeffreys Bay, along with The Farmyard Nursery, now provide toxic disposal bins. These allow unwanted poisons to be safely discarded, preventing them from entering landfills where they can leach into soil, water systems, and surrounding habitats.

A particularly serious concern remains the widespread use of rodenticide bait boxes by pest control companies. While these may appear to be a controlled solution, they perpetuate the same deadly cycle. Instead of defaulting to poison, we must ask a more fundamental question: *why are rats present in the first place?*

In most cases, rats are attracted by readily available food sources — poor waste management, bird feeders, open compost heaps, unsecured refuse bins, and fallen or rotting fruit beneath trees. Addressing these issues significantly reduces rodent activity without introducing toxins into the environment.

Where intervention is still necessary, safer alternatives do exist. Mechanical options such as T-Rex traps, when placed inside secure bait boxes, are effective without posing a risk to wildlife. Another option is a product developed by Arnold Slabbert of the Urban Raptor Project made from food-grade ingredients that are safe for people and pets. It works by

disrupting the rat's digestive system, resulting in death without secondary poisoning to predators or scavengers.

The loss of our owls is a powerful reminder that the choices we make at home ripple far beyond our garden fences. Protecting our wildlife and natural environment begins with informed, responsible decisions — and with choosing solutions that do not come at the cost of innocent lives.

Eco-Kids

The Kromme Enviro-Trust's educational initiative for younger members, ECO-KIDS, offered a programme of five themed mornings across the year. Eco Kids families were also involved in the two Coastal Clean-ups held in 2025 with some prizes for the kids to thank them for their participation.

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Rotary St Francis for their continued sponsorship of T-shirts and caps, to Cheryl Douglas, enthusiastic co-presenter of the programme, Sandra Galer for support and a Big Thank You to the parents for bringing their children.

Eco-Kids kicks off again in February 2026. Each child that signs up for the year will again receive a sponsored Rotary shirt and cap. We are planning to present eight events: six educational activity mornings and two clean-up/community activities involving the children. The new events space at Bruces will be our home, but of course, we would prefer to be outdoor at one of the beautiful natural spots St Francis has to offer.

Bruce's Ocean Museum Cafe - Headquarters of your Kromme Enviro-Trust

The past year saw the transformation of the upstairs area at the Heritage Centre, as it used to be know before it became "Bruces"; which name is now firmly embedded locally and internationally.

The newly refurbished space is available for community-based activities and workshops as well as small events. We plan to offer a variety of activities in 2026. Even before it was finished the St Francis Bird Club hosted a very successful and soon to be repeated bird course featuring the hundred most spotted birds in the Kouga area. Participants were blown away by some of the natural beauty they discovered on their excursions.

Regarding the museum: To quote a publication of St Francis Tourism: "Inside, you'll find displays that tell the story of the local shore, penguins, otters, dolphins, whales and the Chokka industry that has shaped this village. Children climb over a whale skull; families linger in the café... turning the space into a welcoming community anchor."

Our thanks go to Nikki and Ernest Bendeman and their incredible team for the enthusiasm and commitment they show for this venture. It is due to them that Bruces Ocean Museum & Coffee Shop continues to be a great success. Many visitors assume Ernest is Bruce! Maybe in future it could become known as Nikkis&Ernests.

The Amazing Race

For several years now members of the Kromme Enviro-Trust staff Station 15 of the Amazing Race circuit. The Amazing Race is an annual fun event organised by St Francis Rotary. Bruces Coffee shop sponsors the station and provides some of the prizes for the participants. All proceeds go to Kouga Hospice and a significant amount of money was raised again this year. It is just one example how the various volunteer organisations in St Francis link and work together.

Greater Kromme Stewardship

2025 was the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Greater Kromme Stewardship. The Enviro-Trust is a founding member of the GKS in partnership with the local wind farms, and the purpose of the initiative is to identify potential conservation areas in the district and facilitate their formal declaration as protected areas. Conservation Outcomes is contracted to undertake this work and Wentzel Coetzer has been managing the initiative for us since 2015. Ten nature reserves and one protected environment have been declared and another four are in the final stages of the declaration process, with six more at an earlier stage in the process. Over 2000 hectares of valuable biodiversity have been secured for protection so far, and the six additional sites will add another 6000 hectares to the total. The Enviro-Trust is extremely proud of the contribution the GKS has made and continues to make in protecting the environmental resources of our area.

Greater Kabeljous Partnership

In 2023 the Enviro-Trust joined the Greater Kabeljous Partnership, a group of conservationists, business people, and environmental activists working to establish a formally-protected nature reserve on the Papiessfontein state land. The Enviro-Trust's interest in this is that the land is one of the areas ear-marked for conservation by the GKS. It is an exceptionally important stretch of biodiversity, being the last significant remnant of Humansdorp Shale Renosterveld on earth. It is also a breeding area for Black Harrier, a highly endangered bird of prey, and so it has been identified as an offset conservation area by the Jeffreys Bay Wind Farm.

Along with the Kabeljous Nature Reserve and privately-owned neighbouring properties, the Papiessfontein state land will form a reserve from the Gamtoos River to the Kabeljous River, a treasury for fynbos and fynbos creatures unique in the world. However, the land was invaded in December 2022 and a small number of the invaders are still present: the Kouga Local Municipality has taken legal action to evict them from the property and it is hoped that the declaration process can be initiated in 2026.

Response to Development Threats

Every year brings a new wave of development proposals for our area, and our role is to review the Environmental Impact Assessments for those developments and respond appropriately.

During 2025, there were three proposals of significance.

1. In March, a proposal for a shopping mall was advertised, to be located at the corner of Homestead Road and the R330. An EIA was required, but the application was refused by DEDEAT and no further involvement was needed.

2. The proposal to explore for oil and gas off Cape St Francis persisted in 2025, but the major players (TotalEnergies, QatarEnergy and CNR) withdrew and

only Main Street 1549 remains. It is funded through an agreement with a Canadian oil company; Africa Energy, and they have declared their intention to pursue exploration and extraction activities in the block. The Enviro-Trust, together with FOSTER, made a submission in the EIA process that these activities are superfluous, unnecessary and damaging and that the no-go option should be imposed.

3. Finally, in November Eskom announced its renewed intention to establish a nuclear power plant at either Thyspunt or Bantamsklip and that a completely new EIA is required. The Enviro-Trust has registered as an I&AP and attended the first public meeting, held in December

Environmental Clean-Ups

The Kromme Enviro-Trust hosts two coastal clean-up events annually: one in autumn and a second aligned with the International Coastal Clean-Up in September. The Trust has coordinated the international event for several years, contributing to a global movement that engages over six million volunteers worldwide, with the aim of encouraging both community members, businesses and visitors to actively care for and protect the local coastline.

The Trust extends its sincere thanks to Nevermind Restaurant for providing a base venue for both events during 2025, as well as to Bruce's Ocean Coffee shop, Kouga Municipality Refuse Team, Matt Davis and his students of the Sports Academy, local businesses, and the many volunteers who consistently give their time and support. While volunteer participation continues to grow, increasing community involvement remains an ongoing goal.

Two Harbours Trail

Heavy pedestrian traffic over the festive seasons once again placed significant strain on the Two Harbours Walk, particularly at the high-point dune. Early in 2025, erosion near the Port end necessitated the construction of a new bridge approximately 550m along the trail. Initially planned as a 6m span, ongoing pressure from heavy foot traffic required this to be extended to 10m.

The high dune at the midpoint also suffered damage, with abutments between the first and second bridges collapsing and requiring urgent temporary works to ensure public safety. To better protect this vulnerable section, the first and second bridges were subsequently extended to form one continuous structure. In addition, a further bridge was constructed at the lower end of the Ramazini Valley to accommodate overflow from the sewerage pump station, and the staircase linking the wetland to the dune midpoint was refurbished.

Going forward, once all structural repairs are finalised, attention will turn to dune stabilisation. Vegetation will be reintroduced to areas where erosion and high seas have stripped the bases, with planting scheduled to commence in the new year.

The Gabion section, stretching approximately 80m between the Esmeralda Road parking area and the high point, remains incomplete beyond the portion in front of Erf 1214. The proposed upgrade and extension in front of erven 1215, 1216 and 1217 is being driven by local residents under the leadership of Mr David Harpur. Completion of this work will significantly improve accessibility, particularly during high tide.

Our sincere thanks once again to:

- Frank Debrosky for maintaining the pathway section along Tom Brown Boulevard.
- Richard Arderne for overseeing the section in front of Erf 1400, reporting damage, and providing invaluable drone footage where urgent repairs were required.
- Neale Grobbelaar, Ryno and the team for their continued structural work and repairs.
- The SFB Cycling Club for maintaining the first 300m of the trail from Bruce's.
- Rotary SFB, whose financial support has covered the majority of project costs and made these works possible.

Community Garden

The Community Garden continues to thrive and remains a much-loved space for both residents and visitors. Throughout the year, the garden has welcomed adults and children alike, offering a place for play, quiet reflection, and connection with nature. The peaceful atmosphere and well-maintained surroundings contribute significantly to community wellbeing.

The upkeep of the garden relies heavily on the dedication of local volunteers, whose efforts are gratefully acknowledged. Sincere thanks are extended to Edmund and Dusty Elton, Glynn and Dr James Potts, Dennis Titus (Potts gardener), who undertake a wide range of maintenance tasks including litter removal, pruning, pathway restoration, and repairs. Appreciation is also extended to Masibulele Peaceful Mqina and Sibulele Kqweni from The

Links for their regular care of the lawns and assistance with volunteer activities, as well as to The Links staff for coordinating additional support. During the summer months, particular attention has been given to maintaining stairways and clearing pathways to ensure safe and accessible movement throughout the garden. Invasive alien vegetation remains largely under control, although some persists near the start of the Two Harbours Trail along the coastline.

Our thanks to Matt Gennrich of FOSTER for his personal assistance in the removal of alien plants from the garden, which had been an ongoing issue for many months. A great deal of dead and unwanted vegetation has been collected over the past 12 months and we extend our thanks to the Kouga Municipality refuse team who have regularly attended and removed from the garden.

Community Garden continues to serve as a peaceful haven, providing an essential escape from daily pressures and noise. Its continued success is a direct result of the commitment and care of those who contribute their time and effort to its preservation.

Fundraising

The Amazing Race organised by the St Francis Rotary Club has already been addressed earlier in this report and therefore requires no further comment here.

During the year under review, the region was severely affected by devastating wild bush fires, including areas adjacent to the Kromme River. Tragically, these fires resulted in the loss of residential properties and extensive environmental damage, with an inevitable and significant impact on both flora and fauna.

It is important to acknowledge the outstanding response from the local fire services, aerial firefighting teams, the Disaster Volunteer Group (DVG), and the many community volunteers who worked tirelessly to contain the fires. There is no doubt that their coordinated and courageous efforts prevented the fires from spreading far more widely across the area. We extend our sincere appreciation to all those involved for their commitment, bravery, and the considerable time they dedicated under extremely challenging conditions.

In recognition of both the scale of the environmental damage and the crucial role played by the aerial firefighting teams, the Trust resolved to donate R40,000 towards assisting with their operational costs, specifically contributing to the substantial fuel expenses incurred as a result of continuous helicopter operations.

Fishing Line Bins

The Fishing Line Bins initiative has continued throughout 2025 and has operated effectively. To date, a total of 21 bins have been installed, with 14 located in the St Francis area and 7 in Cape St Francis. These bins are strategically placed at popular fishing sites to encourage the safe disposal of discarded fishing line and tackle by both anglers and residents.

The initiative plays an important role in reducing entanglement and injury risks to local wildlife and domestic animals, particularly dogs, which have historically been affected by fishing hook injuries.

Denys Rothero coordinates regular monitoring of the bins, including volunteer inspections, maintenance, repairs, and replacements as needed. The Trust extends its sincere thanks to all the local volunteers for their ongoing assistance in checking and emptying the bins.

Communications and Community Representation

The Trust's website continues to reflect steady and encouraging growth in visitor numbers, increasing from 28,152 visits in 2024 to 39,595 in 2025. The period from September through to December showed particularly strong growth, indicating improved engagement, visibility, and public interest in the Trust's activities.

Our Facebook platform has also demonstrated positive growth, supported in part by targeted paid advertising campaigns. These proved especially effective in promoting the Save Our Dunes Pentathlon Relay and in driving awareness around the groynes initiative. The primary audience demographic remains females aged 25 to 34, predominantly based in Cape Town. January and May recorded the highest levels of engagement and overall viewership.

Instagram remains a relatively new communication channel for the Trust. Despite only 15 posts to date, the account has already attracted 71 followers and is showing consistent month-on-month growth. This platform presents a valuable opportunity for further expansion and more targeted engagement in the year ahead.

Environmental and Municipal Representation

Following the widely publicised groynes project and in accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment process, an Environmental Monitoring Committee has been established. The Kromme Enviro-Trust serves as an active member of this committee and continues to participate constructively in oversight and monitoring processes.

The Trust also continues to represent the environmental portfolio on the Kouga Ward 12 Committee, which meets monthly at the Kouga Municipality Council Chambers. This representation ensures that environmental considerations remain firmly on the local governance agenda and that the Trust maintains an active voice within municipal structures.

Thank You

It goes without saying that the Kromme Enviro-Trust could not achieve what it does without the valued support of our members, partners and the wider community. We extend our sincere thanks to all who have contributed over the past twelve months, and in particular to the following:

Our appreciation to Kouga Municipality for its ongoing support, together with the invaluable guidance and engagement of Councillors Lorraine Maree and Shena Ruth.

To Rotary St Francis, we are deeply grateful for your continued backing of the Eco-Kids Programme throughout 2025, including the sponsorship of tee-shirts and caps distributed this year and continuing into 2026. We also thank you for your generous donation enabling the engagement of Johan de Wet of Roaming Lions, Jeffreys Bay, to present a number of educational sessions. Our thanks further extend to Richard Vauquin for his consistent support and constructive input as Rotary's representative to the Enviro-Trust.

We acknowledge with gratitude Wentzel Coetzer and Sivuyisiwe Mapapu of Conservation Outcomes for their energy, guidance and professional support, particularly in relation to the dune field lead project. Their broader environmental work, including collaboration with multiple agencies and the identification and proclamation of nature reserves, deserves special recognition.

Our thanks to Matt Gennrich and Trevor Gascoigne of FOSTER for their continued support of our events and for fostering a strong relationship of cooperation and shared best practice between our organisations.

We extend sincere appreciation to Trudi Malan of Thyspunt Alliance for her determination and tireless commitment to environmental advocacy, particularly her role in the Provisional Protection of the Eskom-owned Thyspunt site for a two-year period, as well as her ongoing work in this important space.

The twice-yearly coastal clean-ups remain integral in promoting community involvement. We thank Bruce's Coffee Shop, Nevermind Restaurant, Sport for Youth Academy, FOSTER, Rotary, Kouga Municipality, St Francis Tourism and Bayview Boating for their continued participation and commitment to these initiatives.

Our gratitude to St Francis Tourism for its ongoing support across multiple initiatives, including Market Days, event promotion, and the St Francis playing cards project showcasing the beauty of our local area. We thank Hantie van der Westerhuizen for her valued assistance during 2025 and wish Debbie Duncan every success in her role within St Francis Tourism going forward.

We warmly acknowledge the local community members who assist in maintaining the Two Harbours Trail — an ongoing project requiring consistent care, from vegetation management and litter collection to the upkeep of boardwalks and steps. Special thanks to Frank Dabrowski for overseeing the Tom Brown Boulevard section, the Coriander Crew for their dedicated work along Coriander Crescent towards the Port, and to Caryl Logie, Henni de Beer and Petros Tito for their invaluable contributions to dune stabilisation and replanting initiatives along the trail.

We also recognise those who support us in other essential ways. Our thanks to Paul and Tracey Middleton of Calibre Security for their continued assistance, and to Jared Comley of Sewerage Works for his ongoing support to both the Enviro-Trust and the Heritage Centre.

Our appreciation to GuardMed Ambulance Service, Phillip Monteith and the team for their professional assistance at events during 2025. We look forward to working together again in 2026.

We further acknowledge the many NGOs within the greater St Francis area whose dedication and commitment across a wide range of projects make a meaningful difference. It is a privilege to collaborate with so many organisations and individuals who share a common purpose.

Finally, our heartfelt thanks to the Kromme Enviro-Trust Committee. The time, expertise and personal commitment invested by each member underpin all that we achieve. We also extend special appreciation to Sara Fouche and Peter de Wet, long-standing committee members who have contributed significantly to numerous initiatives over the years. Sara's dedicated service as Finance Officer until 2024 is particularly acknowledged. While stepping back from committee roles, their support has been invaluable, and we look forward to their continued involvement as active members of the Enviro-Trust community.

Si Cunneen

Chairman - Kromme Enviro-Trust