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Hwange moves to exorcise ghost town scare

NATIONAL Housing and Social Amenities Minister Daniel Garwe has appealed to the Hwange community to intensify its infrastructural development projects so as to guard against turning into a ghost town.

Minister Garwe said there was a need for concerted efforts by all stakeholders to ensure that Hwange does not face a similar fate as other mining areas, which became ghost towns after economic activities that supported them were depleted.

He said this while addressing various stakeholders during his tour of Hwange District last month.

“In certain areas we’ve mining villages that were created due to mining activities. The mines have since been closed but people are still there, sadly there are no social amenities,” said Minister Garwe.

He said the number of mining areas under threat of becoming ghost towns in the country were on the increase.

“We are aware of such (mining) areas, the majority of them have developed or grown into ghost towns. Kamativi is one of them, Mhangura is yet another. There are so many of them dotted throughout the country and Hwange shouldn’t be one of them,” said Minister Garwe.

Other examples of areas, which have been reduced into ghost towns are Alaska,



(From left) Town Secretary Pastor Ndumiso Mdlalose, Chairman Councillor Nqobile Ocean Mabhena, Town Engineer Philip Nguni and National Housing and Social Amenities Minister Daniel Garwe

Shamrock, Gath’s Mine in Mashava and Mvuma. Production at the mines folded over the past few years owing to viability problems, leaving communities with no source of livelihood.

He said there was a need to modernise the country’s infrastructure premised on Government’s Urban Renewal Project initiative

and its vision of attaining an upper-middle economy by 2030.

Government has made a commitment to transform local cities under a Smart Zimbabwe blueprint which is expected to turn local urban areas into smart cities that use information communication technologies. ▼

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“We need to urbanise and modernise those (mining) areas so that we develop, sticking to President Mnangagwa’s vision of ensuring that Zimbabwe attains an upper middle economy by 2030...,” said Minister Garwe.

He lamented the housing and social amenities at Hwange Colliery Company Limited’s compounds describing them as dehumanising and skewed to the colonial era.

Minister was making reference to the coal mining giant’s shared communal ablution facilities.

“Here we have a situation where several families share one ablution block that alone dehumanises people. It takes away the human dignity, which is well enshrined in our constitution as a human right, that’s one housing station we (Government) are looking at,” he said.

Hwange Local Board (HLB) town secretary Pastor Ndumiso Mdlalose emphasised on the need to effectively implement the Urban Renewal initiative as a springboard to attract investment.

He further noted that delays in incorporating seven of the 14 wards in Hwange urban under

the local authority’s administration was stifling the District’s economic growth.

“As a town we need the seven wards to be incorporated into HLB to allow for better planning, which goes beyond coal mining. We are an industrial town with mining and tourism activities. As it is Devolution funds can’t reach the concession area wards and this retards development,” said Pastor Mdlalose.

HLB chairman Councillor Nqobile Ocean Mabhena said over reliance on one economic activity was the first threat to Hwange’s demise in future.

“That’s why we have always been saying we don’t want to be associated with one economic activity, which is coal mining. If you look at Kamativi it was all about tin mining. Once tin lost its value on the international market, Kamativi started collapsing,” he said.

Clr Mabhena said with the world increasingly preferring green energy as a source of power, coal production was increasingly becoming unpopular.

“In any case some countries are no longer preferring coal for electricity generation because of the pollution caused by coal. We want other economic activities to be here so

that even if coal mining collapses we can hardly become a ghost town,” he said.

Clr Mabhena further reiterated that the abundance of coal resources alone bears little significance to the growth of Hwange’s economy.

“I’m quite aware that a lot of people will say coal reserves are there to last another 100 years, but I’m quite aware that if you go to Kamativi, tin is still there.

“Zambia was once known for its copper but the international price went down. It’s not always about the availability of the product, sometimes it’s about its economic relevance or importance,” he said.

Clr Mabhena also hinted that there was also a need for the District to be in the know of the revenue it generates across economic sectors.

“There is a tendency by people to look at GDP (Gross Domestic Product) through a national perspective. My own opinion is that we should know our own GDP as Hwange. We should know how much revenue is generated in the District and also know how much we are contributing to the national fiscus,” he said.

Hwange Master Plan on cards

HWANGE Local Board (HLB) is in the process of coming up with a Master Plan, which will guide it on future infrastructure developmental programmes in its area of jurisdiction.

HLB town secretary Pastor Ndumiso Mdlalose said the local authority has engaged Urban Development Corporation (UDCORP) to develop a Master Plan.

“We have already engaged UDCORP to do the Master Plan project for us and this will guide us on future infrastructural developments,” he said.

UDCORP was primarily set up for the purposes of encouraging and assisting Local Authorities to plan and co-ordinate urban growth and development, as well as to improve the standards of living of the general populace of Zimbabwe through the development of proper housing and related infrastructure.

HLB town planner Mr Themba Sibanda said there was a need for the local authority to formulate a Master Plan premised on Hwange’s anticipated growth.

“Hwange is fast growing but it doesn’t have any Master Plan. There is only a draft copy at

the provincial Government offices,” he said.

A Master Plan is a dynamic long-term planning document that provides a conceptual layout to guide future growth and development. It is about making the connection between buildings, social settings, and their surrounding environments.

It also includes analysis, recommendations, and proposals for a site’s population, economy, housing, transportation, community facilities, and land use. It is based on public input, surveys, planning initiatives, existing development, physical characteristics, and social and economic conditions.

“A Master Plan gives direction for future growth than a piece meal approach whereby if a certain investor comes and submit an application we run and allocate them land.

“It (Master Plan) gives a direction of a town’s growth whereby it clearly indicates where commercial and industrial are presently and in future. It gives direction of 20 years plus,” said Mr Sibanda.

The local authority is also in the process of identifying illegal structures and developments in residential, commercial and industrial areas with a view of improving

standards of facilities constructed within its locality.

“We are trying to identify illegal structures or developments in residential, commercial as well as industrial... It’s unfortunate that other developments were seen coming up but no one paid much attention to correct the situation,” said Mr Sibanda.

He said an infrastructural development undertaken without Council approval is deemed illegal.

“If one owns a stand but develops it without an approved plan, it becomes an illegal development. We will suspend all construction works and ask the developer to regularise his or her situation,” said Mr Sibanda.

He said the local authority was not heavy handed in its engagement with offenders.

“We can apply to the court to pull down a structure but that’s the last resort. Otherwise we try to give these programmes a human face where we engage with individuals and spell out the conditions and try to give them a timeframe by which they should make a wrong a right,” said Mr Sibanda.

The local authority is also carrying out a peg and stand identification and replacement exercise.

‘Hwange should make full use of its resource’

HWANGE Local Board chairman Councillor Nqobile Ocean Mabhena says there is need for communities in Hwange to effectively harness and utilise resources at their disposal.

Clr Mabhena said communities in Hwange should use their comparative advantage to make use of abundant resources within their locality to enhance their livelihood and the district’s economy.

He said although there are numerous resources that could be harnessed by corporates in the district some of them can be exploited by communities as a source of revenue.

“There has always been talk about channelling Zambezi water to Bulawayo yet there are few communities that benefit from that water though of course pipelines pass by to Hwange urban.

“There is need to find out how best can communities be assisted to harness that water to venture into agriculture. The country is largely an agro-based economy so we can contribute effectively to the sector,” said Clr Mabhena.

Hwange has over the years relied on Bulawayo and other areas for horticultural produce.

He further noted that communities should set up fisheries to enable them to catch fish for income generation.

“There’s lot of fish at the Zambezi River and we should be benefitting from them but we don’t seem to be benefitting. We just go there as individuals to buy from fishermen from nearby villages. We should set up fisheries with a view of supplying other areas outside Hwange and this way we can generate more income,” said Clr Mabhena.

A fishery is an organised effort by humans to catch fish or other aquatic species, an activity known as fishing.

Clr Mabhena said communities should also make efforts to add value to edible fruits in abundance in Hwange to enhance their revenue generation initiatives.

“Every yard in Hwange has four to five trees of mangoes and the fruit can even be found in the bush. We also have a lot of baobab fruit here. Our people should organise themselves into groups or cooperatives and seek funding to set up small factories to add value to these fruits. We can even value add fish. We have a lot of economic activities that we can ride on,” he said.

Mango can be added value to make a wide range of products such as jam, juice, candy, chutney or pickles, wine with the seed being used for making toothpaste.

Baobab fruit is edible, and baobab seed powder is used in foods because of its nutrients, possible health benefits, and as a natural preservative. It is a good source of vitamin C, potassium, carbohydrates, and phosphorus.

Clr Mabhena urged conglomerates to set up shop in Hwange so as to play a pivotal role in the growth of its economy.

“Each time we buy bread here in Hwange, we are creating employment in Bulawayo or



Councillor Nqobile Ocean Mabhena

elsewhere. The more we take products from Bulawayo and other cities, we are creating jobs there and killing jobs in Hwange. These companies should set up in Hwange so that we buy products made by our own people, there’s land for that,” he said.

Clr Mabhena further reiterated that Hwange should economically sustain itself.

“We want the Hwange’s economy to be self-sufficient and it’s possible. We also have to look at the issue of Devolution and how it’s benefitting Hwange,” he said.

“When we strive to become better than we are, everything around us becomes better too.” – Paulo Coelho

Hwange's biggest housing project to start soon

LOCAL companies, which were allocated residential stands by Hwange Local Board (HLB) at Empumalanga Phase 7 have stepped up efforts to commence construction in their area.

Empumalanga Phase 7 is one of the biggest housing projects in Hwange, which is expected to play a significant role in reducing the ballooning waiting list of home seekers.

HLB town secretary Pastor Ndumiso Mdlalose said it was of paramount importance for corporates that were allocated residential stands in Phase 7 to coordinate their activities to expedite development in their area.

"We didn't want individuals to get land there. We wanted corporates, we thought it was going to be manageable that way. We thought in terms of coordinating servicing of stands it was going to be much easier. It normally becomes a challenge to have to have one part having a topography while others don't because these projects are linked," he said.

The local authority allocated land to the Zimbabwe Power Company (ZPC), Hwange Electricity Supply Company (Hesco), FBC Bank, Zambezi Gas, South Mining Private Ltd and OK Zimbabwe.

The Phase 7 housing project is expected to see the construction of over 1000 houses including social amenities such as a clinic, beer hall, community hall, sporting pavilion, library, churches and schools.



Pastor Ndumiso Mdlalose

The companies have already committed themselves to set up specific social amenities while the local authority is expected to construct some of the facilities.

ZPC Hwange is expected to move its workers residing at Ingagula suburb before the commissioning of Unit 7 at Hwange Thermal Power Station, which is being constructed as

part of the plant's expansion project.

The construction of Unit 7 and 8 will see an additional 600 megawatt being added to the national grid.

The expansion will, however, affect Ingagula suburb whose location falls foul of the usual wind direction, leaving the suburb at the risk of dangerous emissions coming from the power generation process thus its relocation to Phase 7.

ZPC general manager projects Engineer Arnold Chivurayise said construction of the houses is expected to be complete before October next year.

"Our plan is that houses should be ready by October next year, that's the schedule on the cards and as such there is a need for ZPC to relocate people who live by the power station which is in Ingagula

"As we speak the surveyor is about to come to do the inspection, the contract is already there...it's really a mammoth task and we need to move with lightning speed," he said.

ZPC's timelines are likely to push other beneficiaries to come to the party and expedite the servicing of the area.

HLB will construct part of the road network utilising funding allocated to it by the Zimbabwe National Road Authority as well as install water pipes at its disposal upon completion of excavation work.

Mabhena OKs Mayor's cheer fund

HWANGE Local Board chairman Councillor Nqobile Ocean Mabhena has applauded retail supermarket chain group OK Zimbabwe for its unwavering commitment towards supporting the less privileged through its contribution to the Mayor's cheer fund.

Clr Mabhena said it was disheartening to note that most companies domiciled in Hwange are hardly involved in any Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives yet their businesses are flourishing while most people from communities which they operate within are wallowing in poverty.

"We only have one company, which donates towards this worthy cause and that's OK

(Supermarket). We have made numerous passionate pleas to all corporates to play a part but most claim their budgets are constrained while some say they will come back to us, of which they never do," he said.

Clr Mabhena further said other local companies should emulate OK supermarket.

"We would like to let the community know that we are happy to partner with OK and we appreciate what it is doing for the community and wish other companies would emulate them," he said.

Clr Mabhena said it was of paramount importance for local companies to contribute towards the fund since its proceeds goes towards improving the livelihoods of the less

fortunate members of society.

"The Mayor's cheer fund is hosted every festive season as a way of appreciating that there are less privileged members in our communities. It's basically aimed at giving them an opportunity to smile and cheer..." he said.

Clr Mabhena said the local authority has since remodelled the fund with a view of ensuring it effectively turns around lives of the underprivileged and vulnerable groups in society.

"We have gone a step further than providing these less privileged members of our community with food stuff. We are now assisting school going children with stationery and uniforms, including paying their fees," he said.

Council to act on stray animals



Stray livestock roam in Hwange's residential

HWANGE Local Board is in the process of amending its by-laws to come up with more deterrent measures to curb the highly contagious issue of stray livestock offences.

HLB housing and community services director Mr Ananias Banda said the local authority is unabated with reports from residents on the destruction of their vegetables by stray livestock.

“We are continuously receiving reports from residents expressing their dissatisfaction on livestock especially cattle straying into residential areas and disturbing their peace, worse still the animals are also destroying vegetable gardens,” he said.

The stray animals, which also include sheep and goats are also posing danger to both motorists and pedestrians.

Mr Banda said the local authority was considering auctioning stray livestock belonging to repeat offenders to deter them from committing the offence.

“The owners of the livestock are known and are always paying fines to have their animals released when we would have impounded them. We are in the process of amending our by-laws to enable us to auction stray livestock

belonging to repeat offenders. We believe this will deter them from committing such an offence,” he said.

Currently offenders are made to pay a fine of \$280 per animal head per day.

Most of the livestock especially cattle belong to peri-urban farmers and communal farmers from nearby villages such as Chibondo, Madumabisa and Makwa while small livestock such as goats and sheep from the Zimbabwe Prison and Correctional Services also stray into residential areas.

In the past Council had to destroy temporary cattle pens put up by villagers on the peripheries of Empumalanga suburb. These villagers tend to move their animals for relief grazing due to depleted pastures at their communal rangelands.

There are also some residents that are in the habit of keeping livestock especially cattle and goats without written consent from Council and measures are being taken to curb this practice. This practice is also prevalent in Hwange Colliery Company concession areas.

The local authority is also working on putting up an animal pound for the upkeep of impounded livestock.

HLB to partner business community

HWANGE Local Board (HLB) is making concerted efforts to partner indigenous businesses to enable them to play a pivotal role in the development and growth of their area.

HLB town secretary Pastor Ndumiso Mdlalose said the local authority has realised the need to rope in indigenous companies to assist in a number of developmental projects being undertaken in its area of jurisdiction.

He said this in an interview after a meeting between the local authority's management and the local business community.

“I don't think we have been effectively interacting with some of our stakeholders, especially the indigenous business community, thus the reason we decided to meet them. We sensitised them on our vision largely focusing on our new head office we are putting up...,” said Pastor Mdlalose.

He said the business community was made aware of the importance of the local authority's first head office as well as an upmarket boardroom, which would be constructed beside the new headquarters.

Prior to converting a pre-school building at Baobab suburb into its new offices, the local authority has been leasing a Zimbabwe Power Company building since its inception in 1974.

The new board, which is currently under construction will accommodate 30 people with the same number occupying the auditorium. It will also comprise of four offices with the town secretary and the chairman expected to be occupying two of the offices.

The local authority's permanent head office would be located at the proposed Civic Centre.

“The business community has pledged to assist us in completing construction of our boardroom. We want to look for a BOQ (Bill of Quantity) and use that to ask for donations from other companies as well...,” said Pastor Mdlalose.

HLB continues fight against Covid-19

HWANGE Local Board continues to intensify its fight against the spread of Covid-19 despite the District having received one of the lowest number of recorded infections in the country.

HLB environmental health technician Mr Nqobile Ndelaphi Mabhena said the local authority has not slackened off measures to guard against the spread of the respiratory disease more so in the wake of relaxation of a number of national lockdown regulations.

“We haven’t relaxed efforts to guard against the spread of Covid-19. We are still making sure all protocols and regulations are adhered to at all our institutions.

“We are now even intensifying these efforts considering that a number of lockdown regulations have been relaxed. The tourism sector and inter-city travel have been opened

and these might leave us vulnerable,” he said.

Hwange District is a predominantly a tourism destination with the Victoria Falls and Hwange National Park headlining the attractions.

Prior to the re-opening of schools on 28 September the local authority fumigated council owned schools, Chilisa Secondary and Nechibondo Primary, which are both situated in Empumalanga high density suburb. It also disinfected all its offices.

“We fumigated the two schools and also did the same to our offices. We expect the schools authorities to abide with Government protocol,” said Mr Mabhena.

He added that the schools’ authorities are expected to provide the necessary Preventive Protective Equipment to learners and members of the staff.

“We expect the schools to provide PPE in the form of masks as well as sanitisers to students



Nqobile Ndelaphi Mabhena

and members of the staff. Any suspected cases of Covid-19 at the two schools will be referred to Empumalanga clinic since it’s also a council facility,” said Mr Mabhena.

CORONAVIRUS SAFETY

Follow these easy steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.



Disinfect surfaces around your home and work.



Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds.



Sneeze or cough? Cover your mouth.