

12 January 2021

Media Statement  
For immediate release

## **UVONGO AND LUCIEN BEACHES REOPEN TO PUBLIC WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT AS WATER QUALITY REACHES ACCEPTABLE LEVELS**

The Uvongo and Lucien Beaches on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast have been reopened to the public following a decrease in the toxicity levels caused by the Escherichia coli, (E.coli) bacteria in the water. Uvongo beach and its lagoon showed a drastic drop in the overnight E.coli readings, which prompted a decision to reopen the beach immediately.

The MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs Ravi Pillay expressed his relief at the latest development. “This is welcomed news to all of us, especially the tourism sector and businesses along the coastal line of the Ray Nkonyeni Municipality. We felt their pain when beach activities were not possible because of the contamination of water. However, the need to protect public health, livelihoods and sustainability of the environment outweighed any other possibility, hence the decision to close the beaches”. says MEC Pillay

Results from water tests conducted on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> January showed a drastic decrease in the E.coli levels, with Uvongo river upstream of the Waste Water Treatment plant and below KwaMasinenge Settlement reading at 200 down from 1 313 the previous day. Uvongo lagoon was down to 200 from 2 909 the previous day while Uvongo beach recorded 300 down from 1076.

Uvongo beach was closed on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December 2021 after sewage pumps in the KwaMasinenge Low Coast Housing projects spilled on to the environment because of vandalism and thereby causing a spill that contaminated the stream en route to the river leading to the lagoon and eventually to the beach. This was also exacerbated by some mechanical faults in the Ugu District Municipality Uvongo Sewer Treatment Plant and thereby releasing untreated sewer direct into the lagoon and to the beach.

On the other hand, the Lucien Beach was closed on Friday the 07<sup>th</sup> January 2022 due of a ruptured sewage pipe that feeds into one of the pumpstations along the coastline. The pipe was fixed but the beach remained closed due to high E.coli levels. The latest test results at Lucien beach also came in within the permissible levels of under 500 per 100ml.

“We must appreciate the good work that has been done by a multi departmental team that has been on site since the incidents occurred. With the same breath we must also categorically state that some of the spills are avoidable. We are concerned by an apparent lack of proper management of some of these treatment pumps. Notwithstanding the ageing infrastructure and limited budgets, Municipalities must adhere to strict maintenance plans which will help detect and prevent any problems with their sewage systems.” says MEC Pillay

Water quality testing, repair and maintenance work of all sewer lines, pumps, and treatment plants will continue for a foreseeable future until any potential threat to the water system is eliminated.

The Speaker of Ray Nkonyeni Municipality, Cllr Zodwa Mzindle expressed appreciation on the team efforts by all relevant stakeholders to ensure that this unbecoming situation is addressed. She concluded by raising concerns that things were left to reach such a state of affairs which then led to the closure of the beach which affected local tourism and economy and she emphasized that this should be avoided in future.

**Issued jointly by the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs and the Ray Nkonyeni Municipality**