



24 August 2026

Dear CapeNature

PROPOSED PREDATOR-MITIGATION FENCE AT STONY POINT

THE BETTY'S BAY CONSERVANCY RESPONSE TO THE COMMUNITY INFORMATION SHARING SESSIONS BY CAPE NATURE

The Betty's Bay Conservancy (BBC) would like to submit its concerns and suggestions regarding the information shared at the community sessions on 9 June and 31 July 2026, regarding the proposed fence.

1. Introduction

We thank CapeNature and SANCCOB for their presentations at both sessions and appreciate the opportunity to ask questions and to submit input and concerns via the sp@capenature.gov.za.

The BBC supports CapeNature, SANCCOB and BirdLife SA as they strive to preserve the African Penguin at Stony Point colony. We are aware that with the multitude of threats the penguins face - past, present and unforeseen disasters - this is a difficult task.

2. The status of the African Penguin

We acknowledge the extinction threat of the African Penguin – and the estimate of when they could be extinct in the wild. At the time of the 2025 South African High Court decision to restrict commercial fishing around six penguin-breeding colonies, it was predicted that the African Penguin, at the current rate of decline, and without drastic intervention, would be extinct in about 10 years, namely around 2035.

The spike in caracal predation in the past 18 months, and the estimated loss of about 150 adults, has exacerbated the current predation numbers. The loss of each adult and breeding pair has a long-term effect on breeding success, which at this stage in the African Penguin's fight for survival, is critical.

With so little time to save the African Penguin from extinction, and with a colony under a high level of stress, there is no room for errors or for ineffective management decisions and measures.

3. The BBC statement on the proposed fence, its impact and “effectiveness”

3.1 Deal with the immediate threat to the penguin colony

Based on the information shared by CapeNature, we do not think that the proposed fence is an answer to the immediate and extreme threat to the penguins. It will take several years to build and, during the construction phase, it offers no predator deterrent.

We propose that the following predator control/deterrent measures would be more effective for immediate protection:

- a) **Effective caracal trapping.** We understand that CapeNature has traps in the colony to try to trap the caracal. So far, this has not been effective. If caracals are indeed the major predation problem for the penguins, this should be a priority strategy and outsourced to a professional capture team.
- b) **Wide-angle image-enhancing or infrared cameras** on poles, at strategic points with an overview of the colony and a live-feed linked into the CapeNature control room.
- c) **Night shift patrols.** CapeNature could arrange night personnel on site, and volunteers can supplement this. This measure would be most effective when used together with the cameras. Some BBC volunteers are assisting with night patrols and we will try to recruit more volunteers to join the Penguin-Pals Night Patrol volunteer group.

Ultimately, now or at some point in the near future, caracals should be effectively removed from the Stony Point penguin colony. To wait for a few years, will move the colony even closer to the brink of extinction.

3.2 Reduce the stress on penguins from visitors

Some proposed measures, both immediate and medium term, include:

- a) **Erect a fence of a maximum height of 1.1 m around the area under CapeNature control that allows penguin movement at appropriate locations.** This will allow penguins to move in and out of the area, but limit human access.
- b) **Increase the distance between the penguins and visitors.** The path along the coastline allows visitors to be very close to and obstructs the penguins from moving between the sea and their resting/breeding sites. A suggestion is that initially this path is moved further inland, and is eventually replaced by a boardwalk.
- c) **Upgrade of the current boardwalk.** We are aware that there are plans to upgrade the current boardwalk in 2026. We suggest that the boardwalk is extended to the east side too, so that visitors are restricted to walking on a boardwalk in the colony.
- d) **Visitor education.** The BBC has assisted with visitor information education and signage with QR codes to link to this information. Some of the BBC volunteers have attended a WWF/SANCCOB workshop for training, and some will attend the Tour Guide Workshop in August. The BBC is

working with CapeNature to enable their volunteers to assist and supplement CapeNature staff with visitor education and monitoring.

- e) **Visitor flow in the colony.** CapeNature does have a plan to change the current “free for all” visitor flow and this will be done in a trial manner before the end of 2026. There is concern that a line of people queuing in front of the restaurant and boat club land may block penguin movement.
- f) **The non-functioning entry and exit gates.** New gates, which are part of the proposed fence plan, should be installed immediately if the current ones cannot be repaired. However, the gates should remain porous to penguins along the gate-line.
- g) **After-hours access,** both in the morning and evenings, when there are no CapeNature staff present to monitor visitor behaviour, is a serious problem that creates stress for the penguins. The gates (see point (f)) and a 1.1 m fence (see point (a)) would prevent some of this.
- h) **Monitor the number of visitors.** Perhaps there should be a restricted number of visitors (locals, tourists, etc.) allowed in the colony at one time?
- i) **Remove the boat club social venue** so that there is no noise, lights, people and vehicle movement in the colony after hours and late at night.
- j) **The drastic “critically endangered” situation requires some drastic solutions.** One suggestion from the BBC is that CapeNature closes visitor/tourist access to the colony for 6- 12 months before the population graph shows it is too late. This would reduce the human stress and interference in the colony and provide the penguins with a quieter habitat to promote breeding success at this critical stage of their population predictions. CapeNature can monitor this to assess the effectiveness of the closure on the penguin population.

3.3 The proposed fence allows predator access at the high-water mark

If the fence ends at the high watermark, will this be at the spring tide or neap tide watermark? There will be access for predators on either end of the fence during the 12 hours between high tides, and possibly even during high tide depending on where the fence ends. Once any caracal discovers this entry point, the fence will no longer be effective.

3.4 Potential harm to the colony

Construction of the proposed fence and its cement foundations will cause significant disturbance to natural vegetation and breeding sites and significant stress to penguins – this at a time when the birds are already under stress by predation, the moulting season, low prey abundance and other factors.

Penguins are burrow nesters but, compared to guano, they cannot adequately burrow in the hard, dry terrain of the core colony. They are able to burrow under the thick vegetation in parts of the colony and the surrounding area – one of the factors that has led them to leave the colony area. Breeding space may be one of the main factors determining breeding success. At this critical time, of whether the species can be brought back from the brink of extinction, breeding success is a key factor.

The current fence enables penguins to choose what they deem is optimal breeding habitat on private and municipal land. On one hand, we understand the birds outside the colony area are at increased risk of threats such as predation, cars, people and domestic animals – as they do not have defence and behavioural responses to threats. On the other hand, we are very concerned regarding the stress of “forced removals” on the breeding pairs who choose to nest outside and do not have a nest area within the colony, and the breeding success of these birds.

The figures of a steep rise in penguin numbers from 2010 to 2015 took place while most of the fences were not in place.

3.5 A different factor: The direct release of stormwater at Stony Point by the Overstrand Municipality

This is from a catchment of more than 200 000 m² (20 ha) (between Crassula, Porter and Agapanthus roads). We request that CapeNature investigate the impact of this and take appropriate action as required.

4. Results of the BBC Survey used to compile residents’ concerns regarding the proposed predator-mitigation fence

We are in the process of compiling the responses to our information gathering survey, and we will send a document with these concerns to CapeNature.

5. Conclusion

The BBC wants to continue to support CapeNature SANCCOB and BirdLife SA in the vital work they all do to protect, manage and preserve the African Penguin.

Our concerns in this letter address some of the reasons why we do not think the proposed predation-mitigation fence is the optimal solution to the immediate problem and we set out some suggestions for immediate actions within the colony.

We trust that the BBC can play a constructive part, together with other stakeholders, in providing the African Penguin with the support it needs to survive.

Yours Sincerely

BBC Executive Committee