

From an organisational point of view, something equally urgent had to be done about the pupils' education, and accommodation for the boarders and their support staff. Jeanne-Marie Botha, the school principal managed to negotiate the rental of the Sandbaai Hall for the children's schooling and two houses to accommodate the boarders, house parents and volunteers. Whilst not ideal, the teachers and learners manfully adapted to the difficult circumstances and got on with the job.

However, unexpectedly a crisis developed while Jeanne-Marie was in the UK attending a conference of the Association of Camphill Communities of the UK and Ireland with which the Hermanus School is affiliated. When she returned just before Easter, she was confronted with the news that the Sandbaai Hall would no longer be able to host the school – as from the beginning of May! Intellectually disabled children do not adapt easily to change or the disruption to their routine.

There could be no question of their being able to return to the school premises where the air pollution had deteriorated even more, so where to go now with 60-odd children from age 6 to 18?

The word was put out and shortly before going to print, we were informed by Jeanne-Marie that the School had been overwhelmed by the many churches and other facilities, like the Volmoed Retreat Centre and Bosko School which had offered them accommodation.

She also wanted to express her gratitude to Franklin Hamman, Chairman of the Hermanus Old Boys' Club who has been throwing himself body and soul into helping find suitable premises. They have until after the 1 May public holiday to decide on the best option and to undertake their second great trek.

At roughly the same time as this crisis was erupting, Jeanne-Marie was informed by Working on Fire that 25 of their fire fighters would be moving into one of the boarding houses at the School to start work on dousing

This will involve red tape galore and the navigation of numerous legal constraints. And then, of course, there's the small matter of who will pay for this inordinately expensive process...

One thing is certain – this will be a lengthy exercise (perhaps as long as a year, possibly longer). There is no doubt, though, that rehabilitation of this delicate eco-system must take place before it degrades even further. Its neglect will have long-term consequences both in terms of the quantity and quality of the water in the Onrus River (and ultimately the tourism potential of the area), but also on the survival of its finely balanced faunal and floral systems.

Key to ensuring that the rehabilitation takes place in the shortest possible time frame is the sustained pressure that the local community can place on the authorities through letters of support and campaigns. The Onrus River Estuary Forum may be the most suitable organisation to rally such support, believes Liezl.

As far as the dousing of the fire is concerned, this week will be critical. Only once the fire fighting team have probed the surface and started implementing their operational plan will they have an idea of whether it will work or not, and if so, how long it might take. *The Village NEWS* will continue to track and report on progress with this project and the successful relocation of the Camphill children.



Camphill children 'thank you for the food we eat.'
PHOTOS: Taylum Meyer