

The plan set to save the rhino

KAREN WATKINS

An integrated plan to fund the war on rhinos was recently launched at Kelvin Grove in Newlands under the auspices of the Cape Town Press Club.

Dubbed "The Plan", it was the brainchild of extreme adventurer and director of Accountability Now, Braam Malherbe, of Green Point. He brought together two anti-trade protagonists, conservationist Ian Michler and retired safari operator Colin Bell, of Hout Bay, and two believing that trade is the way to go, economist Dawie Roodt and himself.

Mr Malherbe said they locked themselves into a room with a mediator and after much heated debate they agreed to forge a new pragmatic partnership that brings together their combined energies, with the aim of creating a unified rhino survival strategy.

Throughout the launch was the thread that it was highly unlikely that the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) would allow rhino horn to be traded legally in the next five years.

The 17th Conference of Parties (CoP17) to CITES will take place in Johannesburg between September 24 and October 5 next year.

"The rhinos cannot afford to

wait while we argue for another six years.

"I believe this is the first time that pro and anti trade lobbyists have put their interests and egos aside for the rhinos. Protecting the rhinos takes huge amounts of resources and money," said Mr Malherbe.

Describing the plan, Mr Roodt said one of the pillars is the creation of a tourism conservation fund to support a multi-pronged approach to tackle the crime syndicates head-on and put them out of business.

"If we take the industry at R220 billion, including domestic tourism, and we have 50 percent sign up, we can get well in excess of R500 million per year. And we can grow that to R1bn with proper marketing and sign-up," said Mr Bell.

He said the plan was to have an advisory board, comprising the private sector, NGOs, SANParks, CapeNature and conservation bodies, which would determine how the money would be spent.

Mr Roodt said the tourist "levy" was the best solution to funding the plan what with the just over R100bn tourism industry contributing to the South African economy, about three-percent. And yet in Kenya tourism contributes 10 percent, bringing in R300 billion.

"If we grow the tourism industry it will create half a million jobs

and more," said Mr Roodt.

Mr Malherbe said the largest consumers of rhino horn are Asians.

"Buoyed by the false assumption that rhino horn has medicinal properties. It has also become a status symbol in an increasingly wealthy Vietnamese population where it's ingested like cocaine.

"Gram for gram, rhino horn is more valuable than cocaine and gold, and demand is growing," said Mr Malherbe.

Other aspects covered in the plan include strengthening policing and the judicial system through a special investigative wildlife crimes unit; improving the lives of communities in or near wildlife areas; improving technology – innovative security solutions to tackle poachers including satellite tracking and surveillance of poachers – the creation of a DNA database; restricting export of rhino horn trophies from sport hunting until such time as the poaching crisis is averted; increasing branding and awareness of The Plan through advertising; and the importance of demand reduction in the markets, and political lobbying for international support.

Mr Bell said: "We have to get rid of the bickering. This anti-trade, pro-trade constant lobbying is only benefiting one organisation and that is the criminal syndicates."



The speakers listen to questions, from left, Ian Michler, Braam Malherbe, Colin Bell and Dawie Roodt.

Rules of engagement

Mr Malherbe said he had delivered a letter to the Minister of Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, to consider changing the "rules of engagement" in the Kruger National Park. "To allow our rangers and all law enforcement agencies to do whatever is deemed necessary to apprehend the poachers," said Mr Malherbe.

Botswana and Swaziland have a shoot-to-kill policy and they have minimal poaching.

He said the letter was forwarded to the ministers of Justice, Police and the SANDF.

He said that of the well over 3 000 rhinos poached since 2008, approximately 65 percent have been killed in the Kruger National Park. Asked to comment on this, Albie Modise, spokesperson for Ms Molewa, said the numbers of dead rhinos would be far

higher if not for interventions put in place by national government.

Asked about Mr Malherbe's request to change the rules of engagement for poachers entering the Kruger National Park to a "shoot to kill" one, Mr Modise said this request is one of many "wild" proposals that people have been making. "South Africa is a democracy and we cannot go around shooting people."

He said they are working with security clusters and employing a number of interventions. These include signing agreements with Mozambique, Vietnam and China and working closely with them.

They are also employing the services of the Green Scorpions at airports and other ports of entry and exit. Mr Modise said a number of arrests have been made due to these interventions.

Keeping fit after birth

YONELA SINQU

After giving birth, most mothers battle to strike a balance between going to the gym and looking after their bundle of joy, says fitness instructor Kyle Brown.

Having tried almost every sport code his school offered, it almost comes as no surprise that Mr Brown followed fitness training as a career.

With an exercise science qualification from Health and Fitness Professionals Academy (HFPA), he became a personal trainer focusing on weight loss among youngsters. While completing his qualification he added sport massage to his course programme.

Soon after completing his diploma, Mr Brown joined the Stormers Rugby Club and later Ajax Cape Town's medic teams.

Mr Brown also boasts South African colours in squash and still plays at provincial level.

While he doesn't have personal experience of how a baby can turn one's life upside down, Mr Brown, a former Rondebosch Boys' pupil believes nothing should change once the baby is born.

Having developed methods for mothers to enjoy time with their children while keeping fit, Mr Brown cautioned that before starting any kind of fitness training one should have a thorough examination by a doctor and should wait at least six weeks after natural birth and at least 10 to 12 weeks after a C-section, before hitting the gym.



Pramfit's founder, Kyle Brown takes Catherine Jordan through her paces.

Because not every mother is comfortable leaving their new-born at a gym play group and because not all gyms have such facilities, he developed Pramfit, which caters for mothers of children of all ages.

"All a mother needs is a mat, sweat towel, water bottle and the baby. And for those parents with children who are older and heavier, weights are used as substitutes. Among other things, the classes focus on toning the body and strengthening the cardiovascular muscles – all exercises are tailor made for every individual's need. And classes are 40 to 45 minutes long."

Pramfit will be hosting free classes at the Rondebosch Scout Hall on Friday October 16 from 8.30am. For more information call Kyle Brown on 072 705 8651.

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