

All-female team to repair roads in Heideveld

The Heideveld all-female roads repair team is the fourth to be appointed by the City of Cape Town and is part of the Women at Work Programme.



The all-female roads repair team is based at the Transport for Cape Town (TCT) depot in Heideveld and has been appointed as part of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) within TCT to repair and do maintenance work on roads, footways and stormwater infrastructure in Heideveld, Manenberg, Tambo Village, Athlone, Surrey Estate and the areas adjacent to Jakes Gerwel Drive.

Gender transformation programme

"Women at Work is a gender transformation programme within TCT which is collaboratively implemented through the TCT Training Academy, the EPWP and selected roads depots across the city. The purpose of this programme is to empower women in the workplace by providing them with skills for manual work that is generally associated with men. With the skills and entrepreneurial abilities they develop during the 10-month employment period, these women will be better equipped to find placement in the permanent job market," said the City's Mayoral Committee Member: Transport for Cape Town, Councillor Brett Herron.

The team was established in March 2016 and consists of six members:

- Kashiefa Beck (34) from Heideveld
- Nomzamo Feni (43) from Gugulethu
- Joyleen Melton-Gordon (40) from Heideveld
- Pumla Mfana (39) from Gugulethu
- Ilhaam Ely (39) from Heideveld
- Akeelah Abrahams (34) from Heideveld

They follow in the footsteps of the all-female teams of the TCT depots in Ndabeni (introduced in August 2015), Fish Hoek (introduced in November 2015), and Kuils River (introduced in February 2016).

"The team from Heideveld now counts among the 24 pioneers of a long-term process whereby the city is tackling gender transformation in the transport realm. Women are generally under-represented in the transport sector – for example, within TCT, women constitute only 3.4% of those involved with the physical maintenance of roads and stormwater infrastructure. I am confident that this project, spearheaded by the TCT Training Academy, will assist us over time in changing perceptions about the type of work that women can do," said Herron.

The Women at Work Programme has also been nominated for the fourth annual Women in Construction Awards to take place in Johannesburg on 10 May 2016.

Identifying suitable candidates

TCT's Training Academy assisted the management at the Heideveld depot to identify suitable candidates from the local sub-council jobseeker's database in accordance with the City's EPWP policy. The candidates underwent a physical assessment to test their ability to perform the type of work required and they were interviewed and evaluated by members of the depot management.



"A total of 24 women would have benefited through the Women at Work Programme by the end of the financial year on 30 June 2016. We have spent approximately R1m on this programme. We now aim to establish 10 all-female roads repair teams accommodating another 60 women in the next financial year," said Herron.

The 24 women will exit the programme on 30 June 2016. Thereafter, TCT will embark on a new recruitment process to find candidates to replace them, as well as to expand the programme with a further six teams situated at other suitable roads depots across the city.

On-the-job training is provided at the depot, covering the following technical fields:

- Stormwater infrastructure: cleaning, unblocking, and repairing pipes, manholes and catch pits
- Footways: edging, paving, operating rollers, and raking pre-mix used to repair surface patches
- Roads: repairing potholes, surface patches and edges, laying kerbs, and operating a plant
- Line marking: painting straight lines and legends on road surface, planting poles and signage, stencilling street names on kerbs, painting kerbs, and street name kerb moulding

"The Heideveld team is currently being trained to clean and repair gullies, as well as to fix potholes," said Herron.

Apart from the abovementioned technical training, the women are also coached in life skills, entrepreneurial skills, conflict management and team work.

Empowered to enter the job market

"Even though the women will not be employed permanently, they will be empowered to enter the job market given the technical exposure and the experience they have gained in drafting a quality CV, interview skills, and selling their interpersonal skills to add value in the workplace. Once the programme ends on 30 June 2016 they will be empowered to apply for permanent work, or even start their own business," said Herron.

The TCT Training Academy has designed a monitoring system that continually draws all the information from the four pilot teams in terms of progress and challenges so that the process can be adapted for future projects.

"We are looking forward to seeing the women working on the streets and sidewalks in Heideveld. I hope that this initiative inspires the private sector to also get involved by assisting us to cover the indirect costs, or by offering these women permanent employment opportunities," said Herron.

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