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As 2016 draws to a close, I start this edition of News & Views with a message of appreciation.

Our thanks go to each and every market that we sell our members’ timber to, and especially the local and overseas buyers of hardwood pulpwood and wood chips that make up the biggest part our business.

This year has seen NCT handle the highest volume of wattle pulpwood in its 67-year history, and close to the highest volume of Eucalyptus pulpwood. We appreciate the increasing business that is done with us and the trust that is placed in the reliability and quality of our products. We place enormous value on the excellent long-term relationships that we have with our customers.

We thank both our long-standing and new members for the record volumes of timber that they are selling through NCT, especially in the knowledge that the overall forestry resource in South Africa is not an expanding one. We will continue to live up to our mission of assisting them to maximise their returns from forestry.

We are extremely proud of our fine team of employees, who deserve gratitude and congratulations for all-round excellent performance this year, be it in the mills, the forests, the depots or the offices of NCT.

The directors, under the very capable chairmanship of Philip Day, are commended for their committed and wise steering of the NCT ship.

The external environment in which we operate is not always a predictable one, but we nevertheless have reason to expect another good year in 2017, a year in which we also have exciting plans to further hone and consolidate the business.

We would like to wish all of our stakeholders a very happy, healthy and successful year ahead.

Patrick Kime
James van Zyl, NCT’s Commercial Manager attended the
Wood-flow Optimisation Conference in Melbourne, Australia, in September.
This is his account of how timber logistics are handled Down Under.

The conference is a biennial event organised by the Forest Industry Engineering Association of Australia
and New Zealand, with specific focus on timber transport technologies, timber logistics and data
management in the timber supply chain. It’s common knowledge that there are many similarities between
the South Africa and Australian timber industries, but I will focus on the latest trends in the Australian
timber industry.

**Platooning of road trucks**
Platooning of heavy vehicles by *Drive* software is currently used by a few trucking companies which allow two, or more, PBS vehicles to follow each other automatically and intelligently within 10m distance intervals. This results in reduced drag on both vehicles, with a 4.5% fuel saving in the leading vehicle and 10% in the following vehicle. This technology is obviously more appropriate for the longer highway routes, but can have limited application on SA’s national roads. Platooning of two vehicles or more, is another step towards autonomous and self-drive trucks of which is read about more frequently.

**PBS vehicles are the norm**

In South Africa, we are familiar with the benefits and cost savings of PBS (Performance Based Standards) vehicles with payloads in excess of 48t in the local timber industry. Unfortunately, it requires extensive administrative red tape to unlock these benefits as PBS vehicles are currently deployed under the abnormal load regulations of the National Road Traffic Act.

The Aussies have effectively convinced their transport authorities that PBS trucks are now normal and do not need to run under a special dispensation. Treating PBS vehicles as normal is something we will engage with SA provincial and national DOT’s to increase the use of these vehicles.

**Legislation**

South Africa has adopted similar road regulations as in Australia with the pilot de-merit points system (AARTO) being tested in Gauteng. This includes our PBS vehicle designs and overload legislations, the concept of which originated in Australia.

There is a chain of responsibility and a general duty to all in the supply chain to uphold the law and be inter-responsible (eg: NRTA Reg. 330A to 330D or commonly known as the Consignee-Consignor legislation).

This new dispensation brings numerous new liabilities, and risks, to the timber supply chain participant. In managing and limiting the organisation’s liabilities, an array of apps or applications were developed. Most of these apps are inexpensive and in some cases free. In the near future, everyone will be carrying some sort of always-internet-connected hand held device or a *phablet* (Phone + Tablet). These apps can be used for direct real time daily production uploads into a central database, from which management decisions can be made. The apps on hand held devices can run and force the completion of vehicle daily checklists, as required by SA legislation for all vehicles over 3 500kg, which can then be used to indemnify the company or in an event of a road accident, repudiate a claim. Driver logbook and fatigue apps are commonly used in Australia. Relevant apps for the SA timber industry will be identified and introduced to members.

**3D printing**

Local retail shops offer 3D printers with a basic plastic filament which can print any object and size which can fit in the printer’s cube of 30cmx30cmx30cm. However, imagine industrial printers which are charged with metal alloys in the tooling and spare parts industries.

With 3D printing, the required parts’ data file will be sent from source, say a German truck manufacturer, to SA. This data file will be uploaded, the part can even be slightly modified, and then printed on site and on demand. No manufacturing, dispatch, shipping and warehousing.

3D printers are costly pieces of technology but the alternative is the current method of injection moulding, where the development of the mould is expensive and cannot be altered once made, plus all the costs associated with the part’s international distribution and inventory. Obviously the green foot print will also play a major role to increase the tempo of 3D printing development.
Safety
I visited a harvesting, extraction and transport operation of structural timber and girders which are used in residential and bridge construction (many Aussie homes are wood frame constructions) in New South Wales forestry company’s plantations near Bonville on the east coast (1) & (2). The Aussies really mean business when it comes to safety: I underwent a rigorous safety induction, completed a comprehensive questionnaire including a check for the date of manufacture of the hard hat! A hard hat is not allowed to be worn on site if older than a year. When last did you check your business’ hard hats for expiry dates?

Collaboration
I also visited an operations room of a software and logistics service provider – Trimble (3). The fundamentals of this operation is the absolute collaboration between three independent trucking companies which run 40 trucks and move 60 000 tonnes a month. These companies established a shared operating consortium and appointed a third party logistics provider – Trimble - to manage and optimise the deployment of all their assets collectively.

In SA, there is collaborative and inter-company research funding and lobbying but inter-company and collaborative operations execution has not been done in the SA timber industry. The key is to optimise between all the companies and not for a specific company ie optimise all the contracting capacity all the time for all the loading points to all mills.

NCT & future wood flow optimisation
The three fundamentals of good supply chain management are good visibility, good control and good performance measurement. At NCT, we do have good visibility of our supply chain via our load scheduling system with good performance measurement as most weighbridges are linked to NCT systems that provide us with close to real-time supply updates. We do however lack proper control over the various operations due to the fragmented ownership in the NCT supply chain. In future, these supply chain elements will be inter-connected via the internet and various personal communication devices making them seamless with more “visibility” to all. For example; when the NCT load scheduling system was implemented, “It cannot be done” was a common comment. Today, we have good visibility of what is planned for tomorrow and beyond. We still have limited control for the reasons mentioned, but even if we improve our control by 30% and start to optimise what we control, I’m convinced that we can have big savings for our members.
About Australia

There is good public transport with trains, trams and bicycle lanes. 80% of Australians live within 20 km of the coast line. Australia is an expensive country, not only from a currency conversion point of view, in local earning power. Average house prices start from USD500 000 in a normal suburb in the smaller towns while a relative senior manager will earn a third of this amount per annum.

There are many Japanese vehicles on the road, but no German vehicles can be found. Campers and caravans are also common mainly among the generation who apparently made their money out of the housing boom in the early 2000s.

Most people work between 35-38 hours a week while labour is very expensive and gardeners and house sitters are unheard of. The high cost of labour is also the main reason why most houses are wooden frame construction. The panels are built off site and one needs only a few days only on site to erect a dwelling. High labour costs, coupled with a society with strict safety regulations, has created very wealthy tradesmen and artisans.

I met up with a few ex-South Africans, three of whom are former NCT colleagues who are in middle to senior management positions, and who are now all permanent Australian residents. A common complaint from them is that the work environment in general has a lot of bureaucratic red tape, decisions take long to be made and briefing notes to your supervisor is the order (swearword) of the day.

I cannot really tell if these NCT old boys miss South Africa, but I can assure you, in their own words, they do miss NCT! I wish to state categorically that these old-boys are still very complimentary of NCT and they still use their NCT experiences as benchmarks in many occasions abroad.

If you ask me what I remember most of this trip: it is the kangaroo. The oddest animal I’ve seen in my life. Evolutionists are also not exactly sure the reasons for its development! The kangaroo is a marsupial from the family Macropodidae (meaning large foot) with a distinctive characteristic that the young are carried in a pouch.

Despite the wonderful experience and contacts/friends made Down Under, it was good to return home to SA and to NCT. There is a reason why South Africa (Africa) is always and officially displayed in the middle of the world on all standard international cartography and maps.

*Good un-ya mate!*
Christmas has arrived early at NCT’s wood chipping mills.

All mills have had gleaming, shiny, yellow metal added to their assets – and, no, it’s not the discovery of gold in them hills - but just as valuable. Of course, we are referring to the new additions to the equipment family.

At the newly established Richards Bay Wood Chip (RBWC) mill, there has been the installation, commissioning and operation of, not just our new, longer, galvanised log deck (1), but also two gleamy and shiny Rotobec Optimax 950SM stationery cranes (2&3).

These new cranes and log deck have contributed to the mill having received, chipped and exported 150 000 tonnes of Eucalyptus in the past few months.
Apart from RBWC, NCT Durban Wood Chips (DWC) has also purchased two Rotobecs (4), the first one operational from October. The older Prentice Post loader has been decommissioned and awaits transfer to Richards Bay for use as spare parts.

The new crane complements the new look and first time ever log storage yard (5) at DWC. Mill management have successfully secured a multi-month lease of the 0.6 ha area adjacent to the mill to be used as log storage, with a view to how best to utilise the space on a longer term basis.
Not to be left out, both ShinCel and BayFibre have also each become the proud owners of their own Liebherr LH30M mobile log loaders (6), and have put them through the paces at their respective mills. These Liebherrs are replacements for the aging Prentice mobile cranes currently in use in Richards Bay.

Creatures of the night seen roaming the wood chip piles in Richards Bay
Generally, most individuals, have some or other latent or hidden talent just waiting to reveal itself when circumstances allow. Who would have thought that in the world of NCT and forestry marketing, tour guidance would be revealed as a strong talent possessed by NCT personnel ranging from the NCT Wood Chipping operations general manager to the Zululand district manager?

This great reveal occurred recently when back-to-back tours of the newest addition to the NCT mill fold, NCT Richards Bay Wood Chips (RBWC), were called for. NCT is immensely proud of RBWC, the former Mondi SilvaCel mill, and is attracting interest from within NCT through to suppliers of hardwood and the industry at large.

Having been acquired some three years ago, the facility has been undergoing gradual cost efficient refurbishment, bringing it back into basic production mode. As seen in Wood Chip Corner, fresh upgrades to the log decks and installation of new log loading cranes sourced from Canada places RBWC in a position to potentially produce 550 000 to 600 000 tonnes of hardwood chips per annum.

This development not only adds production capacity to the greater NCT mill complex, comprised initially of BayFibre and ShinCel, but also room to manoeuvre in terms of strategic log storage, multi species accommodation, bio-fuel production potential and general back-up for the NCT chip production

The chip pile: the product of months of hard refurbishment work
enterprises in the north.

Danny Knoesen, general manager, NCT Wood Chipping operations, led NCT staff on a mill visit early in September, primarily to view the new log decks and the log loading cranes. Staff not familiar with the everyday processes of a wood chip mill were suitably impressed. They viewed the log storage area taking particular interest in the bio-fuel stocks, then onto the log decks and cranes and walked along the conveyor line through to the wood chip piles showing promising fresh wood chip stocks.

Two weeks later, Danny again took on the role of tour guide, ably supported by Elvis Nyathela (Zululand district manager), to lead the commercial Zululand growers through the mill facilities. This group was impressed by the log deck feed into the chipper which was made particularly interesting and exciting...
given that the deck was fully operational at the time.

The last visit to the mill in September, comprised a very well-attended small-scale grower contingent from Zululand. This visit took on the format of a workshop focussing specifically on timber quality, the reasons for strict mill quality specifications and an introduction to mill chipping methodology (something that many had not yet witnessed). Ryno Martyn (mill manager) had the opportunity to don his tour guide cap, supported by Muzi Mnyango, Zululand co-ordinator and former ShinCel employee. They did a wonderful job of presenting topic related data to the group and rounded off with the highlight of the day, a walkthrough of the complete mill including weighbridges and operations rooms.

One could tell from the demeanour of the group at the end of the tour that they were excited and positive about this extended NCT mill capacity and were referring to it as their “own” mill. NCT could wish for no higher accolade.
NCT is delighted at the growing response it receives from the annual small-scale grower workshops held in Zululand.

Each year, around five key topics are chosen in which a workshop is conducted. These topics focus on skills or knowledge transfer, critical to the improvement of a small-scale timber growing enterprise.

We share three of the 2016 series of workshops.

1. Fire protection was a topic that attained a great deal of attention and interest. Subsequently there were noticeable attempts at improved fire protection measures in field but we are nevertheless all relieved that these did not have to be tested during the course of the 2016 fire season.

2. *C. henryi* is being mooted as the species of the future in Zululand. The field day focusing in on this species was therefore well-attended. Our own and very knowledgeable Craig Norris was invaluable in terms of the information that he shared during presentation and in-field visits on the day.

3. Most critical to small-scale growers is transport capacity. The workshop that Bruce Goatley conducted with Zululand transporters was therefore critically important to the small-scale growers reliant on transport service provision. They indicated that they are very happy with the fact that NCT is acting as their intermediary in the arena of timber transport. This adds a new and important dimension to their NCT membership.
New certification system development
Towards an independent South African standard and system

Craig Norris, NCT’s Forest Technology Services manager

In South Africa, there are approximately 1.2 million hectares of exotic tree plantations. About 80% of this area has been accredited under the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) certification system. Most of this certified area is owned or managed by large organisations and there is a growing concern that small and family forestry participants (smallholders) are being left behind with respect to certification.

As the demand for certified products increases, both abroad and locally, certification could become a trade barrier to smaller management units. This is a concern for the entire timber industry as most timber growers supply common markets. In addition, South Africa’s land reform programme is likely to result in a greater proportion of the plantation estate being managed by smaller scale timber growers. The
complexity and costs of managing plantations under the FSC system precludes many smaller operations from achieving certification. In the future this could lead to a shortage of certified timber to meet market demand.

There is an urgent need to develop a market based standard that is more relevant to our plantation forestry, particularly for smaller scale operations.

The Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) system is more flexible than the FSC in terms of the standard setting process. This system allows for the development of national or regional standards that are relevant to local conditions and needs. PEFC will endorse such a standard providing the process meets certain development rules.

**PEFC footprint**

The PEFC was founded in 1999 by national forest organisations from 11 countries in response to the specific requirements for small and family forest owners. It is designed as an international umbrella organisation providing independent assessment, endorsement and recognition of nationally developed forest certification systems.

The PEFC is currently the largest certification system in the world:

- PEFC is represented in 43 countries.
- Across six continents (Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania, N. America & S. America).
- A total area of over 300 million hectares certified.
- Globally, over a million smaller scale management units have been certified.

PEFC has developed a mechanism to enable the independent development of national standards tailored to the political, economic, social, environmental and cultural realities of the respective countries while at the same time ensuring compliance with internationally-accepted requirements and global recognition.

**Advantages of the PEFC system**

- It offers regional, group and individual certification.
- International recognition of national systems and mutual recognition between systems.
- Supports the establishment of a national forest certification system, owned and operated by stakeholders in the country
- More emphasis on national standards which ensure requirements are relevant to local conditions.
- More pragmatic approach around chemical use. Allows for justified use of chemicals approved by national processes and endorsed at international level.
- More relevant to small holder type operations.

**Proposed SA national standard setting process**

The environmental committee of Forestry South Africa (FSA) has tasked a steering committee to develop a certification system that could be endorsed by the PEFC. This committee have suggested using the national PCI&S framework as a basis for developing an auditable standard.

The National Forest Act of 1998 binds forestry operations to principles of sustainable forest management and promotes the development of a system of Principles, Criteria, Indicators and Standards (PCI&S) for sustainable forest management. The current set of PCI&S is the result of an intensive review process of the second edition of the manual (2007).

The steps that are being followed to develop the certification system include:

- Establishment of a National Governing Body (NGB) responsible for the governance and administration of the system. This body will include representatives from industry, government, environmental and social NGO’s. This body will oversee the system. (figure 1). This body will apply to become a member of the PEFC.
- Formal approval from government to the use of the national PCI&S framework for the purpose of developing the standard.
- Gazetting of the PCI&S Framework for public use.
- Development of an auditable standard using PCI&S framework as a template.
- Development of certification, accreditation and chain of custody procedures.
- Development of group certification procedures that will enable small holders to achieve certification (risk based certification of landscapes).

The PEFC steering committee has been given the go-ahead to proceed with the development of this alternate certification system. The steering committee has set a target to have a system ready for implementation during 2017.

**Conclusion**

Many of NCT’s customers require FSC certified products and NCT will continue to encourage members to achieve this standard. However, there is a need to make certification accessible to smaller operations. The primary objective of setting up a second certification scheme is to manage risk around certification and to develop a system that will enable smallholder to achieve certification.
NCT TREE FARMING management scheme
Mbona private nature reserve is set in the Karkloof area of the KZN midlands.

This 700 ha property consists of 100 houses, eight dams, two tennis courts, two yacht moles, indigenous and commercial forests, prolific birds and wildlife. There is also a trout hatchery and seven dams are stocked for anglers.

Mbona, the brainchild of Eric and Pat Mackenzie, was intended to be a timber plantation. However due to the prolific natural water sources, they changed their minds. The Mackenzies decided to open the property to shareholders and the tranquil setting attracted a host of investors. Eric died 10 years later and his widow, who remarried (now Pat Hutton), had to witness the estate’s growth without him, together with Eric’s sons Drummond and Michael.

The 48-year-old reserve is managed by Dave Forsyth who oversees 30 staff and takes care of the water reticulation system, the grounds, firebreaks, the control of invasive alien species, etc.

Resident and chairman of the board, Richard Booth, says that there is an enormous amount of natural water and added that Mbona is a nationally registered private reserve under the biodiversity stewardship programme of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife.

NCT has also had a hand in this success story. Since July 2011, the timber plantations on the property have been managed by NCT Tree Farming under the supervision of estate manager, Ed Hayter, based in Greytown. The original management area was increased substantially in 2012 with the termination of a lease arrangement on a neighbouring farm.

NCT Tree Farming now manages 102.1ha of timber, mainly gum and wattle with smaller areas planted to pine. The timber asset value has increased substantially with the re-establishment of new growing stock and the excellent growing conditions that the soil and climate at Mbona affords. It is a good example of the advantage smaller grower members can derive from NCT’s management service.

Extract from Village Talk – Peta Lee

Pat Hutton’s association with NCT goes back 38 years to 1978. She was part of the NCT team initially as secretary to the late Ken McLeod then general manager. She was later appointed supplies controller and then supplies manager, which eventually became supplies/liaison manager. After re-structuring, Pat completed her career with NCT as liaison manager. During this period, she particularly enjoyed co-ordinating tours and visits for growers to mills and on board ships during the loading of logs for export.

Her late husband, Eric Mackenzie, and founder of Mbona with Pat, was at the forefront of encouraging the growth of new paper industries in South Africa. He served on the NCT board (1959-1970), was president of SATGA (1958-1961) and chairman of SAWGU (1961-1965). He was honorary life president of SATGA in 1976/77.

“When I joined NCT, the offices occupied only one section of the present day building,” recalls Pat. “How NCT has grown and prospered for the benefit of members,” she concludes.

Pat retired in July 1998 and today is still firmly connected to NCT. She is a director at Mbona private nature reserve handling the forestry portfolio.
The Admin Department, a well-oiled machine, is managed by NCT’s newest and most effervescent senior manager, Gernus Swanepoel. Mfundo Zungu, NCT’s PR assistant, compiles this report.

Top: Gernus Swanepoel and Serena Hoosen
Middle: Ruth Ladbrooke, Zinhle Mshengu and Mdu Mthembu
Front: Joyce Ntuli, Chris Zondi and Debbie Scott
Inset: Chantal Swart
Gernus comes with valuable experience as a practising attorney and advocate for a number of years in civil, commercial and criminal law. He has also served as a senior legal advisor for an international organisation responsible for the sub-Sahara African region and as a group companies secretary. His experience will serve well at NCT as his daily dealings are a combination of legal, corporate governance, general administration and HR functions. With his qualifications - B. Com (Business management) LLB, (Potchefstroom) CSSA (Chartered Secretaries Southern Africa) and an Admitted Advocate of the High Court of South Africa - carrying out his duties will be a walk in the park.

Gernus has been at NCT three months and has received his permanent appointment and is very excited about receiving his NCT uniform and become part of the team. Some days he feels like he has been working for NCT all his life, other days he really feels that he doesn’t know anything – but whichever day he’s having – he loves being at the office and enjoys every moment. “The NCT culture is something I have never experienced. It’s a privilege for me to work for NCT,” he says.

Gernus believes that motivation is embedded in every person. There is no way to motivate an un-motivated individual. “As a manager, your function is to provide any person reporting to you with room to grow, assist them to achieve, make them responsible. Responsibility is associated with credit and positive criticism, if this is managed by a positive influence, anything can be accomplished. Accomplishment is the key to motivation,” he explains. He is honoured to work with a highly motivated and energetic team.

His main goal is to achieve a ONE FAMILY co-operative objective where there is no they or we – only one big NCT family irrespective of where one is based.

His personal motto which is dictated by his goals is to be strong, but not rude; be kind, but not weak; be bold, but not a bully; be thoughtful, but not lazy; be humble, but not timid; be proud, but not arrogant; and last, to find a bit of humour in every situation.

“I’m passionate about the rule of law. Doing what is right and in the best interest of our organisation, our people, our community and country. One person can make a difference, you just need to start small and the positive effect of applying the rule of law and good ethics will snowball”, he mentions.

Behind the scenes supporting Gernus to achieve greatness within his department are three virtuoso women: Debbie Scott, Serena Hoosen and Ruth Ladbrooke. Debbie has served 32 years with NCT and is Payroll and Admin Officer. Burmese by birth, British by inheritance and South African by naturalisation. Debbie intends on staying at NCT until the co-operative finally gets tired of her and throws her out. Debbie is a people’s person and feels that she has given value for the Rands she receives; stretching and growing her capabilities makes it all worthwhile.

Serena, NCT’s HR co-ordinator, deals with all HR-related matters within the admin department. She is a mentor and oversees messenger, Mdu Mthembo. Serena is also the custodian of the NCT students.

Ruth is the bubbly face of the co-operative that most people have met at reception or via the switchboard for the past 24 years. Interacting with staff, members and providing a friendly environment is her favourite part of being part of the NCT family. She is supervisor to Joyce Ntuli and Zinhle Mshengu, office cleaners at head office.

Another member of the Gernus team is Christopher Zondi. Chris started at NCT as messenger and was later promoted to admin clerk. Chris is responsible for the procurement of all stationery requirements at head office. He doesn’t consider coming to NCT as work; he feels the people at NCT are his second family. “My 15 years at NCT has equipped me with all the skills and knowledge that I possess, it is an honour to be a part of the NCT family,” he says.

A new addition to the admin department streaming from NCT’s satellite office at BayFibre, is Chantal Swart. Chantal started as receptionist at the former CTC now BayFibre. As the years progressed, she became more involved in the timekeeping and HR process. Chantal is honoured to be part of an exceptional and well-established organisation which is passionate about its employees well-being.
NCT member, Neville Schefermann, won this year’s Kwanalu Young-farmer-of-the-year award recently.

The competition is open to male and female farmers under 35 who belong to their province’s agricultural unions. They are evaluated against all aspects of their business including overall vision, philosophy and technical competence.

Neville, of Alford Farm in Vryheid, is also a past winner of the NCT Tree-Farmer-of-the-year award.
Staff appointments

Gernus Swanepoel
Administration Manager

Roger Poole
Member Services Co-ordinator
SKZN district office

Long-service Awards

Back row: Anil Ramlall, Richard Liversage, Cliff Walton, Rob Thompson, Desigan Naicker
Front row: Synthia Govender, Kerry Moffett, Dulcie Jacobsz, Vijen Naidoo

10 years: Synthia Govender (NCT Tree Farming); Kerry Moffett (Finance); Desigan Naicker (NCT Durban Wood Chips); Meisie Orchison (NCT Tree Farming)

15 years: Alna Botha (Member Services, Vryheid); Rob Thompson (Member Services, HO)

20 years: Dulcie Jacobsz (Member Services, Greytown); Richard Liversage (NCT Tree Farming); Vijen Naidoo (IT); Cliff Walton (Member Services, Greytown); Chris Zondi (Administration)

25 years: Anil Ramlall (IT)  35 years: Elphius Madebe (Finance)
Jeremy Carr of the Piet Retief office at Uzwelo
The Uzwelo Child & Youth Care Centre is a haven for abused and traumatised children from birth to 21 years of age in the Piet Retief area. Since 2005, the centre has provided shelter, care, protection and education to 90 children.

Services that are provided to the children include play therapy, group counseling, remedial educational tutoring, occupational therapy, health care, recreational programme/sport/entertainment and schooling. There are 52 children attending 10 different schools and two schools for children with special learning needs.

Uzwelo is was originally registered as a foster care project with the Department of Social Development. The need for a residential care facility was identified by various role-players in the field of child and youth care. (SAPS, NGO’s, Department of Social Development, justice system as well as parents of children in need of care) in the Mkhondo (Piet Retief) area.

Lack of accommodation for children in need of care/protection was often a barrier social workers had to deal with. They were forced to place children far from their home of origin and this hindered contact between parents/family and children. Piet Retief did not have a registered place of safety or children’s home. The closest home was in Volksrust, 100km away, or Belfast 200km away.

Today, Uzwelo provides an alternative care service within the residential facility (Child and youth care centre) as prescribed by the provisions of the Children’s Act 38/2005 to children and youth in need of care and protection, as amended, to reach the following outcomes:

• Children’s physical, emotional, mental, psychological and spiritual needs are met.
• Children are protected, quality of life improved and a healthy life style promoted.
• Contact between children and their families are ensured through re-unification services.
• Children are successfully re-integrated within their communities.
• Minimum norms and standards of the SA Child and Youth Care System are met.
• Requirements of the Children’s Act 38/2005 as amended and its regulations adhered to.
• Children are able to live independently after discharge (children who have been in the statutory system) by empowering them with skills.

The therapeutic programme includes the reception, care/temporary safe care – to protect children from abuse or neglect or trafficking or commercially sexually exploiting and to develop children, assess children and provide counselling and other treatment as well as assisting children to reintegrate with their families and communities, designing and implementing developmental programmes entailing: life skills, promotion of children’s rights, recreational programmes and outreach programmes preparing children for independently living.

For more information, eMail mercy@wellpring.org.za
Every winter and spring the Baynesfield area comes under threat from illegal hunting with dogs in two forms – the organised taxi hunts and the low key “porcupine hunters”. With the grass and fire breaks burnt, and the animals, now in the open makes the conditions ideal for hunting with dogs.

Oribi, duiker, reedbuck are no match for a pack of greyhound/whippets. The dogs involved in the hunt are indiscriminate and will take down anything that moves, including other small animals and protected species. Hunting parties ranging from small organised groups of five people with 15-20 dogs up to 20 people and over 70 dogs are not uncommon in the Baynesfield area. One can only imagine the harm a large indiscriminate hunting pack can do.

Apart from a confrontational policy, which is not ideal, education has helped play a role in the prevention of illegal hunting and recently led to arrests on Baynesfield. Samson Phakati, senior field officer of the Oribi Working Group affiliated to the Endangered Wildlife Trust, presented an informative and insightful talk to workers at NCT Baynesfield.

He covered all aspects of the environment, from the importance of grass lands, to the owls that control the rats and the rivers that are so vital for clean drinking water. Over-grazing and irresponsible land use was also discussed. Illegal hunting and the destruction caused by indiscriminate hunting was the focal point.

There was good interaction between the audience with a question and answer session. The legal aspect of controlled hunting was also raised and the explanation and validity of hunting permits were covered.

A few days after the presentation, forest guards came across a small group hunting with dogs in the wattle plantations. The NCT fire crew were in the area and assisted in flushing the hunters out the plantations towards the forest guards who the with the help of our workers made two arrests. The knowledge and education passed on by Samson paid off.

Changing farming methods, human encroachment, game proof fencing all play a role in threatening our animals. We need to manage around these issues and ensure the survival of our animals. Wherever there is human encroachment, the environment will take a knock. It is up to us as individuals to all play a part in conserving our environment.

Comments from staff & forest guards:

“We were excited about the presentation. We learned a lot about protecting the buck and other wild animals, and I understand the role these animals play in the environment.

We now know the reason why people are not allowed to hunt with dogs. There are animals protected by law and other animals are protected because their numbers are threatened.

There are laws by government that protect nature and no person may hunt without a valid permit.

We are not allowed to take buck, even if they are injured or sick. We must rather report it.

We would like to have further training in protecting our wildlife and the environment.”
In celebration of the Wildlife & Environmental Society of SA (WESSA), Samsom Phakathi, Senior Field Officer for the Oribi Working Group under the EWT/Threatened Grassland Species Programme, received WESSA’s Lifetime Conservation Achievement award. He was one of 90 individuals who received the award for their dedication to the conservation of our planet.

NCT congratulates Samson on this achievement particularly for his role in protecting the oribi antelope. NCT has been involved in the conservation of the oribi since 2002 and plays an active role in influencing members to preserve natural grassland habitats.
### BIRD-FRIENDLY BEST-PRACTICE
**Achieving bird conservation and economic benefits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management recommendations</th>
<th>Bird-related recommendations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoid annual burning other than in fire breaks.</td>
<td>The fire season overlapped with the breeding season of many birds. Annual burning may reduce breeding success by decreasing nesting success, survival, and recruitment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoid burning too late or too early.</td>
<td>Repeatedly burning late in the season can be detrimental, especially as nestlings or juvenile birds are most vulnerable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burn less than half of any management area in one year.</td>
<td>Many grassland birds breed and forage in specific areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burn at least every four years.</td>
<td>Nesting birds can not cope with increased burning frequency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid repeatedly burning extremely large camps.</td>
<td>Animals that can’t sustain repeated burning may lose populations. If the birds can’t sustain a population then dispersal rates may be affected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevent prolonged over-grazing.</td>
<td>This may lead to a loss of habitat, resulting in a decrease in bird populations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid selective-grazing by concentrate grazers (sheep and Blesbok).</td>
<td>This may decrease food available for birds when food resources are maximised, where poor grazing management affects biodiversity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimise intensive late-season grazing.</td>
<td>Ground-nesting birds may be threatened by the increased detection of nests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid grazing new growth immediately after a burn every year.</td>
<td>This can cause soil erosion and decrease the availability of food for birds.</td>
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</table>

**These are general guidelines. Any management recommendations must take veld condition into account.**
BURNING & GRAZING COMPATIBLE FOR GRASSLANDS

Checking grazing objectives together in South Africa's grasslands

Burning

Chaps with the territory-forming stage of the breeding cycle for many grassland-breeding species burning may result in insufficient food availability and inadequate cover for birds that prefer open, short-grass habitat. A few hours after the growing season has started may negatively impact nesting birds (eggs), birds in spring-summer. Repeatedly burning more than just fire breaks too early in autumn, may result in insufficient cover and food for birds to survive the winter. Grazing birds need sufficient unburnt cover and foraging habitat to persist in an area.

Grazing

Grazing should not use moribund grasslands as they are literally inaccessible.

Fire

Survive fire need to be able to return to burnt areas from neighbouring unburnt area is always too large and not burnt patchily, localised extinction may occur.

Degradation

Loss of vigour in the sward, altered species composition and veld degradation, and a decrease in bird diversity.

Grazing

Grazing of low growing plants and insects. To avoid selective-grazing, cattle to sheep ratios should be possible in a cattle to sheep ratio of 1:1 or higher. This recommendation urges reduction rather than inflation of cattle numbers.

Predation

Predation could be negatively impacted through trampling or by increasing predator pressure. Erosion, loss of nutrients, and loss of the leaf-litter in which many insects live, thereby availability to grassland birds.
NCT’s swimming team of Catherine Prokopiak (Commercial Services), Roger Poole (Member Services), Pete Odell (NCT Tree Farming) and Bexi Odell recently participated in the annual swimathon in aid of two charities, the PinkDrive and Singakwenza.

The PinkDrive is a campaign which focuses on the fight against breast cancer and Singakwenza, is a local organisation – supported by NCT through its social responsibility programme - that helps communities build sustainable early childhood education, using recycling resources to make educational toys.

The event took place over seven hours with teams swimming as many lengths (relay-style) in 30 minutes.

“Team NCT managed a total of 80 lengths (2km) in their allotted time,” says team captain, Catherine Prokopiak, further admitting that it was impressive by all standards, considering that some team members had not swum a single length the entire year!

Well done & thank you for supporting a good cause.
NCT OFFICES WILL CLOSE AT 13:00 ON 23 DECEMBER AND RE-OPEN AT 08:00 ON 3 JANUARY.