

Project Update: February 2011

The team met in early September 2010 and prioritised the work: toilets first, then piping and then painting/decorating. The team has met monthly since then.

The toilets have taken us 6 months and are now complete. They are pit latrines with plenty of capacity, as each wildlife club party comprises up to 30 children! National parks staff will be emptying the pits regularly: in fact, they are looking forward to the regular supply of free fertiliser.

Many thanks to a local football team, supported by Tisunge, who worked for several days digging sand and stone from the national park dry river beds to deliver to the construction site. Many thanks, too, to all of the project team who have given their time and expertise to make sure the toilets are the best we can have.

The reasons for the delay:

- It took the project team two months to get three quotations for the work. When they arrived they were nearly double the original estimates obtained a year previously, when the proposal was being put together.
- It is a 2-hour drive from Blantyre to Lengwe NP, costing K6000 (£24) just in fuel for each journey. So, project supervision was ad hoc.
- National Parks suffered a mid-year cut in the budget which mean more negotiations over their contributions.
- Fuel shortages across the whole of Malawi meant some delays in obtaining materials. For example, cement was 30% more expensive local to the national park so it saved the project money to transport cement from Blantyre – but for two weeks there was no diesel to be had in Blantyre!
- The contractor, who had provided the cheapest quotation, was working on several different sites at some distance away so was frequently not available.

Unfortunately, due to huge price increases on materials, the toilets have cost us more than twice we had originally estimated a year ago.

We have now obtained quotations for the piping work. Unfortunately the original estimate, provided by the national parks plumbers, failed to include a filtration system which would make the water potable. The water is supplied by Illovo to the national park: most of the water is used to make sure water holes are filled for animals. The main supply provides irrigation for sugar crops, hence is not fit for human consumption without treatment.

The cheapest estimate which includes the filtration system, is K328,464, from Stewarts and Lloyds, a company with a high reputation in Malawi. However, this is K81,708 over the grant budget. WESM Blantyre is now considering donating this amount to the project (diverted from our tree seedling budget) so this work can go ahead.

