

Dump site to be turned green again

The eThekweni Municipality is planting more than 62 500 trees to wash away the "climate sins" of 2010 World Cup visitors and to create a new "green lung" in the rapidly growing northern part of the district. The trees will be planted next to the municipality's newest and biggest rubbish dump, the Buffelsdraai landfill site near Verulam.

Debra Roberts, deputy head of the Environmental Management Department, said the municipality had decided to take a "bold and adventurous approach" to ensuring that World Cup events in Durban were carbon-neutral.

The rationale for the mass planting is that trees will help to absorb carbon emissions generated by the thousands of soccer tourists who travel to Durban in 2010.

The carbon - generated from the exhaust fumes of jets, trains and buses - adds to the growing volume of greenhouse gases which heat the atmosphere and contribute to global warming.

But, apart from attempting to reduce carbon emissions, Roberts said the establishment of the new landfill site created an opportunity to start a greening project in the northern eThekweni region.

A third benefit of the project was that it created jobs for people living close to the landfill site by paying them to collect seeds, establish tree nurseries and then plant the trees.

The Wildlands Conservation Trust will be involved in the project through its "trepreneur" scheme, which rewards people who grow and plant trees with cash, food, clothes, bicycles, wheelbarrows, education bursaries and other goods.

Richard Winn, environmental asset manager at Durban Solid Waste, said landfill sites were required to keep a buffer zone at least 800m wide to reduce smells and other impacts on neighbouring residential areas.

"No residential development is allowed in buffer zones, so this creates a perfect opportunity to restore the natural vegetation and wildlife in our fast-changing urban environment."

Winn helped to pioneer a similar greening project at the Mariannhill landfill site, which has since been registered as a nature conservancy by Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife.

The Mariannhill site has become a natural refuge for a wide variety of plants, animals and insects - including the critically endangered black-headed dwarf chameleon.

Winn hopes the Buffelsdraai project will serve a similar purpose, by providing sanctuary areas for threatened wildlife species north of Durban.

The 850ha Buffelsdraai site used to be a sugar farm, and landfilling will be limited to an area of about 100ha.