Environmental Management
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Sourcing historic spring water

ABOVE: In the Green Point Park, water from the springs on Table Mountain wells up in a fountain, symbolic of the source of a river.

BELOW: The spring water flowing over weirs and pebbles into the lake in the Biodiversity Garden

In the 1770s, there was a shallow seasonal pan which filled up with the winter rains on the piece of land that became the Common, and this was used for recreational sailing and rowing until it was filled in during the 1880s. The reinstatement of water on this area of flat land, which had very little natural soil above a base of solid rock, in the form of the lakes and ponds of the new park and the reservoirs on the golf course, is highly appropriate in the historic context of the Common.

Initially, there was concern about the water source which would be needed to irrigate both the golf course and the park and, as Van Papendorp pointed out, relying on potable water was simply not sustainable from the perspective of cost and both moral and environmental considerations. Various alternatives, including the use of effluent, borehole water and desalination, were investigated by water specialist David Crombie of Arcus Gibb Consulting Engineers.

After the suggestion was made by the City Engineer's Department and researched by Crombie, the option of the spring water from fountains in the Oranjezicht area of Table Mountain, Cape Town's original and almost forgotten water source, proved to be the most secure source. The potability of the spring water was questioned in the early '90s and subsequently the water was disconnected from domestic use and left to run into the sea. With this gravity fed water (some of the old pipelines were utilised to carry the water), which is perfectly safe for irrigation purposes, it became possible to ensure a green Common and to transform the park to include water features, ponds and wetlands. Van Papendorp commented that not only was the storage reservoir on the Green Point site maximised but this also enabled an additional sensory experience for the visitor to the park.

"At the point where the water emerges from an underground pipe, it wells up to resemble the source of a river, flows over a textured surface and then over rocks into a pond. From this, the city children can learn about nature and the dynamics of water. A proposed water wheel will showcase the possibility of alternative power sources by generating enough electricity to operate the wetland pumps. A turbine, driven by the gravitational pressure of the water supply will, in future, supply electricity to the planned eco-centre," Van Papendorp explained.

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Professional team

Client: City of Cape Town
Landscape architects: OvP Associates
Botanist, landscape designer, educationist: Marijke Honig
Architects: Point Architects
Urban designers: Comrie Wilkinson, Jakupa, OvP Associates
Civil engineers: Arcus Gibb, BKS, GOBA, Iliso
Structural engineers: BKS, Arcus Gibb
Electrical engineers: Arcus Gibb
Signage designer: Angela Gilbert Architectural Graphics
Irrigation designer: Arid Earth Solutions
Quantity surveyors: Davis Langdon, Abakali
Project managers: MDA, BKS, Ariya Triple-C
Main contractors: Martin & East, DM & Sons, Civils 2000
Landscape and irrigation contractor: Urban Landscape Solutions