



BOTANICAL SOCIETY
OF SOUTH AFRICA

Chairperson's Report in Respect of the Year Ended 31 March 2026

This report covers the financial year ended 31 March 2026 for the Botanical Society of South Africa (BOT SOC) and its various branches.

Dear BOT SOC Members

For many years, I have had the privilege of serving the Botanical Society of South Africa in leadership roles at both branch and national level. For the past five years, I have also served on Council, giving me a front-row seat to many of the significant changes the Society has experienced over the last two decades.

During this time, we navigated important milestones: the introduction of our 2018 Constitution, the 2022 Pathfinder Convention and SANBI's decision to withdraw free access to national botanical gardens for BOT SOC members. While the latter presented real challenges, these moments have also allowed us to redefine BOT SOC, setting our course to strengthen the Society.

One of the most important outcomes was the development of our six conservation focus areas, which now guide our work across South Africa. Council also chose to follow Clem Sunter's High Road philosophy: embracing engagement, positive change and long-term sustainability. At the same time, we made the deliberate decision to invest some of our financial reserves in conservation action while building our fundraising capacity.

Gaining momentum

In both my professional and personal life, I have experienced successes and setbacks. Over more than 40 years, however, I have learnt that a positive outlook is often what carries us through difficult times. I believe that has been true for BOT SOC too.

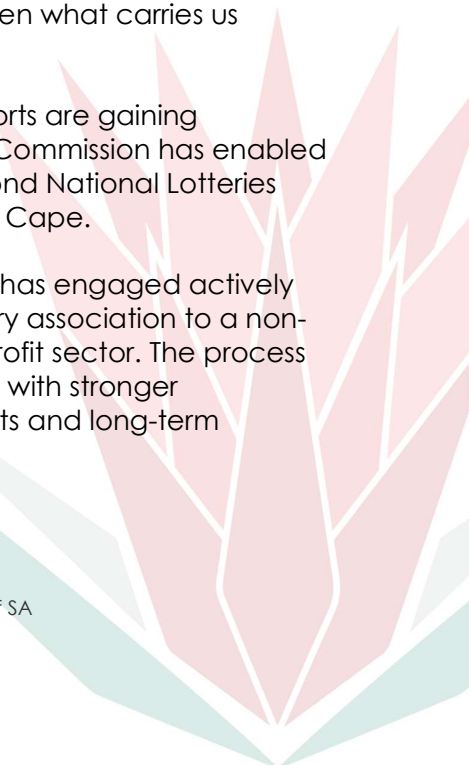
And we have every reason to feel optimistic today. Our fundraising efforts are gaining momentum, and our successful partnership with the National Lotteries Commission has enabled several significant conservation projects. We are now preparing a second National Lotteries Commission application that will expand this work beyond the Western Cape.

At the same time, we continue to strengthen the Society itself. Council has engaged actively with branches on the proposed transition of the Society from a voluntary association to a non-profit company, guided by legal professionals specialising in the non-profit sector. The process has progressed well and will help ensure that BOT SOC is fit for purpose, with stronger governance and statutory compliance supporting our fundraising efforts and long-term financial sustainability.

BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF SA

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[BOT SOC AGM 2026 Chairperson's report – F Webb](#)

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Learning from our branches

We are grateful to all branches that participated. Council has learned a great deal from these engagements this year and we look forward to establishing a Membership Advisory Committee following the 2026 SGM and AGM to continue engaging with branch representatives across the country.

None of this would have been possible without the commitment and loyalty of our members. Whether you volunteer, donate, participate in your branch or simply remain an advocate for South Africa's remarkable flora, you are helping smooth the future of this Society.

It is appropriate to offer a large THANK YOU to our CEO Antonia de Barros and her executive team for all the hard work and forward thinking they have put in over the last year. Often working long hours and managing regular criticism when developing new approaches to "old challenges".

Finally, another big thank you to my fellow Council members for your support and contributions over the last year. Hedwig and Rob are available for re-election while Grant Morrison has moved onto pastures new and is unable to commit the time needed as Treasurer. Thank you very much Grant, for your contribution over the last two years.

Frank Webb: Chairperson of Council

15 August 2026