



Dear All

Another photo of the falls ... They definitely are very photogenic at this time of the year.

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#### **UNWTO Preparations? Or maybe not ...**

The Minister of Tourism, Given Lubinda, arrived in Livingstone last week to spend several days discussing the preparations for the UNWTO. He had meetings scheduled throughout his stay to talk to stakeholders, find their views and make a plan for the meeting which we were told will take place on 24-29 July 2013.

Business people from the Livingstone community were invited to a meeting at Protea Hotel to give their ideas. Business people in Livingstone, of course, are mostly tour operators ... The hall was packed.



We were told that during the 6 months since UNWTO agreed to hold their meeting at the Victoria Falls, a shared venture between Zambia and Zimbabwe, that Zambia has had lots of meetings and that they have agreed on a logo but have yet to decide on a mascot ...

After some lengthy presentations the Minister had decided that he would allow some time for the business community to get clarification on the new SI about using kwacha only for all domestic transactions. Jonathan Chipili was there from the Bank of Zambia and had been given the right to answer any questions.

Mr Chipili gave a short speech about the government's new rule stating that they wanted to make kwacha the main currency in Zambia, not the US dollar.

He told the audience that foreign currency accounts would still be allowed; that all credit card machines had to be reconfigured to take kwacha; that tour operators would be allowed to change a limited amount of foreign currency; that websites can continue to show the dollar price; that only authorised dealers can deal in foreign currency; that visas at the border will continue to be paid in foreign currency.

And then there was time for questions ...

Oh, my goodness me ... Poor Mr Chipili, bless him, was bombarded with questions and comments. One by one people rose to voice their concerns; concerns which had a real impact on our tourism town. It was clear that the Bank of Zambia had not considered the effects of the new SI on tourism, especially in the border town of Livingstone. I will try to remember some of the comments.

*What is the government trying to achieve with the SI?*

*Why did government introduce the SI without consultation?*

*The SI had been backdated to 18<sup>th</sup> May. It stated that anyone dealing in foreign exchange from that date was guilty and liable to a prison term. Therefore everyone at the meeting was guilty and should be locked up.*

*The only benefits of the new SI will accrue to the banks.*

*Employment contracts are often quoted in dollars – does this make them now illegal?*

*It is stated that tour operators can accept a limited amount of foreign exchange from their tourists – what is this limit?*

*The SI has caused such confusion with our agents abroad as they did not know what was going on and when they contacted the lodge owners they could get no clarification because we did not know either.*

*Zambian operators will have to price higher than operators outside the country. A Zambian operator will have to tell his client that he has to pay in kwacha but when the client goes to the bank to change his dollars he will not get the required amount of kwacha because of the exchange rate. A price of US\$100 is likely to become a price of US\$110, just because of the buying and selling rate. An operator outside the country who can use US dollars will be able to stick to the price of US\$100.*

*Traders at the Victoria Falls cannot accept kwacha for all purchases because there is no bureau there and many visitors cross the border for the day just to see the Falls. Are traders expected to send all their would-be buyers to Livingstone to change their dollars into kwacha?*

*The SI is really bad timing during the run-up to the UNWTO as it has caused such confusion. Visitors to the meeting are booking their accommodation now and because of the uncertainty, they are booking in Victoria Falls Town and not in Livingstone.*

*Companies borrow from the banks in foreign exchange when they need to replace their equipment like vehicles, etc. The lending rate for dollars is around 10-11% whereas the lending rate for kwacha is over 20%. If a company is required to keep all their money in kwacha and the kwacha continues to yoyo it is far too risky to borrow.*

These are some of the questions/comments which I noted and Mr Chipili tried his best to answer but he was only able to repeat Bank of Zambia set responses.

Mr Lubinda rose and said that he was also confused and asked Mr Chipili to clarify certain points.

I think, though, that the question and answer which was the jaw-dropper was when one lodge owner who asked if a guest wanted to pay, say US\$100 for his accommodation, could it be accepted and could it be deposited in the dollar account. Yes, said Mr Chipili

....



*So, what is the limit we can accept? If we can accept cash and put it in our dollar account, why can't we accept dollar credit card payments?*

It was obvious to Mr Lubinda that Mr Chipili could not answer the detailed questions, so he stood up and said that he wanted all the questions to be written down and he would take them to the Governor of the Bank of Zambia and get the answers. He quipped that it was time for lunch. He said that he would have another meeting to discuss the UNWTO because he could see that there was little appetite for it that day.

The following day another meeting was held and all the Livingstone tour operators' questions had been put together in a logical format. It was stated that the SI in itself was fine but it was the clarification by Bank of Zambia that was the problem. The situation on the ground, now, was that banks and government were giving different interpretations and that there was total chaos in the industry. Members of the Livingstone Tourism Association had taken the clarification by the Bank of Zambia and added/deleted certain sentences to make the SI workable.

I managed to survive 2 hours of this second meeting and couldn't take any more. I left as the Minister was trying to understand the finer points of the concerns so that he could present them to the Bank of Zambia. He was being very patient although he was obviously tired.

I had wanted to hear about preparations for the UNWTO but I don't know if the meeting sat up until midnight for this ... I doubt it ...

#### **A letter from the bank**

Because of the new SI, banks are now refusing to honour dollar credit card payments after 15 June:  
*Kindly advise the merchants that all USD transactions that were banked\uploaded on 15.06.2012 and beyond have been withheld with regards to the implementation of S.I 33 of 2012 by Bank Of Zambia. The central bank has not yet given us the authority to credit the merchants' accounts with the USD currency. If we went ahead and credited the accounts the bank and merchants would be in breach of the law.*

Just a little comment from me ...

In Zambia tourism is considered a side-line and the government has not paid much attention to its special needs. Over the years the government has made changes affecting the tourism industry using steel-capped work boots kicking the life out of the industry. New park fees, the re-introduction of VAT on accommodation, visa fees, new work permits and now this SI 33. It won't end because next year there will be something else.

We have a Ministry of Tourism; we have Zambia Tourist Board full of 'professionals' in the tourist industry and not one of them stood up for their industry prior to this SI or any of the other rules, come to that. It was left to the private sector. And, quite rightly, the private sector is upset and angry. The amount of money which flies from Livingstone to the government is huge – tax, park fees, visa fees. The tour operators through their tax pay for salaries and vehicles of the staff at Ministry of Tourism and Zambia Tourist Board and yet they get no support from them.

It had to come down to the Minister facing an angry audience to calm the situation and try to find a way forward. We know that Mr Lubinda is passionate about the tourism industry but he can't do it alone. If the staff in the Ministry of Tourism and Zambia Tourist Board don't wake up Mr Lubinda will surely have a heart attack.

And the UNWTO? Well, we await discussions on that ...

Will we be ready for the UNWTO? Well, I think the government has to address the currency issue and find a solution first before any operator will put their heart into the preparations. But if Livingstone has the will to perform it will do it well.

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## Environment Africa

Environment Africa, a private voluntary organisation registered by law in Southern Africa is hereby announcing that it is now operating in Zambia and has established offices in Kabwe, Livingstone and Chibombo districts. Environment Africa is a regional non governmental organisation with offices in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. The Regional Office for Southern Africa is based in Harare, Zimbabwe. Environment Africa is registered in Zambia with the Registrar of Societies as a nongovernmental organisation.



Their offices in Livingstone are at Maramba Community Hall. The officer there is Cassandra and she can be reached on 0965 759889

From their letter of introduction:

*Our current portfolio of activities in Kabwe, Chibombo and Livingstone include:*

- *Raising awareness on environmental rights of children*
- *Mainstreaming environmental management in all child rights programming activities*
- *Raising general environmental awareness in schools, communities and corporates*
- *Working on the impact of extractive industries on children and the environment*
- *Promoting general children's rights*
- *Promoting Conservation farming in rural and peri urban communities*
- *Promoting compliance to Zambian environmental legislation*
- *Promoting the 'Chance To Play' approach in schools and communities*
- *Community participation in forest management*
- *Value addition and creating market linkages for farmers products.*
- *Assisting schools in establishing school environmental management policies and clubs*
- *Encouraging youth participation in environmental decision making processes in Livingstone and Lusaka.*
- *Encouraging and mobilising community participation when Environmental Impact Assessments are conducted for new projects.*

*We would like to collaborate and Network with your organisation as we believe that we will achieve more through partnerships and coalitions.*

*For more information please contact the undersigned.*

*Namo Chuma, Country Director*

*[namo@environmentafrica.org](mailto:namo@environmentafrica.org)*

*[www.environmentafrica.org](http://www.environmentafrica.org)*

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## The Cemetery

From a Livingstonian

On Sunday I went to the far side of the cemetery (turned right just before the Zawa first gate)..I was appalled by the state of the cemetery...it looks like there was a massacre, people buried, fled, and then graves were rummaged and destroyed. As per photos attached, there are one or two new graves in between...so it's not like it's an old deserted gravesite. You cannot actually tell where there is a body underneath or not....one had a toilet cistern instead of the traditional enamel bowl...but the bowls and tins are just scattered. I wondered if there is any kind of council body that looks after graves? I kept asking myself what kind of nation is this that is prepared to see its graveyard in such a mess..where their loved ones are lying.





## Our Elephants

There is a herd of around 50 elephants wandering around Livingstone. They walk between the falls area towards town; they go into the Game Park; they walk up the hill towards the farms at Sinde. Our tourists, of course, love to see them but not everyone does.



The other day I joined several other vehicles on Sichango Road to watch a small group of elephants crossing. We all loved the show. But then as the elephants came close to the Commercial Showgrounds the people there came out shouting and then started to throw fire crackers at them. The elephants were spooked and went off at a run towards Vuma Petrol station.



Every year we have people killed by elephants. The reason for this, of course, is that we do not treat elephants with the respect they deserve. Elephants are intelligent animals and they know when they are in danger and they will retaliate.



If only we could learn the lesson from Mana Pools where the elephants are friendly. They have never been persecuted by man. We can learn too from the story of the Elephant Whisperer

in South Africa.

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### Zimbabwe looking for money for the new Conference Centre

In a report last week, the Zimbabwe government is still looking for money to build the planned conference centre at Victoria Falls Town for the UNWTO next year. Government has allocated US\$1million for preparations for the meeting but this does not come close to the money required for Zimbabwe's ambitious projects of building not only the conference centre, but also a shopping mall, a new hotel and all the other things they had boasted that they would do.

The Chinese, of course, are being engaged to lend the money, but it would seem that if China is to lend the money, it wants Chinese construction companies to build the facilities and this is not to the liking of the Zimbabwe government.

So far, the only advance towards these projects is a partially completed EIA.

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### Livingstone Operators want to know what government is doing

Last week Livingstone hosted the Vice President, Guy Scott. At a meeting the Chairman of the Livingstone Tourism Association, Kingsley Lilamono bemoaned the lack of government leadership for the UNWTO: *From the time the UNWTO was won to be co-hosted by Zambia and Zimbabwe, we have had no single meeting to discuss the way forward; we can't just be shooting in the air. We need the government to constitute a team, otherwise we will be just assisting Zimbabwe to host the general assembly. Look at our markets, they are pathetic.*

But we know from the visit of the Minister of Tourism that we have a lot of unhappy tour operators in Livingstone at the moment because of the new currency controls. If government does not see it necessary to be a partner with the tourism industry over the introduction of currency controls, I doubt that the tourism industry will want to partner with government for the UNWTO.

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## ZAMBIA

### Kazungula Bridge

Bids have been invited for the Kazungula bridge which will link Zambia and Botswana. At present we enjoy the delights of some broken down pontoons to ferry over vehicles and people from one country to the other. The cost of the project is said to be around US\$260million. Woops ... that should be in kwacha: K1.3trillion ...

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### More Protests over the Mine in Lower Zambezi National Park

Southern Africa Resource Watch (SARW) campaign officer Edward Lange and Save the Environment Organisation (STEO) executive director Lusungu Nyirenda have brought their NGOs into the fray about the proposed mine in Lower Zambezi National Park.

Although they both agreed that mining had its place to provide jobs and income for the country, a mine in Lower Zambezi was against all environmental practices and should not go ahead.

From Times of Zambia:

*... Mr Lange said allowing mining in the park would set a dangerous precedent where protected areas intended to preserve critical ecological processes and conserve biodiversity would be irreversibly damaged at the expense of the environment and the local community livelihoods.*

*He said the copper project had high levels of emissions and gases and would not only pose a health hazard to local people including their livestock but also to the entire ecosystem including freshwater life of the rivers in the lower Zambezi.*

*Mr Nyirenda said ZEMA should be allowed to conduct a professional job on the matter because of the impact of the project to the environment including human life.*

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## ZIMBABWE

### A Trip to Bulawayo

On Friday I travelled to Bulawayo. I hadn't been on that road for about 6 months and, by the end of it I wished I hadn't travelled along it that day.

During the journey I had to go through about 15 road blocks. At every one of them I had to show my driving licence and TIP. At two of them I had to get out of my car and show them my triangles and fire extinguisher. At one of them I spent 5 minutes explaining why I did not have a reflective jacket.

The icing on the cake, though, was 50 km outside of Victoria Falls at the Robins Camp turnoff. I was driving along and saw a Stop sign in the middle of the road. About 50 metres ahead I could see police standing for the 3<sup>rd</sup> road block of the trip. I slowed down, passed the Stop sign and stopped by the policemen.

*Did you see the Stop Sign?* said a venomous policeman.

Yes, I said

*Why didn't you stop?*

I thought about this, knowing that there was absolutely no reason for stopping in the middle of the bush in front of the Stop Sign just because it told me to do it.

*That is a fine of US\$20 for failing to stop at a Stop Sign.*

I paid my US\$20, received an Admission of Guilt and carried on my way.

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### Lowveld Rhino Trust to help Save Valley Conservancy

The Lowveld Rhino Trust is holding an exhibition and fun day on 21<sup>st</sup> July at Tuskers Spring, Harare. They hope to raise US\$10,000 in aid of the Save Valley Conservancy.

Entertainment will include:

Fine art exhibition by Will Maberly & Lin Barrie

Interactive drumming by Drum Café Zimbabwe

Talk by a leading rhino conservationist around the efforts being made in the Lowveld to keep these creatures safe from money hungry poachers

Body art by Kelli Barker

Meredith & Meredith & TCI showcase of our collection of luxury handmade Zimbabwean goods

Off the Track Expeditions & Zimbabwe Destinations showcasing a wide variety of lodges, houseboats, activities all found in Zimbabwe

A raffle with amazing prizes donated by The Bulawayo Club, Mokore Safaris & Chishakwe in the Lowveld and Pomene Ridge in Mozambique to name a few...

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**From Kariba**

## **ANTELOPE ISLAND – FEEDING STATION**

We received another donation this week of transporting some of the hay bales from Harare to Kariba by Netrade Commodities as well as a donation towards the fuel for transporting and bailing of hay.

There are still concentrates and hay in Harare to be transported through but with all these goings on, the No. 1 priority is to take the feed that is here to the island. Once things have calmed down we hope to organize with a Karibarite regarding the transporting of the remaining feed as well as sorting out who donated what for the feeding program

Tractor, baler and all are now in place raking the cut grass at the Airport and bailing commenced at the weekend. We hope to keep bailing until there is sufficient to cover feeding for Antelope Island and a possibility of feeding on another island as well as for Bumi to cover feeding at Starvation Island and Gache Gache for their feeding needs.

Cavan is almost run off his feet with the above and hopes to take the first load of feed to Antelope towards the end of this week. Natureways and Hornbill Lodge are doing a sterling job with their help on the above.



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## **Kariba Half Marathon – 12 August 2012**

It is that time of year again, when we are looking for sponsorship for our Kariba Half and 10km Fun Run being held on Sunday 12 August 2012. We are appealing to you to donate as little as U\$50 or as much as you like towards our budget.

Your name will appear on a Sponsorship Board at the finish line at Lomagundi Lakeside on Race Day.

Should you wish to donate U\$1,000 or more, your name/logo will also appear on the Marathon T-Shirts (please note deadline for this is Monday 2 July 2012)

Please consider sponsoring our Kariba Fun Run, it's a fantastic fun filled family day and a great boost for Kariba with plenty of visitors booking in and using our facilities.

We are expecting around 700 entrants this year so it's hopefully going to be bigger and even better than last year!

I look forward to hearing from you.

Many thanks.

Regards

Sonya McMaster

Kariba Fun Run Committee

[karibahalfmarathon@gmail.com](mailto:karibahalfmarathon@gmail.com)

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## More Illegal Fishermen Rounded up in Caprivi

208 illegal fishermen were arrested in Caprivi; fishermen from Zambia, Angola and DRC. Regional Police spokesman, Geoffrey Samunzala commented that they have managed to round up about 80-90% of these intruders.

*Geoffrey Samunzala: Before the operation, we visited all the traditional authorities where we introduced our new regional commander. During our visits, we urged people to stop employing foreign nationals as fishermen. The public is concerned because our rivers are congested, especially Lake Liambezi. That's why we have decided to act now.*

*After we have taken them out of our rivers by arresting them, they will appear before the tribunal set up together with immigration officials and then decisions will be taken to deport them. There are those who fish with border passes and those who completely don't have anything. Both groups are issued with serious warnings and given forms to complete.*

*People from outside are not allowed to fish in our rivers without any permission. These are our resources and local people who continue harbouring and employing such people are transgressing the law.*

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## Flights to Katima Mulilo

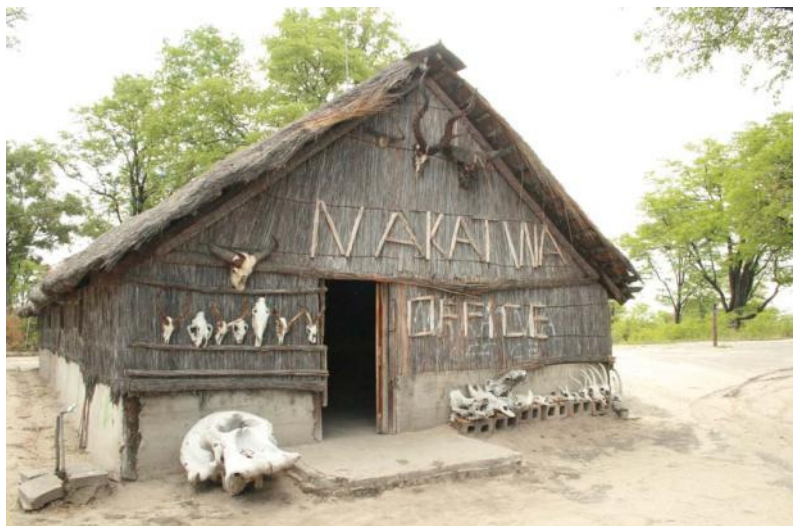
Air Namibia has recorded an increase of 50% on the number of travellers to Katima Mulilo by air. Air Namibia has increased the number of flights per week and the size of its aircraft.

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## New Park Stations

The German government has for a long time assisted Namibia in the efforts towards conservation. Now, they are set to construct two new park offices – one at Bwabwata and another at Mudumu National Parks.

Here is a photo of the present park office in Mudumu. I think it could do with a bit of an overhaul ...



### Happy happy hippo

This acrobatic fellow proves the notoriously fierce creatures have a playful side

By TOM GOODENOUGH

Despite a fierce reputation as one of the planet's deadliest creatures, it's still difficult to take this hippo seriously.

And the huge creature looked as though he was more interested in frolicking around in the mud than starting any trouble.

The amazing images of the over-sized beast were taken at the Khwai River in Botswana, on the border of the Moremi Game Reserve.

But despite the apparent fun of the occasion, the hippo still did its best to try and scare off the photographer who took the pictures.

In an apparent bad-tempered display, the animal tossed his head up and down before charging at Richard DuToit.



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## WOLFGANG'S COLUMN

### NEWS OF LION KILLINGS AND RENEWED ELEPHANT POACHING PILE PRESSURE ON KWS

The shock news yesterday, that 6 lions were killed outside the safety of the Nairobi National Park has brought not just the human – wildlife conflict to the forefront again but also re-kindled the arguments between the conservation fraternity in Kenya and the Kenya Wildlife Service, the latter now accused to doing little if anything to prevent the killings or bring the perpetrators to book. *'What yesterday showed is that KWS seems afraid to wade in and use the law to bring the culprits to justice. They play big boys when they take the cheetahs from the Mara and bring them to Nairobi, ignoring all common sense and reason but when they are really supposed to show flag they back down. The reports on Twitter about the lions roaming outside were there, KWS was copied by several with pleas to act and what have they done other than collect the carcasses. And as you said, I still got to check that by the way but heard rumours yesterday afternoon, more elephant have been poached in Mt. Kenya and there also are allegations that they did not react to information given in a timely fashion. I personally find that KWS leadership lacks*



*consistency and for sure the morals now. Let him [sic: meant to refer to Dr. Julius Kipng'etich] come and arrest me too for disagreeing with him in public'* wrote an angry conservation source from Nairobi, whose identity though I prefer to keep anonymous to prevent him facing the same fate as the CEO of Eco-Tourism Kenya suffered some weeks ago. The poached elephants, four carcasses without tusks have been found in recent days near the Ndumanu / Mathira East location by local residents, constitute again a major loss for the elephant population and according to available reports from sources in Nanyuki KWS did not respond in a timely fashion to reports being filed by the local community, raising questions what process is involved to get them to act when only weeks ago they boasted to have installed a task force able to deal with such incident reports as a moment's notice.

Dr. Paula Kahumbu, a respected and award winning conservation voice in Kenya, lamented in detail the fact of the lion killings and how it developed by giving time frames and all on the Facebook page of 'Kenyans for Wildlife', available via <https://www.facebook.com/groups/kenyansforwildlife/> as did many of the group's over 8.000 members, while KWS, faced with massive dissent and opposition to their handling of the situation then published this statement, without however mentioning any arrests, a glaring omission as the culprits according to conservation sources are well known and have publicly boasted of their ill deed:

#### ***Kenya Wildlife Service***

*A total of six lions were last night speared to death by residents of Oloika area in Kitengela, Kajiado County. The retaliatory killing of two adult lionesses, two sub adults and two cubs on the outskirts of Nairobi occurred after the carnivores had invaded a boma and killed four goats. Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) rangers responded to a community report on the stray lions which had strayed from Nairobi National Park and spent the night with them dealing with the problem. The teams are still on site. KWS dispatched rangers and a veterinary capture team to search for the lions. While the search was on, the lions were killed by the mob. Nairobi National Park is seasonal park and during rainy seasons, herbivores stray out of the park and lions pursue them. In the pursuit lions encounter livestock. While outside the park, the lions occasionally kill livestock from community bomas. However, KWS*



*works with community human wildlife conflict resolution committees and elders in ensuring that people and their property are protected from destruction by wildlife the same way wildlife is protected. The killing is a big loss to the economy given that lions enjoy an iconic status as one of the 'Big Five' which are a big draw for tourists who visit Kenya. Kenya has been losing 100 lions a year for the past seven years, leaving the country with just 2000 of its famous big cats. This implies that the country could have no wild lions at all in 20 years. Conservationists have blamed habitat destruction, disease and conflict with humans for the lion population decline. KWS would like to strongly discourage the public any killing of lions and other wildlife as this is criminal. Instead, communities should alert KWS officers nearest to them about any problem animals. Besides KWS offices spread across the country, the public can report to 24-hour hotlines 0728331981, 0736506052 and 0770296352.*

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GILL STUFF

#### **The Livingstone Insider**

I have started a new Weekly information newsletter for Livingstone. It is being sent out to Livingstonians and neighbours only but I am also putting it on Facebook. Check it out on:

[www.facebook.com/LivingstoneInsider](https://www.facebook.com/LivingstoneInsider)

Please give it the thumbs up by pressing the 'Like' Icon. I am told that this helps to make it visible on the web. I am new to Facebook, never been much of a fan, but I think the Insider works well there.

If you want to get information out to Livingstonians contact me. Information on events is free, advertising has a charge.

### **Spare for my car**

Many thanks to everyone who emailed to help with the spare part for my car. It was really heart-warming to know that Weekly readers care. Fortunately the spare has been found by one of my readers in Namibia and hopefully will arrive in Livingstone this week. I am now a very happy chappie ...

### **Subscriptions**

Please don't forget to help the Livingstone Weekly keep going by paying subscriptions. Thanks to everyone who have responded so far.

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## **THE SMILE**

A man goes into a bar with his dog. He goes up to the bar and asks for a drink.

The bartender says "You can't bring that dog in here!" The guy, without missing a beat, says "This is my seeing-eye dog."

"Oh man," the bartender says, "I'm sorry, here, the first one's on me." The man takes his drink and goes to a table near the door.

Another guy walks into the bar with a Chihuahua. The first guy sees him, stops him and says "You can't bring that dog in here unless you tell him it's a seeing-eye dog."

The second man graciously thanks the first man and continues to the bar. He asks for a drink. The bartender says "Hey, you can't bring that dog in here!"

The second man replies "This is my seeing-eye dog." The bartender says, "No, I don't think so. They do not have Chihuahuas as seeing-eye dogs."

The man pauses for a half-second and replies "What??? They gave me a Chihuahua??!"

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Have a good week

Gill