



## Contribution from Kilingi Nõmme



### **THE MANAGEMENT OF WATER RESOURCES AND NATURAL HERITAGE IN KILINGI-NÕMME AND SAARDE**

#### **1. Water Resource Management in Kilingi-Nõmme.**

The geological sub-stratum of Kilingi-Nõmme is old red sandstone, therefore there is adequate underground water. Analyses show that our water conforms to the norms.

There are three bores (70-140m deep) in the central waterworks which supply some parts of the town and surrounding area.

We have a problem with the lack of fluorine, which we cannot add because of the expense which that would entail. We do not purify our water because it is not necessary. The more serious problem is the quality of water in many private homes which depend on their own well water which can be of variable quality depending on the type of well, its location and local purification treatment. Under the Soviet regime water was very cheap, so that there was no attempt to save it and it was used profligately on gardens. With independence, the price of water increased and people are much more concerned with checking consumption and rectifying leaks. Water use has decreased and there is no longer any industrial requirement.

Some years ago we built a modern biological purification plant to deal with waste water. There is an aeration basin and slurry bacteria clean the water. Superfluous slurry is mixed with peat, sawdust and leaves and is turned into garden compost. But again there is the problem of waste water from private properties using their own wells. They have small septic tanks or cesspits which are often totally inadequate. These provide a danger to the municipal water supply, but at the moment we turn a blind eye because we can find no cheap and simple solution.

We must mention the main danger to our water table. This comes from our rubbish tip in the old quarry near the town. Our rubbish is unsorted and dumped there with a covering of sand at times. We have no solution at present and must wait for the state to build a modern waste processing plant which will cater for the county and will be 40 km from Kilingi-Nõmme. They have started this project, but it is going to take a further five years to finish. When that happens we will sort our rubbish and send it for recycling. There is a special container for more dangerous rubbish which can be deposited there free of charge.

Our town's main problem is building new pumps and reticulation for clean and waste water. Because houses are quite spread out, this work is expensive and our budget provides mainly for running costs rather than for capital development. We need to get finance from the state and

abroad. We must start doing tests and plan for the future so that we can avoid making mistakes.

It is essential that we start thinking about small modern boreholes and septic tanks for some groups of houses, which cannot be connected to the central system. We must educate people to understand, respect and protect our natural resources. At the moment public awareness is low, despite the fact that we have many good new laws at both state and local level. Guaranteeing their observance is difficult.

## **2. Management of the Natural Heritage of Kilingi-Nõmme and Saarde.**

As there is not much to say about the natural heritage of Kilingi-Nõmme, I will talk about the surrounding area of Saarde with which we are closely connected, and are soon to become a single administrative unit. Our main natural heritage is forest. There are many pine plantations in Kilingi-Nõmme and around 70% of Saarde is forested (pines, birches and firs). Under the Soviet regime the forests were state-owned; now 50% belong to the state and the other half are privately owned, having been returned to their pre-Soviet owners. The state-owned forests are really rather well looked after. The wood in the state forests is mature and more could be cut as only about 80% of the available timber is felled. Private forests are a problem because the grandchildren of the former owners do not care for them and often sell them at a cheap price to businessmen who take only the best trees and do not replant. Thus there is a problem in trying to save the traditional landscape as scrubland encroaches on abandoned farms and deforested areas. In the water meadows around the rivers there used to be scattered trees and the landscape was attractive and was used as pasture. Now these areas are covered with scrub.

The ancient coastline was at Kilingi-Nõmme and so there are very special sand dunes. Ten years ago we protected them and I very much hope that we can protect them in the future. This is a long story and I cannot go into it in this report.

Our peat-bogs and marshes are of great importance as water reservoirs--and as habitats for many bird and animal species. Peat is so slow-growing that it is foolish to use it for heating as is done here in Estonia. Fortunately the larger peat-bogs near Kilingi-Nõmme are protected by law. During the Soviet regime many peat-bogs were damaged in an attempt to drain them. With overuse of chemicals our lakes and rivers started to deteriorate, but with a decrease in agriculture this has happily halted. Amongst the few natural resources are gravel and sand, but some of the deposits have already been depleted. To get a permit to mine them is fortunately not easy, as ancient burial sites were frequently located on the gravel and sand hills. Some years ago I was responsible for an excavation of some skeletons in an old gravel deposit.

There are many bird and animal species in our bogs and forests, some of them protected by law. Their breeding sites, such as those of eagles, must be safeguarded. If the forest is cut, the mating sites of the wood grouse are destroyed and the birds disappear permanently. Near Kilingi-Nõmme we have an interesting forest area which is protected and where there are some rare insects. Two kilometres from Kilingi-Nõmme are the Allikukivi caves which are amongst the biggest in Estonia. They have been restored and are protected for the future.

Because our population is not dense the natural heritage is relatively safe, but the people must be better educated to safeguard it and this is not easy when children throw their coca-cola bottles into the forest having seen their parents dumping rubbish there.

I am sure that the European Cultural Villages project is useful for Kilingi-Nõmme and I am especially pleased that our children can participate in the Mellionec summer camp. Thank you.

*Kalle Kiipus* (member of Kilingi-Nõmme Town Council and former Mayor for three terms, i.e. ten years).