



CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF THE GREEN CONNECTION



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24 August 2026

The Municipal Manager
Mr Sydney Adams
Namakwa District Municipality
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Dear Municipal Manager

Submission on the Draft Local Economic Development Strategy 2027–2031

Introduction

The Green Connection is a non- profit environmental justice organisation that works with coastal and rural communities to promote sustainable, inclusive development and the protection of environmental and cultural heritage. Our work focuses on supporting communities whose livelihoods and food security are directly affected by decisions made about natural resources, development, and access to markets.

Our Position

We support development that creates meaningful economic opportunities and contributes to a just, sustainable and resilient local economy. We are not opposed to development in the Namakwa District. However, communities have raised serious concerns regarding proposed developments, including the Boegoe / Pulpi Bay development, green hydrogen-related projects and associated port, harbour, jetty, renewable energy and desalination infrastructure.

Our concern is not development itself, but the potential impacts of large-scale development on existing livelihoods, water security, marine ecosystems, cultural heritage and community rights. Our position is therefore that development should not proceed to implementation where material community concerns remain unresolved, affected communities have not been meaningfully informed and engaged, or adequate safeguards have not been established.

We submit that this process should be concluded, and any governance concerns resolved, before decisions are taken that commit the land and community to major long-term developments.

Key Community Concerns

Livelihoods and local economic impacts

Small-scale fisheries, farming, tourism, informal economic activities and community enterprises depend on continued access to land, marine resources and healthy ecosystems.

Large-scale industrial, port and marine infrastructure could affect access to fishing grounds and the coastline, marine ecosystems and existing local value chains. We therefore require clear assessment of the potential impacts on existing livelihoods and specific, enforceable measures to prevent, minimize or address harm.

Water security

The Namakwa / Richtersveld region is already water scarce. Large-scale industrial and green hydrogen developments could create significant additional water demand.

Before development proceeds, the authorities and proponents must clearly disclose:

- Projected and cumulative water demand;
- Proposed water sources; and
- Implications for community, agricultural and ecological water requirements.

Industrial demand must not compromise the water security of existing communities or ecosystems.

Desalination and marine impacts

Desalination proposals must be subject to transparent assessment of seawater abstraction, brine discharge and potential impacts on marine ecosystems and small-scale fisheries.

The fact that a development is described as “green” must not mean that its associated environmental impacts are assumed to be acceptable.

Meaningful community participation

Communities cannot meaningfully participate in decisions concerning developments of this scale without accessible and comprehensive information about their potential impacts.

Information must therefore be provided in appropriate formats and languages, with sufficient time for communities to understand proposals and respond. Participation must be ongoing and substantive, rather than a once-off consultation exercise.

Local economic benefit

If these developments are intended to contribute to local economic development, this must be demonstrated through clear commitments regarding:

- Local employment and skills development;
- Local procurement and business opportunities;
- Support for community enterprises;
- Protection of existing livelihoods; and
- Meaningful participation of affected communities in economic benefits.

Minimum Safeguards Before Development Proceeds

Considering these concerns, The Green Connection calls on the Municipality, relevant authorities and project proponents to ensure that the following safeguards are established before development proceeds to implementation:

1. Meaningful and ongoing community participation, with affected communities provided with accessible information and genuine opportunities to influence decisions.
2. Demonstrable community buy-in, supported by evidence that material concerns have been heard, responded to and appropriately addressed.
3. Protection of existing livelihoods, particularly small-scale fisheries, agriculture, tourism and community-based economic activities.
4. Protection of water security, ensuring industrial water demand does not compromise community, agricultural or ecological needs.
5. Robust assessment and monitoring of marine and cumulative impacts, including those associated with desalination, port infrastructure and increased industrial activity.
6. Protection of cultural heritage and ancestral connections, including graves, sacred sites and culturally significant landscapes.
7. Clear and enforceable local economic benefits, including employment, procurement, skills development and community enterprise opportunities.
8. Transparent monitoring and accountability mechanisms, including meaningful community representation, to ensure that commitments made during the development process are implemented.

Where material concerns remain unresolved and the required safeguards are not in place, the relevant development phase should not proceed.

Conclusion

The Green Connection supports development that is economically beneficial, environmentally responsible, culturally respectful and socially just. However, the scale of the proposed developments requires more than procedural consultation. Communities must be informed, meaningfully involved and protected from unacceptable impacts, while the promised benefits of development must be tangible, equitable and locally grounded.

We therefore call on the Municipality and relevant authorities to ensure that no development proceeds to implementation until the material concerns raised by affected communities have been properly addressed and appropriate safeguards have been established. We remain willing to engage constructively with the Municipality, relevant government departments, project proponents and affected communities to support a development pathway that strengthens, rather than undermines, the long-term resilience and wellbeing of the Namakwa District.

Submitted by:

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