

Heading: Polluted streams still flowing to Seekoei River and Aston Bay?

(Caption for photos: Photos taken on 3 October 2025, adjacent to the Humansdorp Sewerage plant on the R330, and alongside the farm dam...)

5/10/25:

A damaging Report by the National Public Protector (PP) that severely criticised Kouga Municipality (KM) was released online on Eastern Cape and Kouga local WA and FB groups on Friday morning this weekend.

The Report gave many examples of KM's poor performance in controlling sewage spills from Humansdorp's Waste Water Treatment plant to the Seekoei River that flows to Aston Bay and the sea. However, soon after the release of the PP's Report, the KM widely released online a PR article (repeated here below), about its successes with the Humansdorp sewage plant in Ward 6 and revealed this plant is now complete, is functioning at full capacity, plus that its discharge is regulated. The Ward 6 councillor also confirmed the site is 100% complete.

Yet, a quick visit to the Humansdorp Sewage site vicinity the same day, as the release of the Report and KM's PR release, on 3 October, has raised huge questions as a polluted stream was visible, as these photos show.

The extremely long PP's Report highlights these five severe transgressions by KLM that stand out in the PP's Report for their severe impact on public health, the environment, the local economy:

* Sewage Contamination of Public Spaces and Ecosystems: "The treatment plants were found to be non-compliant with key provisions of the National Water Act, the National Environmental Management Act, and applicable municipal by-laws.

Effluent discharge exceeded permissible limits, contributing to contamination of nearby water sources as confirmed by the Environmental Management Inspectors from the DFFE...that determined that the Plant was not operating at full capacity and was releasing sewage into adjacent wetlands and river systems, which ultimately feed into the Seekoei River and flow towards the Aston Bay Lagoon in contravention of the National Water Act 36 of 1998 and the National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998."

"The sewage from Jeffrey's Bay and KwaNomzamo WWTWs has caused eutrophication in Aston Bay Lagoon as most of the lagoon is covered in Algal bloom."

"Kouga Local Municipality is responsible for excavating or digging up the land to facilitate the dumping of faeces by toilet rental companies near the Jeffrey's Bay WWTW, which is likely to contribute to the pollution and contamination of the nearby wetland and river systems which feed the Aston Bay Lagoon."

* Health Risks to Communities: "The deficiencies in wastewater treatment services infringed upon the constitutional rights of residents, particularly the rights to human dignity, a safe environment, and access to basic municipal services as enshrined in sections 10, 24, and 27... This situation resulted in the pollution of the environment and poses danger to public health and safety of the environment."

"The community of KwaNomzamo, the residents of Polar Park informal settlements, Vergenoeg township and surrounding communities had to endure uncontrolled odour from the plant and untreated/ partially treated wastewater spillage due to lack of maintenance of the plant."

"The sewage spillage is a health risk and a threat to the economy as the Municipality is a tourist destination. Jobs are at stake and the health system is being compromised. The cattle drink sewage water and are thereafter sold to people for human consumption. Fish caught from the sea, especially in Jeffreys Bay might be a health risk."

* Long-Term Neglect and Delayed Response: "The allegation that the functionaries of KLM did not properly maintain Jeffreys Bay and KwaNomzamo Wastewater Treatment Plants, is substantiated."

"The municipality's response to known deficiencies was delayed and lacked urgency, noting that some of the intervening measures were only implemented after almost a decade. Oversight mechanisms were weak, and there were insufficient monitoring and enforcement of compliance standards. This delay exacerbated the environmental and health risks and contributed to the erosion of public trust."

"The Municipality has been receiving Notices of Intention to Issue a Coastal Notice... since 2019 from the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, but nothing happened, or no action has been taken by the Municipality."

* Inadequate Security Leading to Vandalism: "KwaNomzamo WWTP was not properly maintained and had not been operating at full capacity as a result of administrative deficiencies dating back to 2016, resulting in sewage spillage... due to vandalism and cable theft."

"Furthermore, KwaNomzamo WWTP has a shortage of security personnel and there is no other form of security to the infrastructure which continues to pose a security risk. The WWTP has only one security officer which is inadequate to monitor the WWTP, especially at night."

* Economic Threat: "The sewage spillage is a health risk and a threat to the economy as the Municipality is a tourist destination. Jobs are at stake..."

"In Jeffrey's Bay it is happening in different public places even the beaches. People are sharing the main beach in Jeffrey's Bay with a sewage dam. This sewage ends up in the ocean from time to time where people are swimming."

These five transgressions stand out in the Public Protector's Report for their severe impact on public health, the environment, the local economy.

The St Francis Chronicle twice asked KM for comment about the findings in the report and was twice referred instead to the PR release from yesterday that read as follows:

"Proud to confirm that through continuous good governance, intentional planning and decisive actions, it could successfully turnaround the state of the KwaNomzamo and Jeffreys Bay Waste Water Treatment Plants, as these wastewater infrastructure were inherited by the current administration in deplorable conditions. It is confirmed that the Plants are operating optimally.

"The Municipality secured an amount of R42 million under the Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) funding to effect the extensive repairs and upgrade required for the KwaNomzamo Wastewater Treatment Plant. Despite unexpected delays experienced in approval and further setbacks during violent protests in the area in 2021, the plant has been fully upgraded and its processing capacity increased.

"The Municipality also effected the necessary repairs to the Jeffreys Bay Waste Water Treatment Plant and this Plant is functioning at full capacity. Its discharge is regulated under Water Use Licence No. 12/K90F/EF/4333, with effluent treated through reed bed filtration, retention ponds, and wetland buffers before entering the environment. The municipality also conducts regular monitoring of the Seekoei, and Swart Rivers to ensure water quality is adequately maintained.

"The official opening of the upgraded KwaNomzamo Waste Water Treatment Plant will take place on 27 October 2025, showcasing the state-of-the-art improvements delivered under accountable leadership.

"Owing to these interventions by the municipality, nearby communities and surrounding water sources are not affected by untreated sewage, and so in compliance to the national legislation applicable to the operations of these Plant."