

THE GREEN CONNECTION NEWSLETTER



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Foreword



Liz McDaid The Green Connection Strategic Lead

The Green Connection Welcomes You!

The Green Connection welcomes you to another year full of eco-justice struggles. We continue to pride ourselves on ensuring the environment is protected and the country is gearing towards sustainable development, especially in the face of intensifying climate change.

This edition is jam-packed, with highlights of the Who Stole Our Oceans campaign which focuses on protecting oceans from offshore oil and gas drilling and encourages sustainable development. The sad part is, the bulk of our work has been focused on pursuing legal challenges against the government due to its failure to put section 6 of the National Energy Act (which covers the Integrated Energy Plan) into effect while fighting

for the safety security of the environment and coastal community livelihoods against offshore oil and gas projects.

The lack of meaningful public participation and attempts to exclude those who will be affected by offshore oil and gas projects is a recurring theme in this country. That is why The Green Connection is on a mission to empower South Africans, especially our small-scale fishing communities who call our coastline home to participate in decision-making on proposed projects that affect them.

This is the only way that social and environmental justice will be achieved. Through community outreach and advocacy work.

Let's continue to empower the youth and work towards protecting our environment and those that defend it, remembering to restore the ecosystem as people's livelihoods depend on it. Let us push for climate justice, while raising the voices of fishers, to ensure good governance. The time has come to phase out oil and gas.

For more information, kindly visit our website at www.thegreenconnection.org.za

Thank You,
The Green Connection



The Green Connection Red Flag's Karpowerships' Non-Compliance Of EIA Regulations



Image Above: Protest against Searcher & Karpowerships outside Cape Town High Court

Following a submission of the 13 complaint against environmental consultants Triplo4 by The Green Connection (on 6 March) to the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and Environment (DFFE) – exposes a failure to ensure compliance with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations regarding the Proposed Gas to Power Powership Project at the Port of Saldanha Bay. This new red flag in the controversial Karpowerships deal specifically calls out the consultants for using information from aquaculture and commercial fisheries participants in a meeting called to engage small-scale fishers, as if it was valid information from the small-scale fisheries sector.

DFFE Makes Decisions On Karpowerships – The Green Connection Responds

The Green Connection welcomes the decision by the Department of Fisheries, Forestry, and Environment (DFFE) to refuse the environmental authorisation was refused for the project in Coega Eastern Cape. This announcement, issued (10 March) by DFFE, comes after the welcome news from DFFE to suspend the application for environmental authorisation for Karpowerships in Saldanha Bay, pending an investigation into allegations of a failure to ensure compliance with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations.



Image Above: Activists held a picket in Langebaan

The Green Connection said, “We are happy that the Department is investigating our complaint and are confident that they will find in our favour. And while we are somewhat confused by the Environmental Assessment Practitioner’s (EAP) decision to withdraw the application in Richard’s Bay, hopefully this signifies the end of the Karpowership saga. Hopefully now authorities can focus on bringing affordable and appropriate energy to the grid, to address the load shedding.”

The Green Connection And SAFCEI Respond To President, Minister’s Absurd Record Of Decision In Energy Planning Court Case



Right: Andrew Dorer , Kholwani Simelane GC Advocacy Officer | Right: Francesca de Gasparis SAFCEI

In response, President Cyril Ramaphosa and Minister Gwede Mantashe provided the record of documentation that was supposed to show their reasons why, for 15 years, they had failed to bring Section 6 of the NEA into operation. The 34-page document merely provides copies of correspondence – 29 of these pages are The Green Connection’s own communications with the Presidency and Ministry – dating back to December 2020.

Both SAFCEI and The Green Connection agree that it is absurd that copies of their own correspondence have been provided to them as part of the rationale for the government not enacting the necessary legal framework to carry out energy planning.

More Than A Decade Of Impacts From The Deepwater Horizon Disaster, Learning Are Few – South Africa Still Approves Offshore Drilling



Image Above: Saldanha Coastal community picketing against TEEPSA

The Green Connection stated its disappointed that the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) decided to grant environmental authorisation to TEEPSA – to drill up to five exploration wells in Blocks 5/6/7 off the South-West coast of South Africa, including in riskier deep-water locations (at depths of up to 3.2 km). “It is always disappointing when government appears to choose profits over the needs of the people, while also ignoring government responsibility to address climate change (at the very least, not to do things that will make it worse). We also see it as irresponsible for the department to downplay the risks associated with a major oil spill, which we highlighted in our comments on the Draft Scoping Report as this could have devastating consequences for ocean and coastal ecosystems, coastal communities and the Cape,” says the eco-justice organisation. The Green Connection will study and likely appeal the decision.

FAITH-BASED LEGACY ACTIVISTS GAIN RECOGNITION FOR COMPLETING THE ADVOCACY PROGRAMME



Right: Nandipha Masango, Middle Bishop Geoff Davis, Left: Legacy Activist

After successfully completing the advocacy training programme Southern African Faith Community Environment Institute (SAFCEI) in collaboration with The Green Connection Awarded Legacy Participants their certificates of completion (on 16th of March 2023) in Cape Town Schoenstatt. This comes after the faith leaders attended and fully participated in their advocacy workshops. Enthusiastic eco-advocates will continue to raise awareness about climate issues and how nuclear and oil and gas projects aren’t sustainable solutions for the country’s energy crisis.

MORE THAN 300 ACTIVISTS MARCHED FOR SYSTEM CHANGE AS SOUTH AFRICA CONTINUES TO PROMOTE FOSSIL FUELS DESPITE ITS CLIMATE AGREEMENTS



Image Above: Climate Activists Marching For System Change

On 21 March 2023, the youth paraded the streets of Cape Town under the banner system change which calls on government to transform the energy department and the decisions it takes around investing more in the fossil fuel industry instead of diverting funds to renewable projects. One of the main demands was a call to ban offshore oil and gas exploration in South African waters to save marine biodiversity and reduce greenhouse emissions after the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change IPCC report urged African countries to reduce their methane emissions by 34%.

CLIMATE ACTIVISTS BATTLE WITH FIGHTING EXPLORATION OF OIL AND GAS IN THE AFRICAN CONTINENT



Image Above: Neville Van Rooy in Vienna in a Gas Conference

Following a number of actions against the oil and gas industry (23rd - 29th of March 2023) activists took the initiative in Vienna Austria to call on investors to stop funding projects that are detrimental to the environment. The Green Connection in joint effort with Don't Gas Africa and various organisations highlighted threats that oil and gas exploration poses to the environment such as contributing to greenhouse gas emissions that lead to climate change. Moreover, coastal livelihoods bear the brunt of poverty due to the immense consequences these projects pose for instance oil spills that will cost the fishers.

Vindicated, Civil Society Finally Makes Headway To Compel Government To Develop SA's Energy Plan



Image Above: Activists picketing against proposed plans by government to drill for oil and gas

On 28 April 2023, the President finally published, in the Government Gazette, his decision to bring Section 6 of the National Energy Act (NEA), into operation. A couple of days before that The Green Connection and the Southern African Faith Communities Environment Institute (SAFCEI) received correspondence from the State Attorney on behalf of the President and the Minister in the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE), that the President had decided to bring Section 6 into operation with effect from 1 April 2024.

Marine Spatial Plan Flawed Because Oil and Water Do Not Mix

While it is clear that South Africa is making little headway to resolve the electricity loadshedding crisis – which is where citizens want to see government putting its efforts and delivering results – there is, instead, a lot of movement on other energy projects, particularly for offshore oil and gas. This was one of the concerns raised by The Green Connection, on the 9th of May, in its comment to the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) on ten draft Marine Sector Plans (MSP).



Image Above: Activists in Johannesburg Marching Against Environmental Injustices

The eco-justice organisation also points out that the draft Offshore Oil and Gas Sector Plan fails to consider the climate crisis, nor does it account for the impact it could have on the country's international obligations to combat climate change.

SOUTH AFRICAN COASTAL COMMUNITIES IN BUNDLE OF NERVES DUE TO GOVERNMENT PUSHING FOR MORE OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION



Image Above: Activists Protesting in Northern Cape

On 16 May 2023, over a 100 small-scale fishers voiced their concerns in Goedgedacht farm Malmesbury about governments repeated attempt to explore oil and gas exploration in South Africa's coast. Small-scale fishers from Kwazulu-Natal to Northern Cape highlighted key issues about exploration of oil and gas such as destruction to marine habitats which is a violation of fishers rights to livelihood as they depend on oceans for a living.

Coastal communities further called on the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy to start taking fisher's concerns into consideration and invest in sustainable energy that will benefit all South Africans without having harmful impacts to the environment. On the same weekend activists from Gqeberha to the West Coast held a nationwide picket calling on Total Energies to abandon all offshore oil and gas activities while and invest in renewable energy.

Civil Society Organisation Challenge Decision To Give Karpowership Yet Another Opportunity To Amend Their EIA Reports For Richards Bay

South Africans are reaching their breaking point with loadshedding and suffering its increasingly devastating impacts, leaving many wondering why there is such strong opposition to Karpowerships, especially since it is being touted as the silver bullet the country needs to solve the crisis.

THE GREEN CONNECTION PLEASSED WITH LATEST SALDANHA KARPOWERSHIPS REFUSAL



Image Above: Activists marching against oil and gas exploration in Durban.

With so many unanswered questions and unfulfilled requirements, The Green Connection is satisfied that the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE) decision to refuse Karpowership SA's request for condonation and extension with regard to its application for Environmental Authorisation for the project in Saldanha Bay. The news about the DFFE's decision in Saldanha came through on Tuesday 30 May, just as The Green Connection and others civil society organisations were making further enquiries, with a view to challenging any DFFE decision to give Karpowership yet another opportunity to amend their Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) reports for Richards Bay.

Coastal Communities Are All In To Protect Our Oceans

As an eco-justice organisation that works with coastal communities to help them better protect the natural resources they depend on – as part of its *Who Stole Our Oceans* campaign – for The Green Connection and the small-scale fishers working with them, every day is Oceans Day. After 31 years of claiming to pay homage to this precious resource,

decision-makers the world over, still mistreat the ocean.



Image Above: Eco - justice organisations marching against exploitation of the earth's natural resources.

And South Africa is no different. Far too many foreign companies – which are based in countries that claim to promote and drive the just transition – want to drill up and potentially destroy our oceans, in search of offshore oil and gas, neither of which is needed or desirable for dealing with the climate emergency we face.

“AFRICA IS NOT A GAS STATION” CIVIL SOCIETY DISHES IT OUT AFTER MULTIPLE ATTEMPTS TO EXPLOIT OIL AND GAS IN AFRICA



Image Above: Neville Van Rooy presenting the oil and gas exploration map in Nairobi

After back and forth applications to explore oil and gas in South Africa particularly in areas rich in marine biodiversity - On 19th to 20th of June 2023, Green Connection presented how South Africa's coast has been divided in a Don't Gas Convening in Nairobi. Various climate leaders emphasized on the need for developing nations like South Africa to implement a just-transition plan that will not only help reduce emissions but will grow the country's energy investments and reach its goal.

TIME IS UP FOR KARPOWERSHIPS IN SALDANHA BAY AND COEGA



Image Above: Civil society protesting against Karpowerships in Saldanha Bay



Image Above: Activists protesting in Saldanha Bay during gas bill hearings.

Karpowership SA's controversial gas-to-power powerhip projects proposed for the ports of Saldanha and Ngqura suffered further setbacks recently. After being refused environmental authorisation in 2021, Karpowership appealed to environmental Minister Barbara Creecy. The Minister decided to remit the matters back to the Department of Forestry, Fisheries (DFFE) so that various gaps and defects could be addressed by Karpowership. Karpowership subsequently submitted revised final Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) reports in January 2023. However, in the Saldanha application, Karpowership withdrew its final EIA report, and applied to the Minister for extension and condonation to submit a generic Environmental Management Programme (EMPr). This application was refused by DFFE. In Ngqura, DFFE refused to authorise the proposed project. Karpowership has appealed both refusal decisions.

FRENCH ACTIVISTS STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH SOUTH AFRICAN ENVIRONMENTALISTS AGAINST TOTAL ENERGIES MASTER PLAN TO EXPLORE OIL AND GAS ALONG THE COAST OF SOUTH AFRICA



Image Above: Environmentalists protesting in France



Image Above: Environmentalists protesting in France

On 23rd June 2023, activists from all walks of life protested in France against @TotalEnergies plan to exploit South Africa's natural resources. This comes after the French multinational company has been granted environmental authorisation by the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE). Main concerns raised by environmentalists are the threats that oil and gas drilling could pose to the environment as well as coastal livelihoods given that South Africa has been hit unprecedentedly by high unemployment rates and costs of living.

To sign the petition against offshore oil and gas exploration, visit our website and add your signature.

The Green Connection Board Members

Yachika Reddy

Basier Dramat

Liz McDaid

Nomaphelo Hlakula

Jaclyn Smith

Anton Gus Pickard

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