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Dear Mayor and Acting Municipal Manager,

It is with grave concern that we recently read the Daily Maverick media article “POO LAGOON” which was published after the recent spate of effluent spills into the Knysna Estuary.

The GKBC, together with many other civic organisations, work tirelessly to positively promote business and tourism in our town and to build the Knysna brand but with ongoing incidents like this, it becomes an impossible task. While we know that journalists can sometimes sensationalise their writing, the facts in this matter are widely known and the recent closure of the Waterfront during a national waterpolo tournament due to a spillage of sewage in Nelson Street is testament to this. The unacceptably high and non-compliant levels of *e.coli* entering the Knysna Estuary at various points from the CBD (as published on your website) is also unacceptable and exposing the people of Knysna to a health risk on a daily basis.

We are aware that SANParks, who is charged with the management of the Knysna Estuary, regularly engages with the Knysna Municipality through the Estuary Authorities Pollution Committee but that the unacceptably high levels of sewage and solid waste entering the estuary have been ongoing for many years and there has been no effective mitigation response to this chronic pollution instituted by the Municipality despite ongoing requests by SANParks.

The business and private sector can no longer stand by and allow the mismanagement of our town and resources. We cannot allow the degradation of the most biodiverse estuary in South Africa and the destruction of the tourism, economic and subsistence value of the estuary. We would like several questions answered and a multi-pronged, decisive action plan put in place to address this situation. We ask that your response to this issue is factual and achievable with timelines in place to ensure strict action. We would like to ask and suggest the following:

Questions:

- 1) Who heads up the sanitation and sewerage departments?
- 2) Is there a management plan in place for the culverts, streams and waterways that lead into the estuary?
- 3) Are restaurants monitored monthly to ensure fat traps are in place and serviced?
- 4) What is being done to prevent both solid and water-borne waste entering the estuary?
- 5) What is being done about the waste transfer station and relocation of this facility?
- 6) What is the municipality's action plan to drastically reduce the levels of *e.coli* and solid waste pollutants entering the estuary?
- 7) Does the municipality have cleaning teams servicing the estuary and town and if not, why not?
- 8) What is the municipality doing to ensure transparency and regular communication around these issues to the people of Knysna?

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Legal Secretary: Southern Right Financial Solutions

9) Is the Knysna Municipality 100% supportive and accountable to SANParks who are the custodians of the estuary?

Suggestions:

- 1) A task team is set up, comprising of municipal council, private sector and retired professionals to assess the problem areas and formulate a long term multi-pronged approach;
- 2) An immediate media release outlining why there is pollution of the Knysna estuary taking place from municipal infrastructure and the action that is being taken;
- 3) Department heads to be identified and held responsible and accountable for ensuring the infrastructure is serviced, functional and a strict maintenance and replacement plan put in place;
- 4) Councillors, civic leaders and NGO groups are to be made aware of the dire problem around not only sewerage but litter as a whole, and an education program put in place which starts at school level and extends throughout the greater Knysna community outlining the importance of the estuary as the lifeblood of our town;
- 5) The Knysna Municipality together with all staff, councillors and senior management including the Mayor and Municipal Manager openly back a drive for a CLEAN KNYSNA which will set the tone for everyone. This initiative needs to start from the top and be actively supported and driven in all communities;
- 6) Preventative measures be put in place at all access points of the waterways leading to the estuary which is monitored on a weekly basis;
- 7) Waste management which includes solid waste and the water-borne sewer system needs to have a long term upgrade plan which must be the end goal;
- 8) Bylaws and the control of illegal dumping, wastewater disposal and litter need to be policed and enforced with hard hitting penalties for businesses and private individuals alike.

Unfortunately, the new norm is the NO CARE attitude to litter and waste, where it is someone else's problem. Litter is becoming a serious pandemic. The end result will be catastrophic for our town, estuary and the country.

We look forward to your earliest response.

Sincerely yours,

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Pierre Gouws

Chair GKBC

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