

Nelson Mandela Bay proposes to beat drought with R7bn infrastructure investment

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If given the thumbs-up by the National Disaster Fund, the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality plans to pump more than R7bn into infrastructure aimed at relieving drought conditions and preventing taps from running dry in the future.



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The municipality's Drought Disaster Mitigation Plan was approved during a council meeting on Thursday, 19 October.

It included a detailed outline of projects to the tune of R7.05bn that will be rolled out over the next four years. The cheaper projects include reviewing the water restrictions currently in place - at no capital expense to the municipality - while the most expensive proposals are the construction of three desalination plants across the metro, totaling R3.23bn.

Mayoral committee member for infrastructure and engineering Annette Lovemore said the municipality had already approached officials from the National Disaster Fund on a provincial and national level and was now waiting to hear if the application was successful.

"As of [yesterday] the combined level of our dams stand at 31.5% capacity. We have compiled a list and prioritised the projects in such a way to try to alleviate the pressure on our water supply system as efficiently as possible.

"This list includes projects that can be tackled, or even completed, within the next 12 months, while others could take up to the next four years before we are able to give them the necessary attention," Lovemore said.

Some of the projects on the list are already receiving attention, such as repairs and maintenance of aging infrastructure and the city's ongoing water-saving campaign to raise awareness and implement punitive measures against over-consumers.

Another project, scheduled to roll out within the next 12 to 24 months, is the construction of wellfields next to the Churchill and Groendal dams.

This would see boreholes drilled next to the dams so that the water extracted from them could be fed directly into the existing water treatment facilities.

This could add a potential 18 megalitres of water to the city's daily supply.

Phase three of the Nooitgedagt water treatment facility near Addo could also be fast-tracked for an additional 20 megalitres daily.

"The municipality has also established a drought action task team that meets every two weeks to discuss the disaster and look at ways of improving the situation.

"The task team will be meeting [today] to discuss a number of issues, including revision of the [current] water restrictions and also looking at what additional restrictions and penalties could come into play once our dams drop to 30%, and subsequently 25% capacity."

Lovemore said industries identified as high water users had already been warned to reduce their consumption if they wished to avoid penalties.

She said car washes across the city had been warned to come up with ways to recycle their water or face the possibility of closure.

Source: Herald

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