

WATER REPORT - 19 August 2025

SWAT is a sub-committee of the Southbroom Rate Payers Association (SRA). The mandate given to us by the SRA (who represents the rate payers and community), is to find a solution to our water problems.

Bulk Water Issues:

- The Umtamvuma plant requires a far better electricity supply in order to run the plant to its full capacity.
 - 3MVA is required to achieve full capacity. It currently runs at 1.5MVA of we are lucky and it does not trip
 - This means only half of the pumps can be deployed for extraction
 - UGU is currently running the system at between 12 and 18 mega litres per day (12,000,000 to 18,000,000 litres per day)
 - This covers the area Port Edward to Southbroom
 - It is estimated that Southbroom uses 800,000 litres per day
 - The Reservoir holds 5m litres – Gone in plus minus 5 days if there is no supply.
 - With the leaks we experience, it is gone sooner
 - Private storage needs to be filled which eats into the 5 days
 - Empty pipes need to be filled
 - A permanent solution was planned but the implementation from the Eastern Cape but failed. The Eastern Cape Government promised a rural community a water project on their side of the Umthamvuna River which has not materialised. This in turn has upset them and the rural authority has advised that they will not allow Eskom to install infrastructure on their land until such time as their issues are addressed.
 - The lead time on their project is two years
 - I would be cautious on relying on the upgraded supply being installed before the Eastern Cape Rural issues are addressed
 - Eskom is apparently running out of patience and is threatening to mothball the project.
 - A temporary solution was sought and Eskom was going to upgrade the current supply from 1.5MVA to 2.3MVA.
 - UGU Funded this project (internally funded)
 - Eskom has failed to deliver on the due date which was 21 July 2025 with a back up date of 25 July 2025.
 - It was then pushed out to 7 August 2025. This failed due to technical issues and the old supply was reinstated on the 12th of August 2025
 - There has been no new communication on the upgrade
- The current power constraint means that the plant cannot produce optimally.
- Questions have been and will continue to be raised on alternate models. The fact of the matter is San Lameer employed an alternate model at a cost of R60m. Our community does not have the resource to do the same and we are not a gated estate which means costs will be higher in terms of not only the infrastructure but the licensing and approval of an alternate system.

- The Seaslopes line which effectively served the HP line from the north in the past is fed from the Umzimkulu system. Due to a lack of maintenance and ongoing problems with brakes in the line, this system has been mothballed. There is no news on if and when they may reinstate this line.

Southbroom's Internal Infrastructural Issues:

- It is very difficult to effectively manage or identify problems in a system that is not fully pressurised and operating on a daily basis
- Issues are identified as and when they arise and the SRA through SWAT communicates with the local plumber to address issues
- Specific issues are:
 - Leaks
 - Reservoirs overflows
 - No water when water is being provided
- Swat has identified certain specific problems which are addressed as water is supplied
 - Issue at Berea and Southbroom Ave
 - Issue at Captain Smith and Outlook
 - Reservoirs vs HP
 - Who is on which system
- We are aware of buried valves which are inaccessible and could well be damaged, blocked or shut closed
- We are aware of Pressure Release Valves that are inoperable
- We note that no valves are locked which means they are susceptible to being interfered with and or damaged.
- We believe that UGU is probably losing water within the village
 - This means reduced revenue flows on unbillable water, which has a knock-on effect to UGU's income and supply to other areas which are also in need of supply.
 - We have reported the leak into drains at the traffic circle at the library – This has been reported ad-nauseum but there has been no action in over a year. The feedback we received was that they would need to cut through the circle and dig up some road and this would need to be co-ordinated with RNM.
- We note that communication we receive from UGU does not align with what we can visibly see happening.
- We note that there may not be a reconciliation of what is being supplied, what is being billed and what is lost. We have ideas on how to remedy this situation so that UGU gets true bang for buck and so that we get more consistent supply.

Work done by Swat this year

We have achieved the following

- Improved communication between ourselves and the UGU team on the ground
- Improved communication between ourselves and the rate payers
 - More accurate prediction on supply has resulted in the community being able to plan better
- A better understanding of the macro issues (bulk supply, politics etc) and micro issues (internal reticulation problems)
- We have addressed micro issues by applying a “point and shoot” approach. This means I have asked people to report to UGU as well as me so that I can get the local plumber to address the problem as it arises.
- Provided the community with a detailed breakdown on what system they are on (HP vs Reservoir)
- A telemetry system has been purchased and a lot of work on the design and programming has been carried out by Mark Schormann. This will help us to monitor water pressure in the village in order to reduce our reliance on poor communication from UGU.
 - A small presentation of what it is can be displayed at this point

Conclusion

Here are the facts

- We are not in a drought and there is enough water in the Umthamvuna river to supply our communities on the coastal and inland belts.
- UGU cannot extract, treat and distribute water due to electricity supply constraints
- We are not in a financial position to change bulk water supply or solve this problem
- No amount of fixing the internal infrastructure of the village will improve supply. It is the same as having a Ferrari with no engine. Nice to look at but useless if we need to go anywhere.
- We have to apply pressure on local, provincial and national government to make a change.
 - Municipal elections are coming and everyone in positions of authority are sitting on their hands as they do not know if they will have a job post elections.
 - There is no money to do anything.
- UGU Water Projects
 - Working with Eskom on temporary power line to increase capacity from 1.5 to 2.35MVA
 - Pipeline replacement planned for Banner's Rest (R18 million)
 - Umthamvuna bulk infrastructure plan (R1.2 billion)
 - South Coast pipeline (R339 million with follow-up of R781 million)

Yours in community

Alan Hall

Chairman Swat 3 Team