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In an industry defined by cyclical pressure, rising input costs and persistent skills shortages, financial discipline and operational agility have become decisive differentiators. For GVK-Siya Zama (GVK), a national construction group with more than 1 000 permanent employees across South Africa, longevity has not been accidental. It has been engineered. Wilhelm du Plessis spoke to CFO John de Sousa who unpacks how the company structures funding, manages compliance, navigates public-sector payment cycles and balances empowerment objectives with commercial discipline.

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South Africa's contracting landscape is at a crossroads. After years of stop-start investment, the sector now juggles heavy demand for infrastructure with shrinking margins, tighter compliance requirements, and an operating environment that tests even the most seasoned firms.

For contractors from large engineering houses, delivering public bulk services to small builders tackling township housing and private refurbishments, the challenge is to deliver on time, on budget and to regulatory standards, while protecting the commercial health of their businesses.

Budget pressures are front of mind. Municipal and national capital allocations remain critical lifelines, yet they are squeezed by competing priorities. Cost escalation for materials, transport and labour eats into prequalified rates, and many contracts signed a year or more ago are proving uneconomic. Contractors must sharpen commercial management: build realistic escalation clauses into tenders, re-price prolonged projects, and insist on rigorous site cost control. Commissioners should recognise that underfunded scopes and tight pricing will either reduce quality or shift risk onto contractors.

Legislation and regulation have grown in complexity. Health and safety, broad-based black economic empowerment, labour law compliance and environmental permitting are non-negotiables. Recent regulatory updates require contractors to demonstrate robust governance, supply-chain transparency and skills development. Non-compliance risks hefty fines and damaging reputational fallout. The practical implication is clear: successful firms invest in compliance teams and partner with specialised advisors rather than treating regulation as an afterthought.

Despite the demand pipeline, several pitfalls persist. Cashflow remains the Achilles' heel for many. Delayed payments from municipal clients, slow variations approvals, and under-funded retention claims throttle working capital. Firms should tighten payment clauses, use staged milestones, and rely on stronger lien and escrow provisions where possible. Another recurring issue is skills scarcity. The market needs more artisans and site supervisors

Risk allocation in contracts also merits urgent attention. Unsuitable risk transfer to contractors, whether for ground conditions, design defects or *force majeure* events, often leads to disputes and project standstills. More balanced contract terms, clearer employer obligations and faster adjudication mechanisms would reduce costly litigation and preserve relationships.

So, what is the *status quo*? Pragmatic optimism. There are capable contractors who continue to win and deliver complex work, but many smaller players are either consolidating or exiting. Innovation is emerging - from modular construction and digital project controls to closer, integrated supply-chain partnerships - and these approaches are improving predictability.

For the sector to thrive, stakeholders must act in concert. Clients must budget realistically and pay timeously. Regulators should streamline processes where possible without diluting standards. Contractors must professionalise commercial practices and invest in people and systems. If policy, finance and execution align, South Africa can rebuild critical infrastructure and create sustainable opportunities across the value chain. The coming year will test resolve but also offers a clear runway for constructive reform and renewed investment nationwide.

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CESA President Dr. Vishal Haripersad.

CESA WARNS OF NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE CRISIS

Consulting Engineers South Africa (CESA) has warned that South Africa is facing a deepening national infrastructure maintenance crisis, driven by years of underinvestment, reactive asset management and a growing shortage of engineering skills.

Speaking in Sandton at the organisation's annual media address, and ahead of his first year as President of the organisation, CESA President Dr. Vishal Haripersad said the country's infrastructure challenges are no longer abstract policy concerns but are being felt daily by citizens, businesses and government alike. "What we are facing should be recognised for what it is: a national infrastructure maintenance crisis," Dr. Haripersad said.

While government's commitment to invest more than R1-trillion in public infrastructure over the next three years is welcomed, Haripersad cautioned that funding alone will not reverse the decline unless long-standing structural issues are addressed.

CESA pointed to findings from the National Planning Commission, which show declining GDP *per capita* growth, unemployment at 33,9% – over 45% among youth – and persistently low public and private investment levels. According to the Commission's report, these trends reflect job creation constraints, weak business confidence and infrastructure deficiencies.

The consequences of underinvestment are evident in the growing maintenance backlog across public infrastructure. Haripersad noted that many local and provincial authorities continue to manage assets reactively, responding only once systems fail. For example, Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure Dean Macpherson has estimated the maintenance backlog at R30-billion, affecting more than 56 000 state-owned properties.

Nowhere is the crisis more visible than in the water sector, Dr. Haripersad explained. Earlier this year, Parliament was told that R400-billion is required to rehabilitate South Africa's water and sanitation systems. "For many communities, the impact is already clear – not because water does not exist, but because ageing infrastructure can no longer deliver it reliably," he added.

Recent flooding in Limpopo and Mpumalanga, along with wildfires across several provinces, has further highlighted the consequences of a largely reactive approach to infrastructure risk. Dr. Haripersad said these events underscore the urgent need for proactive assessment, maintenance and resilience, particularly in the context of climate change.

Against this backdrop, Dr.Haripersad introduced the theme that will guide his presidency: "If Not Engineers, then Who? Reclaiming Our Purpose, Securing Our Future." Drawing on the principle of Ubuntu, he emphasised that engineering is not only a technical profession, but a shared responsibility grounded in accountability to society.

CESA highlighted South Africa's severe engineering skills shortage, with roughly one engineer for every 3 100 people, compared to significantly higher ratios in developed economies according to the Engineering Council of South Africa. This equates to a shortage of more than 60 000 engineering professionals. Dr. Haripersad described this as "a failure not just of policy, but of collective will", calling for stronger investment in STEM education, mentorship and structured professional development.

The organisation also raised concern about procurement systems that prioritise the lowest upfront cost over quality, longevity and social benefit. This "price-only" mentality, he warned, endangers both infrastructure and communities, forcing professionals into unsustainable procurement cycles simply to remain operational.

CESA further stressed the importance of integrity and governance in infrastructure delivery. Procurement-related corruption, weak oversight and delayed enforcement continue to undermine public confidence and compromise outcomes. Dr. Haripersad said restoring trust requires ethical conduct, transparency, enforcement and improved site safety.

Finally, CESA called for engineers to be meaningfully represented at decision-making tables across government and public institutions. "If we are serious about infrastructure delivery, governance and value for money, then engineers cannot remain on the margins," Haripersad said.

"As a nation, we must decide whether we are ready to stand for accountability, build capability, deliver real value and uphold integrity," he said. "Our collective future depends on it." ⊙

WIND FARM CONTRACTORS UNDER PRESSURE

As South Africa's renewable energy sector continues to grow, contractors in the wind farm construction market are grappling with complex contractual challenges that could limit participation in this booming industry, warns a leading construction law expert.

Natalie Reyneke, Director at Construction Law Specialists MDA Attorneys, says that while wind energy has been part of South Africa's power generation landscape since 1796, the modern wind farm era presents unique obstacles for contractors seeking to capitalise on opportunities created by the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIPPPP).

"The introduction of large-scale wind farms using numerous turbines to harness wind energy is relatively new to South Africa," says Reyneke. "With the expansion of the REIPPPP programme, we are seeing more wind farms being constructed and operated across the country, creating significant opportunities for contractors. However, there are substantial barriers to entry that contractors need to understand and navigate."

Reyneke points to the inherent risks associated with power purchase agreements (PPAs) as a primary concern for contractors. "A senior project manager at one of South Africa's large renewable energy EPC contractors recently told me that the biggest risk on these contracts is the offtake – the generation and transmission of electricity under a PPA that is signed long before construction begins on site," she explains.

"The majority of these projects are funded based on meeting specific commercial operation dates, so the ramifications for not meeting that looming deadline are enormous."

Drawing on her experience representing contractors responsible for the balance of plant on numerous wind farm projects, Reyneke identifies a troubling trend in the independent power producer (IPP) space. "We're seeing an increase in IPPs preferring single-point contracts rather than split contracts," she says. "The IPP seeks to employ one contractor – typically an EPC (Engineering, Procurement and Construction) contractor – who carries sole responsibility for delivering electricity under the PPA by the commercial operation date."

This approach creates a cascade of challenges, according to Reyneke. "The EPC contractor may not have the necessary skills to perform all works required to deliver the project. For example, if the turbine supplier is appointed as the EPC, they will need to subcontract civil and electrical work to specialist contractors."

The structure of these subcontracts has become particularly problematic. "We're seeing subcontracts drafted in ways that pass EPC risk down to subcontractors, often pitting them against each other by requiring mutual indemnities for delays or additional costs that one might cause the other," Reyneke notes. "In my experience, it amounts to contractual mistrust."

This dynamic manifests in several ways that affect market competitiveness. "Subcontractors are over-qualifying the subcontracts, not wanting to accept certain risks being passed down from EPC contractors," says Reyneke. "They're reluctant to collaborate too closely with fellow subcontractors. More accurately, they don't want a contractual nexus to exist, or they're building significant risk allowances into their pricing models, which effectively prices them out of jobs."

"The introduction of large-scale wind farms using numerous turbines to harness wind energy is relatively new to South Africa."

Natalie Reyneke,
Director at Construction Law Specialists
MDA Attorney.

Beyond subcontracting arrangements, the issue could also arise in negotiations between potential EPC contract joint venture partners when the IPP requires a single point of contact, leading to issues around risk allocation and reluctance to accept joint contractual responsibility.

Reyneke cautions that these challenges are particularly acute for new market entrants. "For contractors entering the wind farm construction market, these contractual dynamics will add to the already significant pressures of delivering on time, at the required quality and within budget," she says.

As South Africa continues to expand its renewable energy capacity to address ongoing electricity challenges, Reyneke's insights highlight the need for more balanced risk allocation in wind farm contracts to ensure a competitive and sustainable contractor market. ⊙

Vishaal Lutchman, Group CEO of GIBB Holdings (GIBB).

Deep listening and curiosity characterise **GIBB GROUP CEO'S FIRST YEAR**

February 2026 marks one year since Vishaal Lutchman assumed the role of Group CEO of GIBB Holdings (GIBB) - a year marked by curiosity over certainty. In an environment often driven by quick wins, 2025 was intentionally devoted to deep listening: to the people, the culture, the market perception of GIBB supported by the underlying thinking that shaped the organisation over time.

For Lutchman, the first 12 months were less about making noise and more about making sense, observing where performance truly thrives, pinpointing the company's strongest talent, and confronting, with honesty, how well GIBB's offerings are positioned for a changing market. Just as importantly, it was about understanding where the gaps are and how to respond to them in a way that is both sustainable and true to the brand.

Lutchman adds that the learning journey directly shaped GIBB's growth narrative. "Drawing on the insights, the business developed a clear strategic approach, focused on strengthening existing service lines while exploring new ones. Now, at the end of our financial year, our strategy is embedded in the FY27 budget, positioning us to shift decisively from planning to execution."

While there were significant highlights and wins during 2025, many of these are confidential, bound by NDAs and client sensitivities. "These wins affirm the strength of our people and the relevance of our direction. They reinforce my confidence that GIBB is well positioned for the next phase of growth," notes Lutchman.

With his sights firmly set on action, Lutchman reckons that a major priority is talent, both growing GIBB's people and acquiring new skills into the business. The company has committed meaningfully to developing existing talent, including the provision of bursaries for master's and PhD studies. At the same time, it expects to recruit new people as its strategy gains momentum, particularly in areas aligned to digitisation and innovation.

The implementation of GIBB's ERP system is a critical first step towards digitisation, creating a platform to better integrate data across the business and make decisions informed by reliable intelligence rather than intuition or outdated information.

"From there, we will continue to build digital capability, including exploring automation where infrastructure design and delivery are repetitive and well suited to technological support," adds Lutchman.

A key part of this future is GIBB's focus on youth. "Younger engineers are often quicker to embrace emerging technologies, and they tend to bring a strong sense of responsibility toward sustainability, climate consciousness and community impact. By combining their energy and perspective with the experience of our senior engineers, who provide guidance, rigour and stress testing, we can create a powerful blueprint for success. This is central to our succession planning, our role in transforming the industry and our commitment to building sustainable clients and communities," explains Lutchman.

As the company navigates 2026, its strategic direction will remain consistent. Its core values – People, Expertise and Excellence – will stay the same, and it will stay committed to creating lasting value for its clients and partners, as well as the communities and economies it serves.

"Staying true to this overarching intention is what will allow GIBB to grow with purpose and impact," concludes Lutchman. ⊙

SHORT-STAFFED MUNICIPAL ENGINEERING TEAMS NEED MORE CAPACITY

With local government elections taking place in South Africa this year, public discussion around service delivery has intensified. Residents and communities are increasingly frustrated by water shortages, failing roads and broken infrastructure. The Institute of Municipal Engineering of Southern Africa (IMESA) has emphasised that technical capacity within municipalities plays a central role in addressing these challenges and echoes the widespread calls for the appointment of more engineers.

The institute says that it is heartened by President Cyril Ramaphosa's acknowledgement in this year's State of the Nation Address that it is patronage, not technical capacity and merit, that is weakening local government administrations in many places.

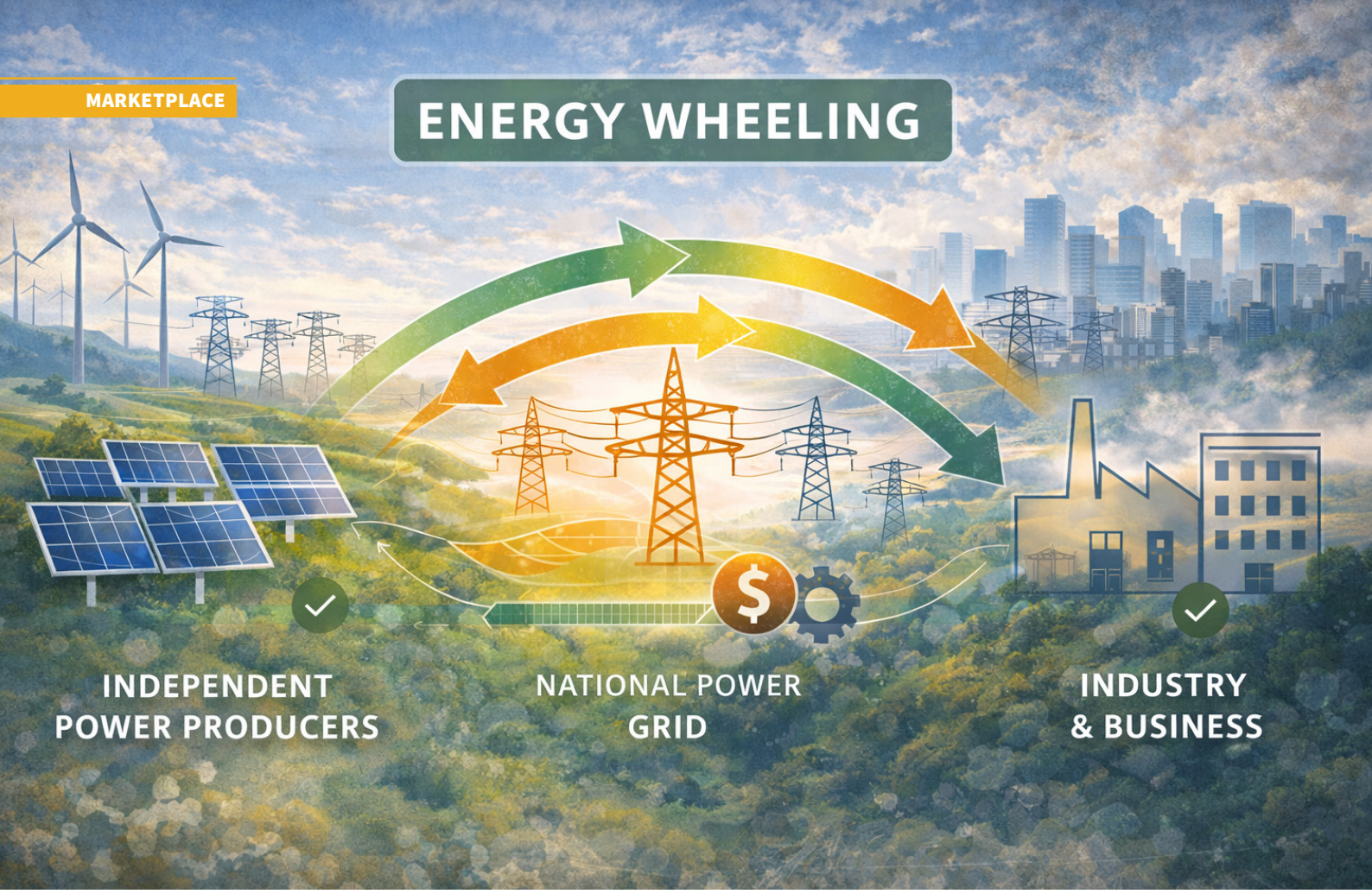
"It is important to understand the actual ratio of technical to support staff necessary for a municipality to operate professionally and efficiently," says IMESA president Geoff Tooley, noting that this is legislated but most municipalities are not compliant.

"The Municipal Staff Regulations (MSRs) in South Africa, issued by the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) under the authority of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000, were formally introduced in 2021 to professionalise local government and standardise human resource practices across municipalities," he explains.

"When service delivery does not meet the required standard, municipal employees are often all painted with the same brush. The competency of the technical staff is brought into question when there is, in fact, good work that is being done by a limited number of efficient staff under very trying conditions. This has a demoralising impact on the technical staff.

"It is critical that municipalities work to rectify the imbalance and meet the requirements of COGTA and the Municipal Staff Regulations. That is how we can start to turn the tide in service delivery," Tooley stresses.

IMESA urges residents and communities to recognise and support the pockets of excellence. ⊙



Why energy wheeling is a critical enabler in solving SOUTH AFRICA'S POWER CHALLENGES

As more South African municipalities start to roll out frameworks that support private energy wheeling, this once-niche mechanism is quickly becoming a cornerstone of the country's decentralised energy future. Due to constrained grid infrastructure, ageing coal plants and mounting pressure to transition to cleaner power, energy wheeling offers a practical, scalable way to connect independent generators with energy-hungry users. ***Wayne Cowie, CEO at EXSA, writes that energy wheeling is the missing link in South Africa's power puzzle.***

Energy wheeling (wheeling), the act of using existing transmission and grid infrastructure to deliver energy from an energy generator to an end-user, is not just a technical solution but a market enabler that is gaining significant momentum. The question now is not whether wheeling will shape South Africa's energy landscape, but how fast we can remove the remaining barriers to make it work at scale.

We don't have the luxury of time to get energy alternatives off the ground

While loadshedding has abated for now, South Africa urgently needs alternative energy sources to stimulate economic growth sustainably. Coal currently provides almost 75% of the nation's power, but most Eskom coal plants have reached or exceeded the standard end-of-life recommendations of 30 to 40 years. While several plants have been, or are undergoing efforts to extend design life to facilitate a phased decommissioning process, there will come a time when these plants are no longer viable for upgrades. The energy gap that will emerge when these are shut down will be significant.

Coupled with this, mounting international calls for the transition to cleaner energy will increasingly put pressure on trade and industry to reduce fossil fuel consumption via penalties, tariffs and taxes.

Traditional alternative energy sources, such as nuclear and coal, can take upward of 10 years to build and we do not have the luxury of time. Conversely, renewable energy sources can get up and running much quicker, with large-scale utility solar project construction timelines of approximately 18 months and large scale wind projects approximately 24 months.

And there is a substantial pipeline of renewable projects ready and waiting for financing to be built - this is where wheeling is playing a critical role.

Wheeling holds the key to unlocking private investment in the renewable energy market

For independent power producers (IPP), a critical enabler for a project is whether there is a committed buyer for the power that

will be produced. Wheeling provides another route to market for IPPs. Energy traders like Energy Exchange of Southern Africa (EXSA) typically enter into long-term agreements with multiple IPPs to bulk-buy power for onselling, thereby assuming certain risks on behalf of the end consumer and providing another route to market for generators.

Conversely, wheeling enables large energy users to access wind and solar IPPs indirectly. Contracting directly with an energy producer is a complex contractual and administrative undertaking for a company. Most large-scale solar or wind projects have long term contracting requirements of 15 to 20 years with substantial guarantees required to enable project financing, which is challenging for corporates. These contracts also necessitate complex metering, reconciliation and settlement processes that are not typically a core competency of corporate energy users. Additionally, businesses may require multiple contracts with several IPPs to ensure the right energy mix of wind and solar to meet their needs.

Wheeling moves into the middle by taking the onerous administration and contracting, complexity and risk away from end consumers as well as unlocking much-needed financing for IPPs.

Energy wheeling is gaining traction in South Africa

In addition to the accessibility that wheeling provides in the market, it is gaining popularity within the local energy market for several other reasons.

Firstly, wind and solar are currently the cheapest form of new energy generation globally. Wheeling can provide cost saving benefits for companies to take advantage of economies of scale inherent in these large, utility scale projects.

Secondly, companies can certify that their energy is procured from green sources via renewable energy certificates. This is particularly important for companies with international footprints and will become an increasingly attractive benefit as sustainability targets and reporting requirements evolve.

Lastly, accessing electricity via wheeling provides critical price certainty for companies. In an environment where electricity tariffs have long been increasing well above inflation, wheeling contracts are escalated on a CPI basis. This allows companies to lock in their renewable energy costs at CPI for the duration of the contract.

Roadblocks to realising the potential of energy wheeling at scale

While there is a large pipeline of renewables to be added to the grid, and hence extensive potential for wheeling, the sector is not without its challenges.

Aside from broad grid constraints, the infancy of the energy wheeling model in South Africa poses its own stumbling blocks. Several municipalities do not yet have approved wheeling frameworks in place. This means that offtakers cannot be accessed in those areas. Encouragingly, virtual wheeling, launched by Eskom in 2025, is designed to remove some of these constraints but is not yet accessible to private energy traders.

Regulations and compliance directives are evolving at a rapid rate as we move towards a competitive electricity market targeted for launch in April 2026. While the momentum is very encouraging, it requires extensive efforts from all industry participants to keep pace. ⊙

New draft regulations seeks to reinforce SA's CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

The publication of South Africa's Draft Construction Regulations 2025 represents more than a routine regulatory update; it signals a fundamental shift in how our industry approaches safety, accountability and professional responsibility. For construction professionals, clients and developers, understanding these changes is essential for survival and success in an evolving landscape where the stakes have never been higher.

With construction accounting for 40% of work-related fatalities in industrialised nations despite employing only 6% to 10% of the workforce, the proposed regulations respond to an urgent need for systemic change. "When construction accounts for four out of every 10 workplace deaths while employing less than one in 10 workers, we have a moral and business imperative to transform our safety culture fundamentally," says Craig Laskey, Group SHEQ Manager for GVK-Siya Zama Construction.

Construction creates jobs, stimulates investment and builds infrastructure that benefits future generations. Effective regulation ensures public safety, consumer protection and industry sustainability. Like the buildings we construct, our industry must rest on a firm foundation of integrity and professionalism.

Recent events have underscored this need for reform. The tragic George building collapse in 2024 was one of the most devastating structural failures in recent memory and a stark reminder of the consequences when oversight, competency and accountability are compromised. As investigations and lessons continue to unfold, the message is clear: complacency is not an option.

A new era of accountability

The draft regulations usher in a new era of accountability. Their most significant departure from the 2014 Regulations lies in the expanded web of responsibility. Clients can no longer remain passive project sponsors.

"The new regulations make it clear: if you commission a building, you're accountable for ensuring safety is embedded from day one. This isn't about pointing fingers; it's about creating shared ownership of outcomes," explains Gareth Robb, GVK-Siya Zama's contracts Director in the Western Cape.

Under the proposed framework, clients must prepare documented design risk assessments before construction begins, develop comprehensive health and safety specifications and ensure designers integrate these

Left: ***Craig Laskey, Group SHEQ Manager for GVK-Siya Zama Construction.*** *Right:* ***Gareth Robb, GVK-Siya Zama's Contracts Director in the Western Cape.***

considerations from inception. Safety is now embedded at the project's conceptual stage.

The entire construction value chain stands to benefit. For contractors, the introduction of Construction Health and Safety Managers as statutory appointments on complex projects elevates safety from a compliance checkbox to a strategic imperative. "By creating statutory roles for Construction Health and Safety Managers, we're professionalising safety management. These individuals will have the authority and professional standing to stop unsafe work before someone gets hurt or killed," says Laskey.

Principal contractors must actively coordinate cooperation between multiple contractors on site. Accountability cannot be diluted through subcontracting. Dual-signature requirements eliminate ambiguity about professional responsibility when critical decisions are made.

Designers face heightened scrutiny. Where soil stability remains uncertain during excavation work, both the competent person and the engineer or technologist must sign off jointly. These dual-signature requirements eliminate ambiguity about professional responsibility when critical decisions are made.

Contractors must review risk assessments whenever design changes alter the risk profile, when incidents occur, or at minimum annually. Risk assessment documents must be accessible to employees, trade union representatives and health and safety committees – not just inspectors and clients.

The shift from paper-based to electronic health and safety files reflects practical modernisation, but the substance matters more than the format. These files must capture the complete project lifecycle, creating an institutional memory that informs future maintenance and prevents disasters during a structure's operational life.

Building capacity, not just structures

Perhaps the most forward-thinking aspect of the 2025 framework is its emphasis on professionalism and skills development. The introduction of Construction Health and Safety Officers and Managers as distinct roles – both requiring registration with statutory bodies approved by the Chief Inspector – establishes clear career pathways in construction safety management. By mandating professional registration, the new regulations seek to enhance standards, enable mentorship and build a generation of safety leaders who can elevate industry practice.

Significantly, the regulations' attention to ergonomics – optimising human well-being and system performance – is a recognition that construction workers' long-term health matters. With 30% of construction workers suffering musculoskeletal disorders, this acknowledges that sustainable construction requires sustainable work practices.

Sustainability beyond compliance

While primarily focused on occupational health and safety, the 2025 regulations intersect with environmental responsibility. The demolition provisions requiring compliance with Asbestos Abatement and Lead Regulations demonstrate integrated thinking. The removal of Approved Inspection Authorities streamlines oversight but places greater onus on contractors to self-regulate effectively.

Building for the future

The transition period will test our industry, but any discomfort will become benefit in the long term. "Those who embrace this as an opportunity to build better systems and earn client trust will emerge as industry leaders. The question isn't whether you can afford to comply; it's whether you can afford not to," adds Laskey.

Smaller contractors may struggle with the administrative burden of enhanced documentation. Project costs will increase as safety infrastructure and professional appointments become non-negotiable. However, these short-term challenges will create long-term competitive advantages. Companies embracing the new framework will differentiate themselves as professional, credible partners.

Clients increasingly recognise that the cheapest tender often carries hidden costs: delays, rework, accidents and reputational damage. The 2025 regulations create a level playing field where cutting corners on safety no longer offers a competitive edge.

Bold action required

The Draft Construction Regulations 2025 are by no means final. The industry must engage constructively in the public comment process. But the direction is clear: over the next five years, with collective commitment, we can build a better sector. Companies that treat this transition as a mere compliance exercise will struggle. Those who recognise it as a catalyst for operational excellence, professional development and sustainable growth will lead South Africa's construction industry into a safer, more credible future. ⊙

HEALTH COVER FOR THE UNCOVERED WORKFORCE

Many South African employees, particularly those in lower income brackets, are excluded from benefits like critical illness cover and disability insurance offered through company provident funds.

By Reo Botes, Managing Executive at Essential Employee Benefits

Eligibility rules and minimum contribution levels make them inaccessible, and workers who do not qualify for these packages are left vulnerable. While the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA) offers basic protection for work-related incidents, it does not cover health risks that occur outside of working hours. Without medical aid, these workers face long queues or delayed treatment at under-resourced public facilities. This is where health insurance becomes essential. While it is not a substitute for formal risk benefits, it offers a vital first layer of protection with access to primary healthcare that can help prevent many health issues from turning into complicated or chronic conditions.

Why traditional risk benefits fall short

Provident funds and group risk schemes are simply not designed for every income level. Many schemes require mandatory employee contributions, and even modest percentage-based contributions can be unaffordable for workers at the bottom end of the income spectrum. In addition to this, eligibility criteria, minimum premium requirements, and employer-specific contribution structures mean that many lower-income employees simply do not qualify or cannot realistically participate in these benefits.

In addition, the risk benefits associated with provident funds, including life cover, dread disease and disability, claims are only instituted after something goes wrong. They over no form of preventative care to assist employees to stay healthy and productive at work.

Health insurance, on the other hand, plays a preventative role by covering day-to-day medical expenses at private healthcare facilities. It enables workers to manage chronic conditions like high blood pressure or diabetes before they escalate into hospital admissions or critical illness. Health insurance generally covers GP visits, acute medication, and hospitalisation for listed conditions. This in turn helps to prevent the very events that traditional risk benefits are meant to respond to.

"Health insurance, on the other hand, plays a preventative role by covering day-to-day medical expenses at private healthcare facilities."

Reo Botes, Managing Executive at Essential Employee Benefits.

Rethinking employee benefits

Employees who do not qualify for formal risk cover often also face a lack of preventative care. This makes them more vulnerable to illness or injury, while at the same time less likely to get the treatment they need to recover and return to work. Employers can help to address this challenge by offering affordable health insurance plans that are accessible to lower-income staff. Even entry-level products can provide day-to-day healthcare access and limited hospital cover.

Employee benefits need to evolve to become more affordable, inclusive, and preventative. For workers who do not earn enough to participate in policies such as provident funds and medical aid schemes, health insurance can provide critical access to care. For employers, it is a tangible way to support employee well-being and wellness, while reducing absenteeism, which is a mutually beneficial result.

Larissa Soobrayan, Consultant Visual Communication, Sustainability at Zutari.

THE STRATEGIC POWER OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION IN ENGINEERING

Clear communication has become just as important as technical excellence in today's engineering and technical sectors. While strong engineering foundations remain essential, visual communication now plays a central role in transforming raw data and complex processes into compelling, accessible narratives. ***By Larissa Soobrayan, Consultant Visual Communication, Sustainability at Zutari***

As projects grow in scale and as multidisciplinary collaboration becomes standard, visuals help people interpret information, stay aligned, and make confident decisions. Ultimately, good visual communication is not just about design; it's about assisting people to connect.

Turning complexity into clarity

Visual communicators translate dense technical content into clear, structured visual stories. Engineering involves specialised terminology, extensive data and layered processes that can easily overwhelm clients and stakeholders. Visual elements simplify complexity by breaking information into digestible components that are easy to follow and understand.

They also help engineers and stakeholders speak the same language. By shaping information into visuals that resonate with diverse audiences, designers reduce misinterpretations and strengthen alignment with client objectives and strategic direction. Strong visual communication directly elevates proposals and tenders by making submissions feel organised, intentional and easy to navigate, which gives teams a competitive edge during evaluations.

Within organisations, visual tools strengthen internal collaboration. Process maps, workflow diagrams and training graphics create clarity and consistency, supporting more efficient teamwork across departments.

Driving impact across projects and teams

In multi-disciplinary firms, maintaining visual and brand consistency can be challenging. Designers uphold and refine standards so that every output feels cohesive, professional and aligned with the organisation's identity. Data storytelling is also becoming essential. By transforming raw numbers into clear visual insights, designers enable teams and clients to make informed decisions without relying on dense tables or lengthy documents.

Across project teams that include engineers, planners, architects and environmental specialists, visual communication acts as a unifying force. Master plans, project summaries, and training tools help teams stay aligned and maintain a shared understanding of goals and progress. In client and community engagement, visuals help build transparency and trust by grounding conversations in clear diagrams, maps and presentations.

Visual communicators also bring a human-centred mindset into technical environments. Through design thinking principles that emphasise user focus, clarity and solution-driven reasoning, they streamline systems, improve processes and introduce more effective ways to present and manage information. Ultimately, they ensure quality and consistency across all outputs, making engineering work more understandable, relatable and impactful for the people it is designed to serve. ⊙

MUNICIPALITIES URGED TO REPRIORITISE ROAD MAINTENANCE

The rainy season in most of South Africa has once again exposed the dire state of municipal road networks across the country. From metros to small towns, potholes are multiplying and growing rapidly, disrupting mobility, damaging vehicles, increasing accident risks and fuelling public frustration.

Yet potholes themselves are not the real problem, says The Institute of Municipal Engineering of Southern Africa (IMESA). They are the most visible symptom of road maintenance delays and underinvestment. “The greatest challenge is not filling potholes, but convincing decision makers that the sound operation and maintenance of existing assets should be prioritised over investment in new infrastructure.”

The South African road network of over 750 000 km is the tenth longest in the world. Municipalities manage over 256 000 km of this network, and an estimated 131 000 km is unproclaimed. The road replacement cost is estimated at R2-trillion. Given the extent of the network to be managed, it is critical for municipalities to prioritise road maintenance. IMESA warns that neglect will result in the ongoing deterioration of assets and a huge knock to the economy that will be compounded with the inflated costs of reconstruction over time.

Citing the findings of an important research paper that was shared with the more than 700 engineers and municipal officials who attended the 2025 IMESA Conference, the institute states that delaying road maintenance is a false economy. The longer such maintenance is left undone, the higher the eventual cost to restore the road to an acceptable condition. The paper’s authors, Ashiel Rampersad, Melusi Nkosi, Obey Manganyi and Jabulani Vincent Mashinini from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research’s (CSIR’s) Smart Mobility cluster, set out to understand the readiness of municipalities to manage an ageing local road network, given their internal and external challenges.

Some of their findings were concerning, but IMESA notes that recognising the issues and planning the way forward is the first step towards improving service delivery. The authors found that 59% of municipalities are unaware of their road network conditions, primarily due to missing assessment systems. A limited number of municipalities have appropriate systems and policies in place to manage their road network, and the consequences of the widespread underfunding of road condition maintenance are seldom assessed by roads authorities.

The writers reviewed 41 municipal Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) to understand how their road assets are prioritised. They noted that local governments should be able to leverage their existing knowledge, skills and resources to meet their goals effectively. Achieving this requires stronger institutional capacity to manage operations and service delivery. However,

most municipalities currently lack the capability to consistently produce reliable and transparent performance reports, highlighting significant institutional weaknesses. Less than half of municipalities have road asset management, infrastructure or transport plans.

Municipalities, on average, spend more on newly constructed roads as opposed to maintenance of existing roads, Smith et al. found. They noted that this trend highlights the widespread underinvestment in infrastructure prioritisation.

A concept framework for road infrastructure management developed by the writers was shared with IMESA Conference attendees. As potholes continue to rile road users and test municipalities around the country, IMESA urges municipal engineers to use this powerful tool at their disposal. “The shortage of skills is also recognised as a major threat to local roads infrastructure management, so the education, knowledge sharing and professional development offered by IMESA is vital. Since 1961, the institute has been committed to the pursuit of excellence in all facets of infrastructure, offering a platform for the exchange of ideas and viewpoints on all aspects of municipal engineering with the aim of expanding the knowledge and best practices in all local government municipalities. All municipal engineers are invited to be part of this community of pioneers, professionals and enthusiasts united by a singular purpose: to reshape the landscape of infrastructure engineering.”

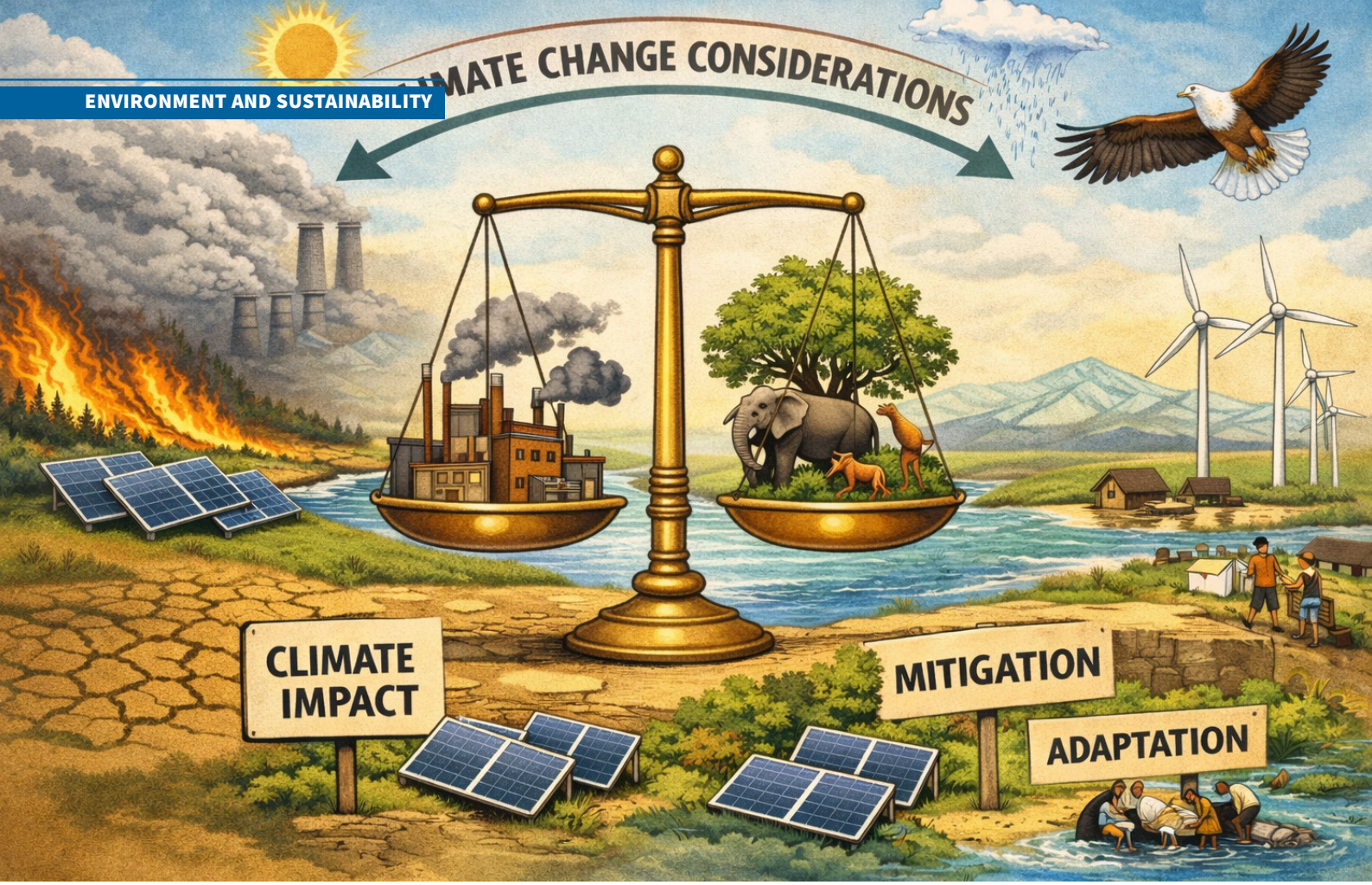
Municipalities and residents are also urged to reframe performance criteria for road maintenance. “Rather than counting the number of potholes fixed, we should instead consider how many kilometres are under preventative maintenance programmes. Preventative and proactive maintenance are more beneficial to the municipality and ultimately to ratepayers and their purses than reactive repairs like potholes fixing.”

IMESA cautions citizens, communities and businesses who might be tempted to fix potholes themselves that this carries serious legal, safety and infrastructure risks. Public roads are municipal assets. Any unauthorised work on them constitutes interference with public infrastructure and exposes individuals or community groups to legal liability. If an accident occurs as a result of an informal repair, the person or group that carried out the work may be held personally liable, even if the intention was to improve safety. In addition, unauthorised repairs can void municipal insurance cover and complicate claims against the municipality.

Potholes are rarely surface-only defects. In many cases, failure extends into the base or sub-base layers due to water ingress and poor drainage. Without proper assessment and preparation, informal repairs often trap moisture beneath the surface; use the incorrect materials; lack proper compaction and fail within days or weeks, IMESA says.

The right ways for communities to help include reporting potholes through official channels and working through City Improvement Districts (CIDs) or recognised community structures that have entered into Memorandums of Agreement (MoAs) with municipalities. These models protect public safety, preserve legal clarity and ensure that repairs contribute to long-term asset health.

“If municipalities, engineers and communities can align around a shared goal of preserving road assets rather than merely reacting to failures, South Africa can move from a cycle of pothole crises to a culture of proactive infrastructure management,” IMESA concludes. ⊙



WHEN JUDICIAL PRECEDENT OUTPACES REGULATORY CLARITY

South African environmental law is undergoing a decisive shift in how climate change considerations are integrated into environmental authorisation (EA) decision-making. ***By Garyn Rapson, Partner & Gaura Moodley, Trainee Attorney at Webber Wentzel***

Courts are increasingly recognising climate change as a material consideration within the "need and desirability" assessment required under the National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998 (NEMA), particularly regarding fossil-fuel developments. This judicial path coincides with the publication of the Draft National Guideline for the Consideration of Climate Change Implications in Applications for Environmental Authorisations in terms of section 24J of NEMA on 24 October 2025 (Draft National Guideline). Once finalised, the Draft National Guideline will be a mandatory consideration for competent authorities when determining EA applications, alongside other relevant factors contemplated in section 24O of NEMA.

Two recent superior court judgments, *Green Connection NPC and Another v Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment and Others (5676/2024) [2025] ZAWCHC 349 (Green Connection)* and *South Durban Community Environmental Alliance and Another v Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment and Others (479/2023) [2025] ZASCA 134 (SDCEA),* confirm that inadequate climate change impact assessments can render EA decisions unlawful. At the same time, the Supreme Court of Appeal's decision to grant leave to appeal in *Green Connection*, specifically on whether climate change impact assessment, including Scope 3 emissions, is required at the exploration phase or only at the production phase, introduces significant legal uncertainty for the upstream petroleum sector. Applicants, competent authorities and company boards must therefore navigate a developing regulatory landscape, where judicial doctrine is advancing more rapidly than settled policy and statutory clarity.

The current regulatory framework

Section 24O of NEMA, read with the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014, requires an EA applicant to motivate the "need and desirability" of a proposed development. This assessment is rooted in the principle of sustainable development, balancing present socio-economic needs with the rights of future generations. The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment's Guideline on Need and Desirability, 2017 expressly directs applicants to consider South Africa's climate change commitments as part of this motivation.

Importantly, section 24O of NEMA requires competent authorities to consider all relevant factors, including applicable guidelines published under NEMA, departmental policies, environmental management instruments, and any other information relevant to the application. Climate change considerations are therefore mandatory, but they are not determinative in isolation and must be weighed against other relevant factors such as economic development, energy security and the protection of existing rights.

The constitutional and administrative-law foundation for this approach is well established. In *Fuel Retailers Association of Southern*

Africa v Director-General Environmental Management 2007 (6) SA 4 (CC) the Constitutional Court held that a failure to consider a relevant environmental impact renders an administrative decision reviewable. This principle was further developed in *Earthlife Africa Johannesburg v Minister of Environmental Affairs and Others [2017] ZAGPPHC 58*, where the court confirmed, in relation to the proposed Thabametsi coal-fired power station, that a formal expert climate change impact assessment constitutes the clearest evidence that climate impacts were properly considered. In *Sustaining the Wild Coast NPC and Others v Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy and Others [2022] ZAECMKHC 55*, the court extended this reasoning to fossil-fuel projects, emphasising that climate change impact assessments must consider the full lifecycle of the activity culminating in production and combustion, thereby recognising exploration and production as interconnected stages of a single process.

Green Connection and unresolved questions of scope and timing

In *Green Connection*, environmental organisations successfully reviewed the decision to grant an EA to TotalEnergies EP South Africa for offshore oil and gas exploration. The Western Cape High Court found that the environmental impact report was deficient because it failed to quantify greenhouse gas (GHG) and fugitive emissions from potential gas combustion, did not consider renewable energy alternatives, and did not adequately explain mitigation measures. The Court rejected the argument that climate change assessment could be deferred until the production phase, finding instead that exploration and production formed part of a continuum requiring meaningful climate consideration at the exploration stage.

However, the Supreme Court of Appeal has granted leave to appeal on this precise issue. As a result, guidance from superior courts on whether climate change impact assessments, including Scope 3 emissions, are required at the exploration phase or only once production becomes reasonably foreseeable is still yet to be determined. This uncertainty has significant implications for petroleum rights holders, particularly regarding whether separate assessments are required at each regulatory stage or whether a single, comprehensive assessment may suffice. The appropriate temporal and evidential scope of Scope 3 emissions quantification remain unresolved where commercial viability and downstream end-use are speculative. The precedent that may come out of the Supreme Court of Appeal could have unexpected consequences for other extractive industries.

SDCEA on mandatory considerations of renewable energy alternatives

In SDCEA, the Supreme Court of Appeal considered an EA granted to Eskom for a proposed 3 000 MW gas-to-power plant. The applicants contended that the environmental assessment failed, amongst other arguments, to adequately consider GHG emissions and renewable energy alternatives. Eskom and the State argued that the decision was justified by the Integrated Resource Plan 2019 (IRP) and national energy security imperatives. The Supreme Court of Appeal rejected this position, holding that while the IRP is a relevant policy framework, it cannot override NEMA's mandatory requirements to assess climate change impacts and reasonable alternatives, including the "no-go" option. The judgment underscores that compliance with energy policy is insufficient on its own and that climate change considerations must be substantively engaged in every EA decision.

Scope 3 emissions and proportionality

The requirement to assess Scope 3 downstream combustion emissions remains the most contested aspect of climate change impact assessment. The *United Kingdom Supreme Court's decision in R (on the application of Finch) v Surrey County Council [2024] UKSC 20 (Finch)* held that Scope 3 emissions must be assessed when they are an inevitable consequence of the development. However, Finch concerned a production project where combustion of the extracted oil was a certainty. This contrasts sharply with reconnaissance permits and exploration rights where discovery, commercial viability and end-use are uncertain.

At the early exploration stage, the quantum of potential reserves is unknown, downstream uses may include non-combustion applications, and multiple regulatory approvals separate exploration from any future production. These uncertainties render Scope 3 quantification at exploration inherently speculative and potentially unreliable, with projected emissions varying widely. A proportional, tiered assessment regime is therefore necessary to align administrative burden with technical certainty, recognising that reconnaissance and early exploration activities typically involve limited direct emissions and should not require speculative Scope 3 quantification without confirmed discovery.

Protection of existing rights and regulatory sequencing

The Draft National Guideline requires consideration of climate-related financial risks, including transition risks and stranded assets. Without clear limits, this creates a risk that existing or pending exploration and production rights granted under the MPRDA may be indirectly constrained through the EA process. Climate considerations must be balanced against constitutional imperatives, including development, energy security and job creation.

Uncertainty is compounded by the Climate Change Act 22 of 2024. Sections 26 and 27, which establish the framework for listed GHGs, listed activities and carbon budget determinations, are not yet in operation. For petroleum operators with long-term investment horizons, uncertainty regarding future carbon budget allocations and the potential for retrospective application creates material investment risk that may deter foreign direct investment and undermine otherwise viable projects.

Directors' duties and climate risk

These developments have important corporate governance implications. Directors are increasingly expected to manage climate-related risks as part of their duties under section 76(3) of the Companies Act 71 of 2008. Climate change presents foreseeable financial and regulatory risks, and failure to ensure that specialist assessments adequately address those risks may expose boards to claims of negligence. Boards considering fossil-fuel projects must therefore ensure that climate risks, mitigation measures and renewable alternatives are properly interrogated as part of the "need and desirability" assessment.

The path forward

Green Connection and SDCEA have added to the growing bank of legal precedent that climate change impact assessments are a core aspect of EA decision-making. Courts expect meaningful engagement with GHG emissions, renewable alternatives and long-term sustainability, and policy compliance alone will not suffice. Once finalised, the Draft National Guideline will play a critical role in providing regulatory certainty by embedding proportionality and methodological clarity into climate assessments.

A differentiated approach should recognise that reconnaissance permits and non-invasive exploration warrant streamlined screening focused on Scope 1 and 2 emissions, invasive exploration requires focused Scope 1–2 assessment with Scope 3 analysis only once commercial discovery is reasonably foreseeable, and that production and development applications justify comprehensive Scope 3 quantification and climate scenario analysis. ⊙

ABLAND PROPERTY DEVELOPERS BREAKS NEW GROUND

The premium-grade, 4-Star green-rated office development will meet growing demand for flexible, high-spec office space in key business nodes.

Abland Property Developers has broken new ground on Canal Plaza, a new premium-grade office development in Cape Town's Century City, in partnership with Gutsche Investment (GIMCO), the Moolman Group and Blue Dawn Capital in response to rising demand for high-quality workspace in well-connected business hubs.

Already attracting firm interest from blue chip tenants, Canal Plaza's gross lettable area of 10 333 m² across four floors is designed to meet the needs of companies seeking modern offices in a location that supports both business and employee wellbeing. Set for occupation in May 2027, it is one of the last developments to overlook the serene Intaka Island Nature Reserve.

"Century City's modern infrastructure, green spaces and mixed-use appeal offer strong value for corporates. As more businesses return to the office or adopt hybrid models, they are looking for environments that support productivity, talent retention and workplace culture, and Canal Plaza responds to this business need", says Grant Silverman, Director at Abland Property Developers.

Abland is a leading real estate development company specialising in premium office, retail, industrial, residential and motor developments that attract both local and international Tenants. In Cape Town, Abland's office developments include landmark projects such as The Rubik and 35 Lower Long, two of the city's most sought-after premium-grade buildings.

Located just off the N1, Canal Plaza is well-positioned to capitalise on a growing trend.

The latest market data shows that P-grade offices in key nodes like Century City are seeing strong demand and healthy uptake of new developments.

This is the fifth Century City office asset investment for GIMCO, who are known for their quality properties and signature professional property services. GIMCO's diversified portfolio of retail, office and industrial properties are focused in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth.

Vivienne Gutsche of GIMCO says the launch of Canal Plaza comes at the right time to meet growing demand for premium, sustainable office space in Cape Town.

The P-grade, 4-Star Green Rated development will offer backup power and water, high-speed fibre and access to public transport via a nearby MyCiTi bus stop. Canal Plaza will offer competitive rentals, with tenants receiving fit-out allowances on top of white box specifications that include lay-in ceilings, zoned air-conditioning, lighting and smoke detection.

"With limited land and a constrained supply of prime office space, Canal Plaza is well-positioned to appeal to tenants seeking green-rated offices in an exceptionally strong business node," she says.

The new development underway at 1 Heron Place overlooks the Intaka Island Nature Reserve and is within walking distance of Canal Walk Shopping Centre, offering both tranquillity and convenience. ⊙

ABOUT ABLAND PROPERTY DEVELOPERS

Abland Property Developers continues to shape the South African landscape for the better, with prestigious mixed-use precincts and premium office, retail, industrial and motor spaces. As a result of its commitment to creating world-class property developments, Abland's quality spaces have attracted top local and international businesses for over 30 years. With an innovative approach to property development, Abland considers every detail from sustainable building practices, transport links, connectivity, state-of-the-art security, accessibility, green surroundings and improved work performance to be able to create spaces in which South Africans can break new ground.

GROWTHPOINT BREAKS GROUND ON TECOMA PARK, CORNUBIA

Growthpoint Properties has commenced construction of its new 36 830 m² multi-tenanted logistics park, Tecoma Park, in the rapidly emerging Cornubia Town economic hub in KwaZulu-Natal.

The major R392-million development reinforces Growthpoint's continued investment in the logistics sector and reflects its disciplined capital allocation strategy, with a clear preference for investment in the country's stronger-performing coastal metros.

Growthpoint's KwaZulu-Natal property portfolio is one of the largest and most diversified in the region. Valued at R8.6-billion, it spans 560 000 m² of gross lettable area across more than 50 logistics, office, retail and healthcare assets.

Estienne de Klerk, SA CEO of Growthpoint Properties, says: "KwaZulu-Natal remains a core investment region for Growthpoint. Our portfolio in the province consistently delivers exceptionally high occupancy levels, underpinned by sustained tenant demand across all sectors, which gives us the confidence to keep deploying capital in the province in line with our strategy."

Growthpoint's domestic strategy is to increase portfolio weighting towards sectors and regions expected to deliver better growth over the longer term. For sectors, it is specifically targeting logistics and retail property and, when it comes to regions, it is focusing on its portfolios in key coastal metros, including in KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape.

Including Tecoma Park, Growthpoint is currently investing around R1,5-billion in various developments and value-add redevelopment projects in the region, which are already underway or will commence soon. This includes the R800-million purpose-built student accommodation development adjacent to the Howard College Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Berea.

Greg Worst, Growthpoint's KwaZulu-Natal regional head, says: "KwaZulu-Natal continues to demonstrate robust property fundamentals, particularly in key nodes offering strong connectivity and long-term growth potential. Demand is driven by the ports, airport and logistics infrastructure, as well as growing consumer markets. From a regional perspective, we continue to see strong tenant demand for well-located, modern space."

Scheduled for completion in 2027, Tecoma Park will deliver premium A-grade logistics space strategically positioned within Cornubia Town, next to Cornubia Mall and just 12 km from King Shaka International Airport and 21 km from Durban Harbour. The location offers direct access to major arterial routes, surrounding industrial precincts and key transport infrastructure, enabling fast and reliable movement of goods across the region and beyond.

Jason Reeves, Growthpoint's head of asset management for logistics and industrial property, says: "The Tecoma Park development responds directly to escalating demand for modern logistics and warehousing facilities in KwaZulu-Natal, amid a well-documented shortage of suitably sized, high-specification units. It is set to become a flagship industrial asset in our portfolio, aligned with our strategy of investing in modern, well-located logistics properties."

The development will comprise eight flexible units ranging in size from 2 790 m² to 5 264 m² with the ability to combine adjoining units creating larger units up to 10 000 m² in response to tenant needs and to accommodate a broad range of logistics and warehousing users. Featuring contemporary industrial architecture suited to high-performance operations, the units will offer generous internal heights and efficient loading configurations with both dock leveller and on grade access.

Each unit will include an integrated office component, modern façade treatments, cantilevered canopies over loading doors and high-quality internal finishes. The park's masterplan ensures clear separation between industrial operations, vehicle movement and office activity, maximising efficiency and on-site safety. Dedicated truck circulation routes, optimised yard depths and well-planned staff and visitor access points will support smooth traffic flow across the precinct.

As with all Growthpoint's developments, sustainability is embedded in the design. Solar PV will be installed across the roofs of the units and elegantly screened. Green features include energy-efficient lighting systems, hot-water heat pumps and building forms that maximise natural light to reduce energy consumption. The park will be set within landscaped green spaces that enhance the overall working environment.

As a future-focused logistics destination, Tecoma Park will provide modern, efficient and environmentally responsible facilities tailored to the evolving needs of next-generation occupiers.

"This development reflects our confidence in logistics assets that are well-located, future-ready and demand-led, and our conviction in KwaZulu-Natal's property fundamentals," concludes De Klerk. ⊙

Palabora Mining Company (PMC) - controlled blasting and toppling of 107 m compromised concrete converter stack.

SPECIALISED TURNKEY SITE SOLUTIONS — WHERE SAFETY, PRECISION AND PERFORMANCE COME FIRST

Established in 2015 and based in Johannesburg, Draco Group has rapidly positioned itself as one of South Africa's leading turnkey demolition, earthworks, rehabilitation and asbestos abatement contractors. Built on a foundation of excellence, safety and reliability, the company delivers integrated solutions that span the full lifecycle of site preparation and environmental restoration.

With more than 20 years of collective industry experience within its leadership and technical teams, Draco Group offers clients a comprehensive, all-encompassing service portfolio. From highly complex demolition projects to precision-driven earthworks and specialised hazardous waste management, the company's focus remains constant: to deliver sustainable, cost-effective solutions tailored to each project's unique requirements.

As a Level 1 B-BBEE contributor and a proud member of the Green Building Council, Draco Group is committed not only to operational excellence but also to environmental stewardship and community upliftment. Its Green Star affiliation underscores its dedication to preserving and developing a better environment for both people and the planet.

Demolition: precision, innovation and responsibility

Draco Group has established a strong reputation for introducing modern, innovative demolition techniques supported by a comprehensive fleet of advanced machinery and equipment. Operated by highly trained and experienced professionals, this fleet enables the company to execute projects efficiently, safely and within budget.

The company provides a full spectrum of demolition services, including mechanical demolitions, controlled implosions, soft strip-outs, steel structure dismantling and partial demolitions. We specialise in heavy structural removal, including reinforced concrete slabs, foundations and footings, concrete and cast-iron

lancing, and the precision cutting and removal of structural steel and reinforcement.

Draco Group manages the entire process, from applying for permits and isolating utilities to pest control surveys, site clearing and rubble removal. Its investment in recycling plant and equipment reflects a proactive approach to minimising environmental impact. On-site crushing of base course material for reuse in roads and backfill – complete with compaction certification – forms part of its circular economy strategy. The reclamation of steel further adds value to clients, who receive payment per ton recovered.

Earthworks: accuracy meets efficiency

Draco Group's earthworks division is driven by a team of skilled surveyors, engineers and designers dedicated to delivering thorough and cost-effective solutions. Using state-of-the-art technology, the company undertakes projects with meticulous attention to safety, precision and waste minimisation.

The earthworks portfolio includes general and complex earthworks, deep bulk basement excavation, mass excavation and tight-access excavation. Services also cover structural, topsoil, rock, channel, drainage, roadway and bridge excavation, as well as grading, stripping, dredging and underground excavation.

Transportation and disposal of excavated materials are handled with strict environmental compliance, while fill and backfill operations support road, highway and site development projects. Whether managing muck excavation with excess water or unclassified excavation involving mixed material types, Draco Group ensures reliable, efficient execution across diverse project conditions.

Rehabilitation: restoring land, rebuilding ecosystems

Mine rehabilitation – also known as mine reclamation – is a critical component of Draco Group's offering. The company plays a vital role in restoring mined or disturbed land to a natural or economically viable state, mitigating environmental impacts and promoting biodiversity.

Services include assessment and planning, contamination management, landform reconstruction and revegetation. The team also manages water systems, removes redundant structures and conducts environmental investigations. Continuous monitoring, maintenance and regulatory compliance form an integral part of every rehabilitation project.

By combining technical expertise with environmental sensitivity, Draco Group helps transform degraded landscapes into stable, productive environments that benefit surrounding communities and ecosystems.

Asbestos removal: certified hazardous waste specialists

As a Department of Employment & Labour approved Type 2 and 3 Asbestos Contractor in terms of the Asbestos Abatement Regulation 2020, Draco Group is fully certified to handle complex asbestos removal projects.

The company's trained specialists assess asbestos presence, develop abatement plans and safely remove and dispose of asbestos-containing materials in strict accordance with

Earthworks in progress at Highlands North – all demolition rubble was crushed to G5 specification and repurposed as backfill, supporting waste reduction and sustainable site rehabilitation.

regulations and best practice guidelines. Services include asbestos inventory, surveys and assessments, asbestos management plan development, containment setup, encapsulation, removal, decontamination, disposal and air monitoring.

By adhering to stringent safety protocols, Draco Group minimises the risk of exposure to hazardous fibres, protecting both workers and the broader community.

Commitment to excellence

From high-profile projects such as the iconic Munitoria building to complex infrastructure and industrial assignments, Draco Group continues to demonstrate its ability to meet demanding deadlines within budget and with uncompromising quality.

Ultimately, Draco Group measures its success by client satisfaction. Through innovation, environmental responsibility and technical expertise, the company delivers turnkey building solutions with a difference - shaping safer sites, stronger foundations and a more sustainable future for South Africa. ⊙

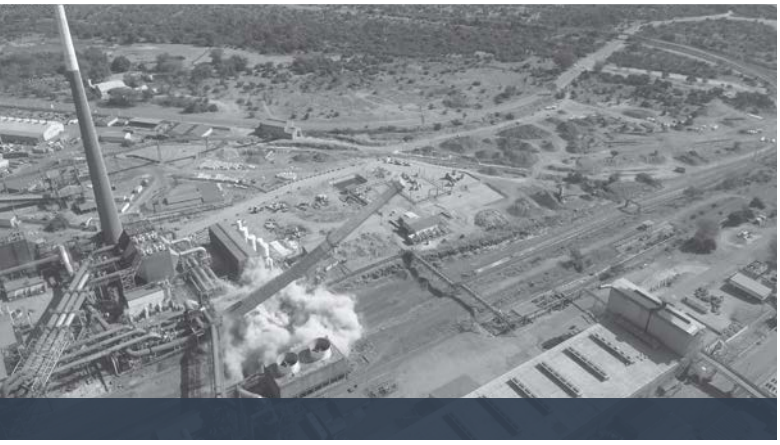
Rehabilitation & demolition of Beatrix 2 shaft & outbuildings for Sibanye Stillwater.

Munitorial building implosion 2013 – another iconic landmark safely and expertly demolished by Draco Group — shaping the future while respecting history.

TURNKEY SOLUTIONS WITH A DIFFERENCE.

MUNITORIAL BUILDING IMPLOSION 2013 –
Another iconic landmark safely and expertly demolished by Draco Group — shaping the future while respecting history.

DEMOLITION
From implosions, mechanical demolitions & soft strip-outs



REHABILITATION
Rehabilitation of mines

ASBESTOS ABATEMENT
Cost effective hazardous waste services

EARTHWORKS
Accurate and cost effective earthwork services

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GVK-Siya Zama's CFO, John de Sousa.

AGILITY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND ANCHORED GROWTH

In an industry defined by cyclical pressure, rising input costs and persistent skills shortages, financial discipline and operational agility have become decisive differentiators. For GVK-Siya Zama (GVK), a national construction group with more than 1 000 permanent employees across South Africa, longevity has not been accidental. It has been engineered. ***Wilhelm du Plessis*** *spoke to CFO John de Sousa who unpacks how the company structures funding, manages compliance, navigates public-sector payment cycles and balances empowerment objectives with commercial discipline.*

Strategic anchors and self-funded discipline

One of GVK's flagship developments is Quay 7 at the V&A Waterfront - a strategically located project with long-term commercial implications.

"GVK views the V&A as a strategically aligned client," De Sousa explains. "Having large anchor projects over multiple years is essential for our business model."

Rather than relying on external funding structures for each development, GVK adopts a self-funded model supported by rigorous internal controls. "All our projects are self-funded and carefully managed through our project lifecycle strategy," he says. "That includes detailed programmes, cash flow forecasts and forward workload projections."

Risk management is embedded rather than reactive. "Risk is managed through the same processes we follow on all our projects and a careful hands-on approach by the management team, together with consulting teams, ensures that risk is managed carefully."

The emphasis on lifecycle visibility - from tender stage through to completion - reflects a broader philosophy: margins are protected not by speculation, but by disciplined oversight.

Governance under global scrutiny

High-profile developments such as the Amazon corporate office brought global visibility and heightened governance expectations.

De Sousa points to sustained investment in modern systems and skills. "Our continuous investment in modernisation and in systems that stand up to international client scrutiny and our strategy as a forward-thinking contractor is important," he notes.

Equally critical is procedural adherence. "From a contractual perspective we follow rigorous policies and procedures to ensure that we adhere to financial controls and governance frameworks within our environment and theirs. It's critical."

Over time, GVK has prioritised digitisation, system integration and staff training to ensure project lifecycle management is both transparent and accountable. "We've continuously modernised our systems and invested in our staff to manage the full lifecycle effectively." In an environment where reputational risk can escalate quickly, governance discipline is non-negotiable.

Regional retail and socioeconomic sensitivity

Regional developments such as Soshanguve Mall carry unique socioeconomic dynamics. Commercial risk in these contexts extends beyond spreadsheets.

"Projects like this depend largely on successful and clear collaboration, problem solving and reciprocity between ourselves and the client," says De Sousa. "You need to be focused on outcomes, and the developer, contractor and consulting teams must align those outcomes."

Community engagement also plays a decisive role. "We were fortunate that the client was intrinsically involved in ensuring collaboration and communication with the community at large. That's what led to the success of a project of this nature in the area that it was in." For GVK, commercial sustainability is inseparable from stakeholder alignment and, ultimately, client satisfaction.

Navigating public sector complexity

Public sector projects - including the award-winning Transnet

The award-winning Transnet HQ re-development had stringent compliance, reporting and fiscal accountability requirements.

HQ re-development - bring stringent compliance, reporting and fiscal accountability requirements.

"In our environment, all projects carry similar risks and expectations," De Sousa explains. "We rely heavily on our business operating systems, which clearly identify project lifecycles as well as project management, contract management, financial and cash management, HSE and quality."

These frameworks are underpinned by defined roadmaps. "If they're followed and adhered to correctly, they ensure we manage all facets of our projects in a regulated manner." However, public sector realities cannot be ignored. Delayed payments remain a persistent challenge across the industry.

"From our perspective, it's imperative that we maintain a good balance between public and private sector projects to manage cash flow," he says. "You can't be too heavily weighted towards one or the other."

While public sector debt is ultimately settled, timing can strain liquidity The key lies in portfolio balance and rigorous forward planning.

Building in remote environments

GVK's footprint extends deep into rural South Africa, including hospital construction projects in remote parts of the former Transkei. These developments present logistical, skills and cost challenges unlike urban commercial builds.

"These projects are probably our biggest challenges," De Sousa admits. "Skill shortages, quality of local contractors, distance from main cities, transport logistics and the long duration of contracts all play a role."

Access roads, seasonal weather patterns and supply chain constraints can complicate delivery. Yet, the greatest variable may be human capital.

"It's important to find individuals who thrive in those circumstances," he says. "Not everybody is cut out for living in remote areas for extended periods at a time."

Matching personality to project environment is therefore part of financial risk management. Productivity and morale directly influence programme adherence, cost control and viable project delivery.

Transparency and ethical procurement

In an industry often scrutinised for governance lapses, ethical procurement and regulatory compliance are under constant watch.

GVK's approach begins at tender stage. "We follow a rigorous tender process with close scrutiny in terms of documentation required," De Sousa explains. "We follow the correct routes, adhere to requirements and submit all documentation accordingly."

While broader systemic issues may exist within the sector, GVK's emphasis remains on procedural compliance within its sphere of control.

High-profile developments such as the Amazon corporate office brought global visibility and heightened governance expectations.

Protecting margins in a volatile market

Rising input costs, energy instability and logistics constraints have placed unprecedented pressure on construction margins.

The response lies in efficiency and accountability. “Systems are important and managing inefficiencies is critical while holding staff accountable and providing incentives contribute meaningfully to final project success.”

GVK’s leadership model reinforces this. “We’re still a close-knit, hands-on management team,” he says. Quarterly regional financial reviews are conducted by owners personally.

The skills crisis

Perhaps the most pressing structural risk facing the sector is the ongoing exodus of skilled professionals. “The greatest risk, in my opinion, is the lack of skills to manage projects,” De Sousa says. “We face a constant challenge with professionals leaving the country. Finding adequate replacements is very difficult.”

International demand - particularly from the Middle East - has intensified competition for engineers, quantity surveyors and project managers. This has had a direct impact on contractors and more so on consultants. The net result for the industry being either poor or delayed information flow.

“We have to continue training younger staff in an attempt to retain skills and upskill existing team members.”

While market cycles and client behaviour fluctuate, the skills deficit poses a more enduring threat to industry sustainability.

Transformation as strategy, not obligation

As a leading black-owned construction group operating in a transformative environment, GVK integrates empowerment into its core strategy.

“I’ve personally spearheaded our transition to black empowerment in a real way,” De Sousa says. “It’s been part of our focus since the dawn of democracy. It’s part of our DNA.”

Rather than viewing empowerment as compliance, GVK embeds it across recruitment, mentorship and advancement structures. “The makeup of our country ensures that empowerment and localisation generally happen quite naturally for us,” he adds. “From hiring trainees and QSs to contracts managers, it’s a constant focus.”

Alignment between financial strategy and transformation objectives strengthens both resilience and sustained relevance.

Entrepreneurial longevity

“Being extremely entrepreneurial and agile,” De Sousa responds without hesitation when asked what has led to GVK’s longevity. “We’re hands-on. We make decisions quickly. We’re personally involved.”

He cautions against distance from the operational coalface. “If you want to sit in a boardroom and sit back, you’re not going to make money. You need to understand what’s happening on the ground and get out there.”

It is a philosophy shaped by experience. Trained in accounting but drawn to broader business dynamics, De Sousa moved from insurance into construction 26 years ago - and stayed.

“I love the industry. I love understanding the business more than just the numbers. The numbers come naturally.”

In a sector where uncertainty is constant, that blend of financial rigour, discipline, and strong adherence to policies, procedures, structure and entrepreneurial instinct may be GVK’s most valuable asset.

As infrastructure budgets tighten and regulatory complexity intensifies, companies that combine disciplined governance with operational agility will likely define the next chapter of South Africa’s construction story. For GVK, the blueprint appears firmly in place. ⊙

Dock Road luxury apartments, V&A Waterfront.

Regional developments such as Soshanguve Mall carry unique socioeconomic dynamics.

COVERING THE WORLD OF CONSTRUCTION

MARCH 2026

CROWN PUBLICATIONS

Construction WORLD

South Africa's BEST CONTRACTORS

CSV USES AFRISAM ROCK IN PROJECT TO CONSERVE BLAAUWBERG'S RIETVLEI

BUILDING CONTRACTORS IN SOUTH AFRICA: NAVIGATING RULES, RISKS AND AN UNEASY RECOVERY

South Africa's construction sector is a patchwork of opportunity and risk - from large engineering firms delivering public infrastructure down to small builders eking out margins on inner-city refurbishments and township housing. Contractors operate in a highly regulated environment, face chronic operational headwinds (skills, cost inflation, power and logistics), and must meet exacting standards to compete for both public and private work. This matters because construction is a bellwether for the broader economy: when contractors struggle, jobs, housing delivery and public infrastructure delivery suffer too.

Who governs contractors - the formal architecture?

At the centre of public-sector procurement and contractor regulation sits the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB). The CIDB's Register of Contractors and its grading system effectively act as a "licence to trade" with government: contractors are graded (1–9) according to track record and available capital, and many public clients will only award work to appropriately graded firms. This grading shapes access to tenders and is a gatekeeper for firms seeking scale in public infrastructure work.

Parallel to the CIDB for the housing sub-sector is the National Home Builders Registration Council (NHBRC), which registers

and inspects home builders and enforces warranty and quality standards for residential projects. Registration with the NHBRC is mandatory for anyone "in the business of building homes", and non-compliance carries criminal penalties — a measure designed to protect homeowners and raise minimum workmanship standards across the industry.

Health and safety is another legal pillar. The Department of Employment and Labour publishes construction regulations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act; the regulations specify duties for clients and contractors, require health-and-safety plans and set out inspection and training expectations on site. These rules are central to contract compliance and risk management for every contractor operating on site.

The landscape for contractors: grading, specialisation and the market squeeze

The CIDB grading structure encourages firms to specialise and grow methodically: low-graded firms typically occupy local building, maintenance and subcontract work, while higher-graded contractors pursue complex civil, engineering or large commercial projects. But climbing the grades requires consistent financial strength, audited track record and often joint ventures - a barrier that can limit the pipeline for emerging or black-owned contractors despite government procurement set-asides and transformation targets.

On the demand side, the market is uneven. Urban nodes (Gauteng, Western Cape) remain the most active, while weaker provincial finances and slow economic growth constrain new public-sector starts elsewhere. Market intelligence reports show pockets of activity - but also highlight how regional variation, subdued GDP growth and constrained municipal balance sheets have kept headline construction activity below potential.

Headline challenges contractors face today

- **Cost inflation and material supply:** Cement, steel and fuel price volatility has squeezed margins. Global supply chain disruptions plus local logistics add lead times and unexpected price escalations that small contractors struggle to absorb.
- **Skills shortage:** Skilled artisans, site managers and project managers are in short supply; the industry faces a generational skills gap in both trade skills and construction management. This increases labour costs and raises quality-control risks on site.
- **Power and infrastructure reliability:** Load-shedding and unreliable municipal services raise direct costs (generators, delays) and indirect risks (damaged materials, disrupted schedules). Sustained outages translate into delayed completions and liquidated damages.
- **Access to finance:** Smaller contractors are particularly exposed: constrained working capital, late payments from clients and stringent lender requirements make cashflow management a daily battle. This situation discourages growth and makes joint ventures or subcontracting a necessity rather than choice.
- **Regulatory burden and compliance:** Meeting CIDB grading criteria, NHBRC registration (for homebuilders), and health-and-safety requirements adds administrative overhead. Non-compliance can exclude firms from tenders or expose them to prosecution or costly remedial work.

How contractors adapt — practical responses

Successful contractors combine compliance with commercial agility. Common strategies include: forming strategic joint ventures to access higher-value projects; investing in training and apprenticeships to build a reliable skills pipeline; adopting prefabrication and tech tools to reduce on-site labour intensity; and improving procurement practices to hedge material risk. Larger firms are increasingly using integrated project delivery models and digital tools to tighten schedules and control margins.

Public policy has tried to respond: the CIDB's grading and procurement controls seek to professionalise the supply chain; the NHBRC raises homebuilding standards; and various sector initiatives promote skills development and SMME participation. Yet implementation gaps and the pace of change mean many contractors still operate in a reactive environment.

The near horizon — cautious optimism, conditional on reform

Market reports point to modest growth opportunities - particularly around infrastructure roll-outs, maintenance backlogs and urban renewal projects - but recovery is fragile and conditional on macro stability, predictable policy and improved municipal capacity to execute projects. Contractors who can manage cashflow, diversify income streams (maintenance, private work), and meet regulatory standards will be better placed to capture opportunities. ⊙

CSV Construction is partnering with AfriSam to upgrade the Bayside Canal outfall system.

CSV USES AFRISAM ROCK IN PROJECT TO CONSERVE BLAAUWBERG'S RIETVLEI

A far-reaching upgrade is underway to an important water canal in Blaauwberg near Cape Town, where contractor CSV Construction is partnering with AfriSam for the large volumes of rock and construction material necessary for the project.

The upgrade to the Bayside Canal outfall system will make an important contribution to the natural environment, and will help reduce the risks and impacts of flooding in this fast-growing area of the Western Cape. The existing canal is the only stormwater outfall culvert for the local catchment area which includes a large portion of fast-developing suburbs such as Tableview, West Beach, Parklands and Sunningdale. According to Alex Pospech, Contracts Manager at CSV Construction, the existing stormwater capacity is insufficient and is compromised by extensive reed growth downstream of the canal outlet.

"The upgrade will have multiple benefits, among which is to safeguard the Rietvlei Wetland Reserve, which is a significant local site for water sport and birdlife," says Pospech. "It will also better accommodate the water flows from high-order storm events and reduce the risk of flooding in this low lying area."

Key elements of the project, which is located on the inland side of the raised R27 roadway known as the West Coast Road, include the upgrade of the existing stormwater canal and the construction of a bypass canal. He highlights that the marshy conditions and the engineering design require unusually large volumes of rock and overburden. For this reason, CSV Construction turned to AfriSam, who was the only construction material specialist in the area with the capacity to deliver.

Stormwater from the Bayside Canal currently flows into reed beds in the northern section of Rietvlei, and has been naturally treated to a large extent. The advantage of these reed beds is they allow suspended solids in the stormwater to settle out, and for excess nutrients to be absorbed by the root systems. The upgraded and formalised stormwater treatment system therefore needs to maintain this natural function while

substantially raising its capacity. It also needs to allow for easier maintenance and periodic clearing of litter.

"The design includes two 140 metres long primary sedimentation ponds which will allow heavier suspended matter to settle out," he says, "while the 460 metre long secondary treatment canal will ensure that finer suspended matter also drops out of suspension as the water passes through."

After passing through the sedimentation ponds, stormwater will flow over a weir into a secondary treatment canal, allowing for the uptake of nutrients and physical filtration of pollutants by the reeds. A new bypass channel of almost 600 metres is also being developed along the eastern boundary of the R27 to bypass the primary and secondary ponds and drain freely directly to Rietvlei when the water level in the Bayside Canal exceeds the weir level of 2,9 m MSL.

CSV Construction was handed the site in November in 2023, and earthmoving machines were busy from January 2024. With construction activity taking place directly in the path of a flowing water course, the project was scheduled around the Cape's rainy season in winter. The bulk of the work has been planned to take place during the dry summer months. Pospech points out that, during the winter months of 2024, there were occasions when the entire seven hectare site was submerged – although an efficient pumping regime allowed work to resume on the higher levels. Temporary berms were also constructed to mitigate the regular surges of water flow that would follow each rainfall.

About 15 000 tonnes of large stones of up to 200 mm in size are being delivered for the gabion baskets.

"In Phase 1 of the project, we cleared reeds and removed sludge, importing pioneer material – or dump rock – from AfriSam to stabilise the access road and gabion areas," explains Pospech. "The gabion baskets, which are mostly 1 metre by 1 metre by 3 metres in size, were then constructed, after which AfriSam also supplied a clayey overburden material of the appropriate plasticity index."

The work involves extensive earthworks, with some 45 000 m^3 being excavated down to depths of 1 to 1,5 metres. Clearing of reed beds has been conducted using long-boom excavators and articulated dump trucks, which stockpiled the material to drain before reloading onto trucks for removal from site.

Earthworks prepare the way for 12 000 m^3 of dump rock for stabilisation – to be covered by around 20 000 m^3 of overburden. About 15 000 tonnes of large stones of up to 200 mm in size are being delivered for the gabion baskets.

The contract is also making use of 3 500 m^3 of G4 material, which is stabilised with cement. According to Ian Trimmel, Territory Sales Manager for AfriSam, the range of material required for the project is sourced from the company's nearby Peninsula quarry.

"Material such as dump rock can add complexity to the supply logistics," says Trimmel. "Not all trucks can accommodate the size and impact of dump rock, for example, and we adjusted our arrangements to ensure that trucks could navigate the quarry to collect certain materials."

As part of AfriSam's commitment to the project, a dedicated gabion stone plant was established. Traditionally, this size of stone is usually hand-picked from dumps. However, the large volumes required by this project meant AfriSam

had to produce and deliver on an industrial scale.

Pospech highlights that the project has generated considerable work for local small businesses, such as the packing of gabion baskets and laying of Reno mattresses – which remain a manual task. CSV Construction also arranged for additional training of subcontractors in these skills. There have been a range of benefits for other local stakeholders too, such as the adjacent soccer club – for whom a protective berm was constructed.

With a second and third phase of the project planned for the 2025/6 and 2026/7 summers respectively, the challenge is to concentrate the effort when rains and water levels do not disrupt construction activity, he reiterates.

"When the dry weather arrives, we have to push activity hard – and this acceleration in construction programme relies on receiving a rapid supply of rock and other material," he says. "We therefore appreciate AfriSam's considerable production capacity, and their efforts to meet our material requirements."

CSV Construction works in close consultation with Lukhozi Consulting Engineers as Employer's Agent responsible for contract administration and construction monitoring for the City of Cape Town, and BVi Consulting Engineers, who are responsible for the design. ⊙

AfriSam is supplying the specialist material from its nearby Peninsula Quarry.

A 460 metre long secondary treatment canal will ensure that finer matter also drops out of suspension as the water passes through.

The design includes two 140 metres long primary sedimentary ponds.

Earthworks have prepared the way for 12 000 m³ of dump rock for stabilisation.

STRUCTURED LEADERSHIP. NATIONAL CAPABILITY. ENDURING PERFORMANCE.

Established in 1999, Ruwacon has grown from a building contractor focusing on repair & maintenance projects into a nationally active construction group operating across civil engineering, general building, plant hire and scaffolding. With more than 26 years of industry experience and an annual turnover remaining above R2-billion, the company has built its reputation on disciplined execution, structured governance and long-term client relationships.

Ruwacon operates across South Africa, including in remote and logistically demanding regions, delivering infrastructure and building projects that support economic growth and community development. Its CIDB 9CE and 9GB classifications confirm its capacity to undertake projects of unlimited value across civil and general building disciplines, but the company's identity extends beyond regulatory grading. At its core, Ruwacon is defined by experienced leadership, operational diversity and a hands-on management culture.

Leadership with construction at its core

Ruwacon was founded by Managing Director Pieter Ruthven, a third-generation building contractor whose practical industry experience continues to shape the company's strategic direction. With extensive exposure to both public and private sector developments, Ruthven has guided Ruwacon's steady expansion while maintaining a disciplined approach to risk, quality and financial control. His background in property development and business management has reinforced a culture that balances operational capability with commercial oversight.

Board Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer Valentine Rantsoareng brings broad executive experience and business acumen to the organisation. As a distinguished business leader with interests across multiple sectors, his oversight strengthens the company's governance framework and long-term strategic positioning.

The executive team further reflects a blend of technical and financial expertise. Financial Director Hansie Rheeder, a chartered accountant with experience at Coopers & Lybrand, contributes strong financial governance and compliance oversight. His background in audit, taxation and forensic accounting reinforces disciplined fiscal management across the group. A firm grip on the company's operational expenditure and financial savvy ensures that Ruwacon is able to remain operational and profitable.

Commercial Director Reeza Seedat, a professionally registered quantity surveyor and project manager with an MBA and international professional accreditation (MRICS), leads commercial and risk management functions. His expertise in project costing, contract administration and risk mitigation ensures that projects are managed with precision and financial accountability.

Marketing Director Palesa Rantsoareng contributes strategic brand direction and stakeholder engagement, strengthening the company's presence and brand awareness within the built environment.

Collectively, the leadership team combines construction heritage, financial governance, commercial oversight, strategic business insight and most importantly, a wealth of experience.

This multidisciplinary foundation underpins Ruwacon's operational stability.

An integrated construction group

Ruwacon's structure is built around four operational divisions: Construction, Infrastructure, Plant Hire and Scaffolding. This integrated platform enhances coordination and reduces reliance on external providers, strengthening delivery certainty.

The Construction Division delivers projects across a broad range of sectors including education, healthcare, transport, housing, commercial developments, retail facilities, sports infrastructure, military bases and specialised facilities. The division emphasises programme discipline, quality control and client engagement from concept through completion. The Construction Division actively seeks to expand its presence in the private sector.

The Infrastructure Division focuses on civil engineering works that support national and regional development. Services include civil infrastructure, road construction, mining-related infrastructure, renewable energy infrastructure, and water supply and sanitation systems. The division's work often extends beyond metropolitan areas, requiring logistical coordination due to the remote nature of the project and experienced site management.

Supporting both divisions, the Plant Hire Division provides a fleet of modern, well-maintained equipment operated by skilled professionals. This internal capacity improves scheduling reliability and enhances cost control across projects.

The Scaffolding Division delivers compliant, safety-focused access systems designed to support structural and maintenance works. With strict adherence to occupational health and safety standards, the division reinforces safe and efficient project execution.

Together, these divisions create a cohesive operational structure that enhances quality management, efficiency, flexibility and responsiveness.

A hands-on management philosophy

While Ruwacon operates at significant scale, its management philosophy remains grounded in direct involvement. Regional managers maintain close oversight of project teams nationwide, ensuring that executive leadership remains connected to site-level delivery.

This approach supports quicker decision-making, improved accountability and strengthened client relationships. It also enables the company to maintain consistent standards across diverse project locations, thanks to having a presence in multiple provinces.

The group's ISO 9001:2015 certification reflects its structured quality management systems. Standardised procedures, documentation controls and continuous improvement processes are embedded across divisions. Quality assurance is integrated throughout project lifecycles rather than applied retrospectively.

Safety similarly remains central to operations, with rigorous compliance protocols designed to protect personnel and stakeholders. The company has dedicated heads of safety for both Construction and Infrastructure.

Transformation and national contribution

Since May 2010, Ruwacon has been one of the few top-tier construction firms in South Africa with majority black ownership. As a Level 1 B-BBEE contributor with 51% black ownership, the company aligns transformation with operational excellence.

Transformation within Ruwacon extends beyond ownership structure. It encompasses skills development, regional employment participation and inclusive procurement practices. By operating across multiple provinces, the company contributes to local economic participation while maintaining national standards.

This balanced approach supports long-term sustainability in both commercial and socio-economic dimensions.

Delivering in diverse environments

Ruwacon's teams operate across urban centres and remote regions, reflecting the company's logistical capability and operational flexibility. Infrastructure development in challenging environments requires planning discipline, resource coordination and experienced personnel capable of adapting to varying and challenging site conditions.

The company's involvement in civil works, building projects and specialised facilities demonstrates its capacity to manage complexity and diversity across sectors.

Its annual turnover exceeding R1-billion reflects sustained activity supported by structured financial management and disciplined operational systems.

Building with stability and purpose

More than two decades of sustained growth have positioned Ruwacon as a nationally recognised construction group defined by stability, governance strength and integrated capability.

The company's civil and general building classifications confirm its readiness for large-scale projects, while its leadership depth and operational integration reinforce delivery certainty.

Ruwacon continues to focus on infrastructure and building projects that contribute to long-term development across South Africa. Through structured leadership, disciplined systems and national reach, the company remains committed to responsible growth and consistent performance.

For clients, consultants and industry stakeholders, Ruwacon represents a construction partner built on experience, governance and practical execution - a company where leadership remains engaged, systems remain structured and delivery remains dependable. ⊙

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Hands-on executive oversight. Disciplined commercial control.
Proven national performance. No Limits.

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RUWACON

ISIPANI CONSTRUCTION: DELIVERING AWARD-WINNING INFRASTRUCTURE WITH GRADE 9 CONFIDENCE

Achieving and sustaining a CIDB Grade 9 classification reflects far more than eligibility to tender for large-scale projects - it signifies proven capacity, financial strength, governance maturity, and the ability to deliver complex developments with consistency and discipline.

For Isipani Construction, Grade 9 status represents the outcome of strategic growth, operational refinement, and an unwavering commitment to excellence in the built environment. It signals to clients, partners, and industry stakeholders that the company possesses the systems, leadership, and technical expertise required to execute substantial civil engineering and general building works with confidence.

At its foundation, Isipani Construction is driven by a philosophy of structured delivery. Complex construction projects demand more than technical skill — they require rigorous planning, disciplined cost control, integrated stakeholder coordination, and proactive risk management. Over time, these principles have become embedded within the company's operational framework, ensuring that every project is executed with precision from inception through to completion.

Governance, systems and delivery discipline

In an increasingly regulated and performance-driven industry, accountability is essential. Isipani Construction prioritises strong governance structures, transparent financial management, and robust internal controls to support sustainable growth and responsible project delivery.

Comprehensive project management methodologies underpin each contract. Detailed pre-construction planning, structured procurement strategies, quality assurance systems, and strict health and safety compliance form part of a disciplined approach applied across all sites.

This level of operational maturity enables the company to manage multiple subcontractors, consultants, and stakeholder interfaces while maintaining programme certainty and cost control. Continuous monitoring mechanisms ensure that progress, risk, and quality benchmarks are actively managed throughout the project lifecycle.

Grade 9 classification therefore reflects not only scale, but organisational depth — the capacity to undertake complex projects without compromising on performance, compliance, or delivery standards.

Delivering award-winning developments

A defining feature of Isipani Construction's capability is its successful delivery of diverse, high-profile developments across mixed-use, industrial, and retail sectors. These projects demonstrate both scale and sophistication, reinforcing the company's position as a trusted main contractor.

Longkloof Precinct, Cape Town

As main contractor on the Longkloof Precinct development in Cape Town, Isipani Construction delivered a landmark mixed-use urban precinct within a dense metropolitan environment. The project required intricate coordination across structural, civil, architectural, and services disciplines, all within a high-visibility inner-city context.

Urban mixed-use developments present unique challenges — constrained access, complex logistics, stakeholder sensitivities, and the integration of multiple building components within a cohesive architectural vision. Through disciplined project management and close collaboration with the professional team, Isipani Construction ensured that programme objectives, structural integrity, and quality standards were achieved in unison.

The development's excellence was formally recognised when it was named winner in the Mixed-Use Developments category and went on to receive the Overall Winner award within its programme. This independent recognition underscores the quality of execution, technical coordination, and delivery excellence demonstrated throughout the project lifecycle.

Longkloof stands as a compelling example of Isipani Construction's ability to deliver sophisticated, large-scale developments in complex urban environments.

Solar MD Facility

In the industrial and energy-aligned sector, Isipani Construction acted as main contractor for the Solar MD facility - a technically specialised development supporting advanced manufacturing operations.

Industrial projects demand precision construction standards, structural robustness, and seamless integration of services infrastructure to meet operational requirements. The

Solar MD facility required disciplined planning, adherence to strict tolerances, and effective coordination between design intent and functional outcomes.

The successful delivery of this development reflects the company's versatility and its ability to operate confidently within technically demanding environments. It also highlights Isipani Construction's role in supporting infrastructure aligned with innovation and energy resilience - an increasingly critical component of South Africa's economic landscape.

Optenhorst Retail Development

Isipani Construction also served as main contractor for the Optenhorst Retail Development, a prominent commercial project delivered within a fast-paced retail programme environment.

Retail developments require meticulous coordination between developers, consultants, and tenant stakeholders, often under stringent completion timelines to ensure trading readiness. Precision in finishes, programme discipline, and effective subcontractor management are essential to success.

The Optenhorst project was recognised at the 2025 SACSC Retail Design & Development Awards, where it received the Category A: New Developments (Small Centre) award. This accolade reflects the quality of construction, architectural alignment, and disciplined execution achieved by the project team.

Together, these award-winning developments demonstrate Isipani Construction's ability to deliver across multiple sectors while maintaining consistent standards of quality, safety, and performance.

Strengthening transformation and industry sustainability

Sustainable success in construction extends beyond project delivery - it requires investment in people, inclusive growth, and long-term industry resilience.

Isipani Construction's Level 1 B-BBEE certification reflects its commitment to meaningful economic transformation and responsible industry participation. This status not only affirms the company's internal transformation initiatives but also provides measurable procurement value to clients operating within regulated and scorecard-driven environments.

Maintaining Level 1 recognition requires sustained focus on enterprise development, skills advancement, and inclusive business practices. For Isipani Construction, transformation is not approached as a compliance requirement, but as a strategic priority aligned with national development objectives.

The company actively invests in training initiatives, mentorship programmes, and leadership development to strengthen technical and managerial capacity within its workforce. By nurturing talent and supporting supplier development, Isipani Construction contributes to building a more resilient and competitive construction ecosystem.

This balanced focus on performance and empowerment ensures that growth is measured not only by project scale, but by organisational strength and industry impact.

Positioned for continued excellence

As the built environment evolves in response to economic pressures, technological advancement, and sustainability imperatives, Isipani Construction remains focused on adaptability and continuous improvement.

Grade 9 classification is not viewed as a destination, but as a platform for continued impact. It reinforces the company's readiness to undertake increasingly complex civil engineering and general building projects while strengthening partnerships with both public and private sector clients.

Through disciplined governance, award-winning project delivery, and a firm commitment to transformation and skills development, Isipani Construction continues to solidify its position as a leading contractor within South Africa's construction landscape.

The company's trajectory reflects more than growth — it reflects consistency, credibility, and the capability to deliver infrastructure that supports economic development and long-term value creation. ⊙

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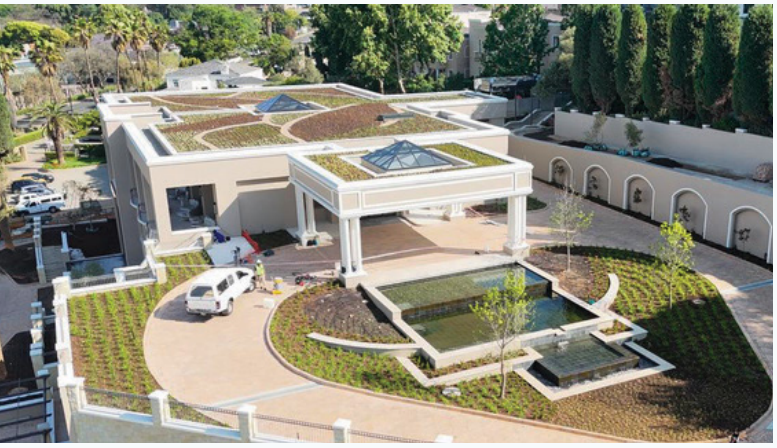
From tendering and negotiations to construction execution and completion, the company's integrated process ensures on-time delivery while prioritising Health & Safety and Quality standards.

Partnering closely with developers, architects, and quantity surveyor professionals, Tri-Star bring visions to life by supporting value engineering for projects including multi-unit housing, high-rise towers, commercial hubs, industrial facilities, retail outlets, and bespoke developments.

The company's comprehensive, efficient approach guarantees superior quality, precision, and performance at every stage by fostering trusted collaborations and lasting value for communities and stakeholders alike.

Tri Star is committed to delivering excellence and creating sustainable, impactful solutions for a better South Africa. ⊙



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DOES WATER MANAGEMENT NEED ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?

The right combination of data and algorithms can produce astounding improvements in efficiency, speed and oversight. While many water utilities already use digital monitoring and analytics to manage operations, artificial intelligence builds on these capabilities by identifying patterns in large datasets, enabling predictive insights, and supporting more informed decision-making.

Chetan Mistry, Strategy and Marketing Manager at Xylem Africa, WSS

Utility managers are taking note, with around 15% of large water utilities across the world using artificial intelligence, set to reach 30% by 2026, according to the Xylem Water Technology Trends 2025 report. By 2035, three-quarters of water utilities will use some form of AI.

With aging infrastructure, climate variability, and rising water demand placing increasing pressure on water systems, utilities are seeking more resilient and adaptive ways to manage operations. Data-driven and AI-enabled tools are emerging as part of this broader digital water transformation.

Experts have good reason to be optimistic about AI adoption in the sector. Already, digital water management systems are producing excellent results. For example, Yorkshire Water Services in the UK uses Xylem Vue digital services reported a reduction in visible leaks by 57% while still reducing annual distribution main repairs by 30%.

Similar digital and AI-driven capabilities are also expanding into industrial water and wastewater operations, where predictive monitoring and process optimisation help improve compliance, reliability, and resource efficiency.

Such outcomes show the hidden capacity at every water management site, says Chetan Mistry, Strategy and Marketing Manager at Xylem Africa, WSS.

"Water distribution and treatment sites produce far more data than they use. But that data gets neglected because of capacity. It would take an enormous amount of time to organise and study the data for patterns and insights. Digital and AI systems are solving those problems. Digital systems record and share accurate and reliable data, which AI systems use to rapidly produce planning information, automation, and other improvements."

Water management sites utilise smart data and AI services in several ways, including:

Real-time process adjustment

Water treatment is at its best when the system can maintain consistency, a laborious task since water flows keep changing. Intelligent water systems add intelligence that adjusts processes such as reagent dosing and treatment line control in real time. Site operators define specific scenarios that automatically adjust operations using information from external technologies such as water management applications and business intelligence systems.

Predictive demand and optimisation

AI systems predict conditions to manage demand and optimisation. Predictive maintenance systems rely on predictive analytics and AI-driven models, which use performance data and systems such as digital twins to anticipate maintenance conditions for equipment.

Similar technologies have expanded to help water managers forecast demand, such as consumption peaks. They also optimise energy consumption by adjusting operations based on demand.

Advanced metering infrastructure

Smart meters have radically improved water distribution's performance and efficiency, using digital technologies to gauge consumption and feed reliable data into water planning systems. Advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) is the next step in that journey. AMI performs remote reading and integrates and processes information into AI systems, vastly reducing information intervals towards almost real-time monitoring and feedback.

Decision support systems

Water utilities are using decision support systems (DSS) to inform real-time, medium, and long-term planning and management. DSS tools use AI to analyse large datasets and information from different disciplines, including data from hydrological and meteorological stations, expert knowledge, and local inputs. This analysis models different situations, from simulating water bodies to predicting usage patterns.

While these and other data-driven improvements sound very attractive, utility and infrastructure managers are not always sure where to start. Successful deployment depends on data quality, integration with existing infrastructure, and organisational readiness. Deploying digitisation can become complicated, which is why leading water technology OEMs develop and maintain extensive software platforms designed to meet water utility challenges.

"Companies like Xylem invest substantially in developing water management platforms that are secure, simple to deploy, and make sure the data remain with the utility," says Mistry. "They create interactive and customisable dashboards and reports, which authorised staff and contractors can access on-site through smart devices and computers."

The real advantage of using data-driven water management platforms is not just in the new features. It enables utilities to leverage information they already have: "Data that does nothing only takes up space. But data made useful through cloud-based management software opens additional dimensions for planning and predictive actions such as maintenance." ⊙

UCB MUNGO WAREHOUSE ORGANISATION

ASPIRE Consulting Engineers was appointed as the Civil and Structural Engineering Consultant for the UCB Mungo Warehouse development in Cameroon. The project forms part of UCB's strategic expansion to increase beer and soft drink manufacturing capacity across Cameroon and the wider African region.

The development comprises two primary operational components: the Packhall and the Brewhouse, each housed in purpose-built warehouse structures designed to accommodate heavy industrial equipment and complex manufacturing processes. In addition, the project incorporates multiple auxiliary facilities essential to the efficient operation of the plant.

Background

UCB is a leading beer and soft drink manufacturer based in Cameroon, with operations expanding across several African countries. To support increased production capacity, two new warehouses were constructed as part of the Mungo facility development.

The Packhall, located on the upper portion of the site, accommodates heavily loaded equipment and incorporates extensive floor drainage systems to support manufacturing operations. The Brewhouse, situated on the lower portion of the site, consists of multiple levels, including suspended platforms and access walkways to facilitate production

Monitoring and quality control

The broader site includes several ancillary facilities, such as generator and diesel storage tanks, waste storage areas, ablution facilities, a storage yard, canteen building, and a gatehouse for controlled access. Significant coordination was required to ensure seamless integration of all buildings and services across the site.

Construction innovation and technology

Several innovative construction strategies were implemented to address local constraints, climatic conditions, and material availability:

- Importation of structural steel from China due to local shortages
- Development of effective stormwater management systems during construction
- Optimised construction sequencing to mitigate prolonged rainy seasons
- Use of locally sourced materials, including blockwork
- Custom material blending for earthworks and pavement layers
- Close collaboration with local engineers to adapt designs to site conditions

Cameroon experiences extended periods of heavy rainfall, which posed a significant construction challenge. To address this, all structural steelwork was imported from China. Extensive design coordination sessions were held with Chinese suppliers to ensure compliance with local standards and engineering specifications.

The in-situ material on site was unsuitable for the heavy equipment loads required. Pozzolan material, sourced locally from a nearby site with a high California Bearing Ratio (CBR), was blended through a tailored layerworks design developed in collaboration with local engineers. This solution achieved a design bearing pressure of 200 kPa.

Stormwater management was a critical aspect of the project. Open stormwater channels were constructed to discharge runoff into the Mungo River, allowing for easy inspection, maintenance, and blockage control. Temporary stormwater measures were also implemented during construction to manage surface water effectively.

To mitigate construction delays caused by rainfall, roofing sheeting was installed as early as possible, enabling construction activities to proceed under cover and maintaining productivity during adverse weather conditions.

Structural and material innovation

Material shortages, particularly blockwork supply constraints, necessitated a redesign of walling systems. Blockwork was reclassified as non-load-bearing, and the structural system was revised to incorporate reinforced concrete columns, beams, and ground beams.

To further mitigate supply delays, an on-site blockwork manufacturing facility was established. The revised structural approach significantly reduced reliance on blockwork, improving construction efficiency and programme certainty.

Corporate Social Investment

The project generated substantial employment opportunities for local communities in Cameroon. Multiple local contractors were appointed for different components of the works, supported by a locally based construction management team.

Upon completion, the facility will continue to provide long-term employment opportunities, contributing positively to local economic development and strengthening community infrastructure.

Design innovation

ASPIRE Consulting Engineers delivered a highly coordinated and modular design approach to support fast-track construction. Structural steelwork was imported, while reinforced concrete detailing and reinforcement schedules were developed in South Africa.

Reinforcement designs were standardised and modularised to enable rapid implementation on site, minimising delays during the rainy season and enhancing construction efficiency.

Environmental impact considerations

Environmental sustainability was a key consideration throughout the project:

- An on-site concrete batching plant reduced transport-related emissions and traffic impacts
- Locally sourced pozzolan material minimised reliance on imported materials
- Stormwater was safely collected and discharged into the Mungo River
- Effluent systems were fully segregated from stormwater networks to prevent contamination
- All effluent was treated at a wastewater treatment plant prior to discharge
- Boreholes were installed to supply water, with ongoing monitoring to ensure water quality compliance

Strict environmental controls were implemented to protect surrounding ecosystems and water resources.

Health and safety

The project required extensive coordination among multiple local construction teams. A central construction manager oversaw all activities, supported by full-time health and safety officers on site.

Despite the fast-tracked programme and challenging weather conditions, the project was completed without any reported safety incidents. Rigorous safety monitoring and compliance ensured a safe working environment throughout construction.

Cost, quality, and programme management

Project costs exclude specialist manufacturing equipment, which was outside the consulting scope. Quality control was prioritised through:

- An on-site concrete batching plant
- Daily inspection and testing of earthworks and layerworks
- Continuous oversight by a full-time local engineer to monitor levels, compaction, and concrete works

The quality of construction was consistently maintained and met all design requirements.

Risk management

The primary project risk was construction during Cameroon's extended rainy season. This was mitigated through:

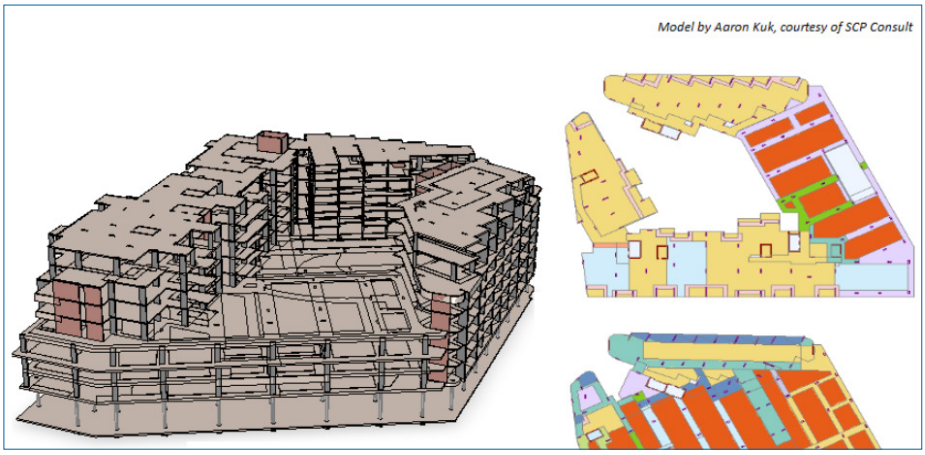
- Early installation of roofing sheeting
- Construction of permanent and temporary stormwater systems prior to major works
- Dewatering strategies in high-risk areas

Additional risks included delays in imported equipment and materials. Advance procurement planning and local material contingencies were implemented to mitigate these risks. Language barriers between international suppliers and local teams were effectively managed through structured coordination and communication protocols.

Despite these challenges, the project progressed efficiently and is nearing successful completion. ⊙

INDUCTA: ENGINEERING INTELLIGENCE FOR THE FUTURE OF CONCRETE DESIGN

In an era where construction projects are becoming increasingly complex, the demand for precision, efficiency, and code compliance has never been greater. Across Australia and internationally, Inducta has established itself as a trusted provider of advanced structural engineering software, specifically focused on reinforced concrete design. As the South African construction sector continues to modernise and embrace digital workflows, Inducta's expertise offers timely and practical value.



Model by Aaron Kuk, courtesy of SCP Consult

Founded by structural engineers with decades of hands-on experience, Inducta was built on a clear philosophy: engineering software must reflect real-world design practice. Rather than producing generic calculation tools, the company develops specialised applications that address the daily challenges faced by consulting engineers. The result is software that not only complies with relevant standards but also mirrors how engineers actually think, check, and optimise their designs.

At the core of Inducta's offering is reinforced concrete column design software tailored to the requirements of modern building codes. Reinforced concrete columns remain fundamental to mid- and high-rise construction, industrial facilities, and infrastructure projects. Yet their design can be computationally intensive, particularly when accounting for biaxial bending, slenderness effects, load combinations, and second-order analysis. Inducta's software automates these processes while maintaining full transparency of calculations - an essential feature for professional engineers who must verify and sign off on their work.

For South African practitioners working under SANS standards and international codes, software reliability and traceability are critical. Inducta's development approach emphasises rigorous validation, detailed documentation, and clear reporting formats. Engineers are not simply given a result - they are provided with the calculation pathway. This transparency enhances confidence during peer reviews, regulatory submissions, and client presentations.

Digital transformation in construction is no longer optional. Building Information Modelling (BIM), performance-based design, and integrated project delivery are redefining workflows. Structural engineers are under increasing pressure to deliver faster turnaround times without compromising safety or economy. By reducing manual iteration and eliminating spreadsheet errors, Inducta's tools free engineers to focus on optimisation and innovation rather than repetitive calculations.

Another defining strength of Inducta is its responsiveness to practitioner feedback. Because the company is led by engineers rather than purely by software developers, user input directly shapes product updates. This practical orientation ensures that new features address real project conditions - whether that involves irregular column geometries, high axial load ratios, or complex interaction diagrams.

In emerging and growing markets such as South Africa, cost-efficiency remains paramount. Concrete continues to be the structural material of choice for residential towers, commercial developments, and public infrastructure. However, material optimisation is essential to remain competitive. Intelligent design software enables engineers to refine reinforcement layouts, evaluate multiple scenarios quickly, and achieve economical yet compliant solutions. Even small reductions in steel tonnage can translate into significant project savings.

Beyond technical capability, Inducta demonstrates a commitment to professional development. By promoting structured design workflows and encouraging rigorous checking procedures, its software supports best practice in structural engineering. This aligns closely with the broader goals of the construction industry: safer buildings, reduced waste, and improved productivity.

As South Africa invests in urban development, transport infrastructure, and sustainable building solutions, advanced engineering tools will play an increasingly important role. Companies such as Inducta are helping to bridge the gap between theoretical code provisions and efficient real-world application. Their contribution is not merely digital - it is structural, economic, and ultimately societal.

In a competitive global market, engineering firms must leverage technology that enhances both accuracy and efficiency. Inducta's specialised reinforced concrete design software represents a practical step forward. For South African engineers seeking reliable, transparent, and optimised solutions, the company offers more than software - it offers engineering intelligence tailored for modern construction. ⊙

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HOW DO WE DEFINE A SMART CITY IN SOUTH AFRICA?

In recent years, the term "smart city" has become a buzzword attached to various developments across the country. But what does it really mean? Contrary to popular belief, a smart city is not defined by how much technology has been installed. It is defined by how well that city uses information, infrastructure, and institutions to improve the lives of people who live and work there. ***Morag Evans, CEO of Databuild***

That is the thread running through the Department of Cooperative Governance's South African Smart Cities Framework. It sets out a decision-making framework rather than a shopping list of gadgets. But from a construction perspective, how can this conversation be anchored in reality?

What global definitions agree on

Globally, there is no single definition of a smart city, but the reputable frameworks share common elements. UN-Habitat's guidelines on people-centred smart cities describe a smart city as one that leverages technology to improve quality of life, advance human rights, reduce inequality, and support sustainable development, with people rather than devices at the centre.

The World Bank has taken a similar view in its work on smart cities. It highlights the role of technology and data as tools for more sustainable, resilient and well-managed cities, not as ends in themselves. An article published by the World Bank years ago still holds up. It describes a smart city as a welcoming, inclusive, and open city that listens to its citizens, uses evidence to make decisions, and continues to learn from others.

The South African interpretation

The South African Smart Cities Framework was developed to provide municipalities and other role-players a structured way to think about smart initiatives. Importantly, it does not prescribe a rigid checklist. Instead, it offers an interpretation built around the idea of an inclusive smart city.

The framework highlights several guiding principles, including that:

- A smart city must be "smart for all" and not only for a connected minority.
- Technology should be an enabler, not the driver.
- Smart initiatives must be shaped by local context and informed by real community needs.
- Partnerships, innovation, sustainability, resilience, and safety are essential.

What defines or classifies a smart city?

Because the framework is careful not to impose minimum standards, classification becomes a question of alignment with core characteristics.

In practice, we can apply these four pillars:

- People and governance. Does the city use digital tools, data, and planning processes to involve residents, improve transparency, and strengthen accountability? UN-Habitat's guidelines and our own integrated urban policy environment, including the Integrated Urban Development Framework, both stress citizen participation and collaborative governance as foundations for any smart approach.
- Data and digital infrastructure. Is there a deliberate effort to collect, manage, and use data to run the city better, whether through basic management systems or more advanced platforms?
- Integrated urban systems. How well do core systems such as transport, energy, water, waste, and land use planning talk to one another? In many South African cities, the real "smart" gains come from basic integration: using project and asset data to coordinate infrastructure upgrades, intelligently sequencing work, and reducing duplication and waste.
- Sustainability and resilience. Does the city consciously use innovation to reduce environmental impact, manage climate risk, and improve long-term service reliability? The COGTA framework and related policy documents link smart cities directly to resilience and sustainable infrastructure, rather than treating these as separate agendas.

A city that scores highly across these lenses, even with modest technology, is far closer to a smart city than one that installs impressive hardware without improving governance, integration, or inclusion.

What this means for the built environment

From a Databuild perspective, smart cities are a project pipeline and an information conversation.

Developers, contractors, and professional teams all make daily decisions about where to invest time, how to phase work, and which projects to pursue. When cities use data and planning frameworks effectively, the result is more predictable pipelines, clearer capital programmes, and better-targeted private investment.

A more grounded way to talk about smart cities

So, how do we define or classify a smart city in South Africa? We begin by asking whether technology, data, and design are being used in an integrated, inclusive way to solve real problems for real people, in line with our local context and constraints.

If our sector keeps that definition in mind, the smart city agenda becomes less of a buzzword and more of a practical framework. It gives municipalities, professionals, and private investors a common language for making better choices about where and how to build.

That, in the end, is what will determine whether South Africa's smart city story is about headlines or about lasting change. ⊙

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