



THE **GOOD** WAY FORWARD

**PROTECTING THE VALLEYS
THAT FEED THE WORLD**



THE GOOD PARTY MANIFESTO:

**2026 SUNDAYS RIVER VALLEY
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS**

GOOD

THE VALLEY THAT FEEDS THE WORLD

Sundays River Valley grows citrus that ends up on supermarket shelves all around the world - one of the largest citrus-producing regions on the continent, an export engine that keeps the country's trade figures looking healthy. And in Kirkwood, Addo, Paterson and Sunland, households can go weeks without a drop of water from their own taps.

That contradiction is not bad luck. It is the result of a municipality that has been named, year after year, among the most financially distressed in the country, so far behind on its bulk electricity and water accounts that entire towns get cut off, so short of the basics of financial management that it has repeatedly needed outside administrators sent in to keep it running at all. Interventions arrive, stabilise the immediate crisis, and leave once the cameras do, without ever fixing the reason the crisis kept happening.

The valley takes its name from the river that irrigates its farms and, in theory, supplies its towns. That same river absorbs the sewage spills from wastewater works too broken to keep up. A town does not need a grand vision

to fix that. It needs a council that can pay its bills, keep its infrastructure standing, and stop treating residents as the last people in the queue for water grown, quite literally, on their doorstep.

A valley that can feed the world can fill its own taps - if the people running it decide that residents come before the next intervention report.

This manifesto is GOOD's answer for the towns of the valley. Six pledges: a Trusted Town, a Functional Town, a Working Town, a Clean Town, a Safe Town, an Affordable Town. Each one names the failure plainly, says what we'll do about it, and says how - because a valley that exports abundance and imports crisis does not need another intervention. It needs a council that works.

This is the GOOD way forward - for Kirkwood, Addo, Paterson, Sunland and every farming community of the valley, on the same standard. No exceptions.



1.

A TRUSTED TOWN

Sundays River Valley Municipality has spent years on the list of the country's most financially distressed councils, unable to pay its bulk electricity and water accounts, unable to produce a clean audit, unable to hold onto a municipal manager or CFO long enough for a recovery plan to survive their departure. When the crisis gets bad enough, the province steps in. The intervention buys time. It has never yet bought a fix.

Residents are asked to trust a council that cannot show them where the money went, why the last recovery plan stalled, or who was responsible for the decisions that got the municipality onto the distress list in the first place. Trust is not restored by another turnaround strategy document. It is restored by a council residents can actually see running itself properly, one budget cycle at a time.

THE GOOD WAY FORWARD

- **A public recovery plan with real milestones:**

Financial recovery targets published and tracked against actual performance every quarter, not restated as new promises every time the old ones are missed.

- **End the revolving door in top administrative posts:**

Properly recruited, protected municipal manager and CFO appointments, shielded from being pushed out every time the political mood shifts.

- **Open budget and supply chain meetings:**

SCM and budget committee decisions made in view of the public, not behind it.

- **A binding bulk-debt repayment plan:**

A transparent, monitored agreement with Eskom and the water board so residents are not blindsided by disconnections negotiated in private.

- **A working petitions channel:**

Residents across Kirkwood, Addo, Paterson and Sunland can raise an issue with their ward councillor and see it tracked to resolution, not lost between administrations.

- **Publish consequence management:**

Every audit finding and forensic report gets a public tracker showing what was found and what happened to those responsible.

HOW WE DELIVER IT

The recovery plan and open-meeting reforms require no new budget, only the political will to make existing processes public, achievable within the first six months.

The bulk-debt repayment plan is negotiated directly with Eskom and the water board in the first year, using the revenue-protection measures under the Functional Town pledge to demonstrate the municipality can actually keep to it.

2.

A FUNCTIONAL TOWN

Kirkwood, Addo and Paterson have each been through weeks-long water outages, not because the region lacks water, but because unpaid bulk accounts and broken reticulation networks mean the water that reaches the valley's farms never makes it to the households living among them. Electricity cuts follow the same pattern: infrastructure and debt problems layered on top of ordinary load shedding, in towns too small and too poor to absorb either.

A functional town does not require a mega-project. It requires a council that pays its bulk suppliers before it misses a deadline, fixes a leak before it becomes an outage, and tells residents honestly when and how a problem will be solved instead of leaving them to find out from a neighbour.

THE GOOD WAY FORWARD

- **An emergency reticulation repair fund:**

Targeted first at the networks behind the worst and most frequent outages in Kirkwood, Addo and Paterson.

- **Ring-fence bulk-service payments:**

A protected share of revenue collected goes straight to Eskom and the water board first, so a cash-flow problem elsewhere in the municipality never again means a town goes without water or power.

- **Published repair timelines:**

Fixed, public turnaround times for water leaks, electricity faults and road repairs, tracked the same way in every town of the valley.

- **A managed interim-supply plan:**

A published schedule for water tankers and standby boreholes during outages, instead of an ad hoc scramble every time the taps run dry.

- **An infrastructure asset register:**

An honest account of the state of the valley's water, electricity and road infrastructure, so capital budgets are set against real need.

- **Shared-infrastructure partnerships:**

Work with the valley's citrus growers, who depend on the same bulk water and power systems, on co-funded maintenance where interests genuinely align.

HOW WE DELIVER IT

Ring-fencing bulk-service payments is a budgeting decision the council can adopt in its first sitting, and is the single change most likely to stop future disconnections.

The repair fund is prioritised using outage records already held by the municipality, so the first repairs can begin within the first year rather than waiting for a new study to confirm what residents already know.

3.

A WORKING TOWN

The valley's economy runs on citrus, and citrus is seasonal. For months of the year, farmworker households have no income at all, and the packing and processing that adds most of the value to the fruit, and would keep most of the jobs, largely happens somewhere else. Young people leave the valley because the work that exists doesn't last the year, and the work that would keep them here isn't here to have.

A working town does not mean asking the citrus industry to do more with less. It means building the local capacity - packing, processing, cooperative farming, tourism linked to Addo Elephant National Park - to keep more of what the valley produces, and more of what it earns, inside the valley.

THE GOOD WAY FORWARD

- **Support local agro-processing:**

Back packhouse and juicing capacity based in the valley, so more of the value of the harvest - and more of the jobs - stays local instead of moving downstream.

- **Off-season income and skills support:**

Structured support and training for farmworker households during the months between harvests, instead of leaving families to absorb the gap alone.

- **Back smallholder and emerging farmers:**

Support access to land, water allocations and export-market entry for black and emerging citrus farmers, not only established growers.

- **Local procurement:**

Municipal contracts prioritise valley-based cooperatives and small businesses wherever they can deliver.

- **Grow the Addo tourism economy:**

Support local SMMEs, informal traders and tour operators around the park gates, so tourism revenue reaches valley residents, not only operators based elsewhere.

- **Decent conditions on municipally-linked contracts:**

Fair wages and safe, dignified housing standards for seasonal farmworkers on any contract connected to the municipality.

HOW WE DELIVER IT

Agro-processing and smallholder support are pursued through partnership with existing citrus industry bodies and provincial agriculture funding, phased in over the first two years.

Off-season support and local procurement changes are within the municipality's own power to implement in the first year, requiring policy change rather than new legislation.

4.

A CLEAN TOWN

The valley takes its name from the Sundays River, and the river is paying for the municipality's neglect. Wastewater treatment works serving Kirkwood, Addo and Paterson have failed and spilled sewage into the same river that irrigates the citrus orchards the whole valley depends on. Refuse collection is unreliable, and illegal dumping fills the gap it leaves behind.

A river this central to the valley's identity and economy should not be treated as an afterthought. Its health is the valley's health, for the farms that draw from it, the towns that live alongside it, and the tourism economy built next door to it.

THE GOOD WAY FORWARD

- **Refurbish failing wastewater works:**

A funded, sequenced programme starting with the plants responsible for the most frequent spills into the Sundays River.

- **Public water-quality reporting:**

Publish river testing results as they're collected, so residents and farmers know the state of the water they rely on.

- **A reliable refuse standard:**

Fixed collection days that are actually kept across every town in the valley, with a public reporting line for missed collections.

- **Ring-fenced sanitation funding:**

Bulk infrastructure grants for wastewater are protected from being redirected to cover shortfalls elsewhere.

- **A catchment partnership:**

Work with citrus growers and Addo Elephant National Park - both dependent on a healthy river - on shared monitoring and clean-up funding.

- **Enforce against polluters:**

Publish penalties issued for illegal dumping and industrial pollution into the river and stormwater system.

HOW WE DELIVER IT

Refurbishment is prioritised using existing spill records, targeting the works responsible for the majority of incidents within the first eighteen months.

Water-quality reporting and the refuse-collection standard require no new capital spend and can be in place within the first year.

5.

A SAFE TOWN

Safety in the valley looks different from town to town. On the farms, it means stock theft and the isolation of households far from the nearest police response. In Kirkwood's residential areas, it means the same under-resourced policing spread across a large rural municipality, and the same gap in support for survivors of gender-based violence that small towns everywhere struggle to close. None of it is served by a one-size-fits-all approach built for a metro.

A safe town takes both realities seriously - farmworkers and farm owners, town residents and outlying communities - instead of treating rural safety as an afterthought to a bigger city's plan.

THE GOOD WAY FORWARD

- **Rural safety forums:**

Bring SAPS, farmers and farmworker communities into the same structure, so stock theft, farm safety and worker safety are addressed together, not as competing concerns.

- **Resource stock theft response properly:**

Dedicated capacity and faster response times for a crime that devastates both farm livelihoods and rural households.

- **GBV support points in every town:**

Given the distances across the valley, survivors in Addo, Paterson and Sunland should not have to travel to Kirkwood to find support.

- **Safer public space:**

Lighting and visible safety infrastructure in residential areas like Nomathamsanqa and along routes workers use to and from the farms.

- **Community-led safety structures:**

Formal standing and funding for local mediation and neighbourhood watch structures already active in valley communities.

- **Safe transport for farmworkers:**

Work with growers on safe, regulated transport for workers travelling before dawn or after dark during harvest season.

HOW WE DELIVER IT

Rural safety forums and community-led structures can be established within the first year through partnership agreements, at minimal cost beyond coordination capacity.

Lighting and public safety infrastructure are prioritised using a ward-level safety audit conducted in the first six months, targeting the highest-risk areas first.

6.

AN AFFORDABLE TOWN

A municipality this financially distressed does not absorb its own shortfalls, it passes them on. Rates and tariff increases land on households already struggling with seasonal income, billing errors take months to resolve, and prepaid electricity penalties hit families who had no say in the debt that caused them. In a valley where so much of the workforce is paid seasonally, a rigid billing system is not a minor inconvenience, it is the difference between keeping the lights on and not.

THE GOOD WAY FORWARD

- **Income-linked relief:**

An expanded indigent register and means-tested rebates that account for seasonal farm income, not just a flat annual figure.

- **Fix billing errors before they become debt:**

Corrections made before accounts are handed to debt collectors, not after.

- **Transparent tariff-setting:**

Increases go through genuine, published public participation before Council votes, not after.

- **Protect lifeline tariffs:**

Extend eligibility to backyarders and farmworker tenants, not only property owners.

- **A billing ombud:**

A dedicated, publicly-reported channel for residents to resolve billing disputes without needing a lawyer.

- **Plain-language billing:**

Municipal accounts residents can actually read and understand.

HOW WE DELIVER IT

These reforms are largely self-funding, fewer billing disputes and less debt written off saves the municipality money it currently loses to its own errors.

Billing fixes and lifeline tariff reform are implemented within the first year; the full public tariff-setting process is in place ahead of the next budget cycle.

**GOOD**

THE GOOD VALLEY, 2046

Sundays River Valley, 2046. The taps run in Kirkwood, Addo, Paterson and Sunland, every day, because the bulk bills are paid on time and the reticulation was fixed a generation ago. The Sundays River runs clean past the orchards and the elephants of Addo alike, because the wastewater works that used to fail it were rebuilt and maintained.

A packhouse on the edge of town processes fruit that used to leave the valley raw, and the jobs that come with it stay here too. A council sits through its whole term,

publishing its budget, paying its accounts, answering its petitions - not because the politics got easier, but because the people running it decided residents came before the next headline.

What you are picturing is not a fantasy. It is what a valley that feeds the world was always capable of being for the people who live in it.

**2046**

**IS A SUNDAYS RIVER VALLEY BUILT BY RESIDENTS,
FOR RESIDENTS - A VALLEY THAT FINALLY DRINKS
FROM THE SAME ABUNDANCE IT EXPORTS.**