

Dear Members, dear Friends,

This Newsletter N^o2 is to keep you informed of the activities of your Association since February.

In the last months PG has focused on following closely the process of revision of the Plano Diretor Municipal de Grândola (PDMG). This is the Master Plan of the municipality, defining the zoning rules for 826Km².

The Mayor's proposal to suspend the PDMG failed to get a majority at the Municipal Assembly in February and was only finally passed in April. The PDMG is now partially suspended until a new version is presented to the Assembly and voted. During this period the CMG has no power to issue any building licenses for tourism projects located west of the A2 and north of the IC33 – whether newly submitted or processed applications.

PG has prepared a compilation of all available public data and has concluded that if all the planned tourist beds are built, we will have in the municipality of Grândola more than 30.000 beds. This number is twice the level which is approved in the PROTA/PDMG and is therefore illegal.

To give a sense of context for this 30.000 number:

- Were these beds to be built the “touristic intensity”, a ratio that gives an indication of sustainability, will be 10 times greater than that of the Algarve;
- The total number of tourist beds in the municipality of Grândola will amount to a third of those of the Algarve, a region that has 33x more population.

This model of development threatens the environmental, social and cultural balance of our region. The availability of water is insufficient to meet the requirements driven by 30.000 tourist beds. The local infrastructure - healthcare, roads, wastewater treatment, rubbish collection - is already stretched and is evidently wholly inadequate to serve 30.000 tourists plus the required labour force that will need to be brought in from outside the municipality.

PG supported the PDMG's suspension, but we will not support its revision if the Mayor's proposal is little more than the whitewashing of the illegalities and blunders of the past twenty years. What we need is a revised Master Plan that is sensible, founded on solid studies based on data, put together by an independent and competent team. A Master Plan that addresses and solves past mistakes and provides Grândola with some assurance of a balanced and sustainable future development.

PG is the voice of civil society. PG argues its position on the big issues that concern us all, but we also support the specific complaints of our members.

PG activities - February to June 2022

- PG has 80 members. The management team meets every two weeks. There is a legal committee that follows closely the PDMG developments.
- We attended and expressed our views at the Municipal Assembly meeting last February and have since met with the various parties with seats in the Municipal Assembly.
- We submitted to the Mayor PG's comments in the context of the proposed revision of the PDMG, these were made public through our website.
- We participated in the public enquiry process of the tourism development of UNOP 3, part of the Troia Urbanization Plan.
- A Board Member participated in the public enquiry process of the Lagoa Salgada mining concession.
- We provided PG's public position on a number of matters raised by various media organizations, portuguese and foreign, radio, TV and written press. Many of these have since been published.
- We compiled all the available official public data with a view to ascertain the exact number of tourism beds that the CMG has either already licensed (whether built, under construction or licensed to build) or has an obligation to approve (there are thousands of beds that are legacy obligations pre-dating the land management plan for the Alentejo PROTA – the summary table and our conclusions have been published on our site.
- We authored an Op-ed article, *Grândola feita num 8* [Grândola tied-up in knots], that the Jornal Público ran on the 22nd June 2022.
- We maintain relationships with several faculty members from several universities to access specialized know-how we require.
- We have become aware of both the technical complexity of many of the matters we have included in our scope, and the lack of reliable data. Namely in connection with water resources we note that there is a lack of reliable data points across the municipality to enable anyone to make specific assessments, and we see many prone to generalizations. The existence of the largest European underground water reserve located between the Tejo and the Sado cannot be a valid response to every water issue when we are confronted with climate change, and when the rainwater levels year-on-year have been reducing

and are insufficient to replenish the underground reserves in our municipality. The expected water requirements -were plans to remain unchanged- cannot be met by the predicted water availability.

You can find PG's position papers in:
<https://protegergrandola.org/documentos/comunicados-e-participacoes/>
(sorry Portuguese version only)

Our Next Steps

1. Close oversight of the process of PDMG revision, aiming to ensure it respects the Law and the views of civil society, promoting a debate on what should be included in a strategic plan that addresses land use planning over the next 10 years.
2. Informing the relevant authorities of alleged illegal situations that result from the continued approvals of new building licenses for tourist projects that exceed the limits set by PROTA/PDMG.
3. Protecting our beaches from changes that are not supported by civil society or that hurt the rights of the Public: i) free access to the beach and space for car parking, ii) double standards in connection with the concessions of beach support services, iii) any acts that result in loss of character of our traditions.
4. Perform an in-depth study of the water availability in the municipality, and compare it to the likely rising demands, and recommend ways for the CMG to plan ahead prudently.
5. Close oversight of the licensing of the Lagoa Salgada mining concession over 13.000Ha in the municipalities of Alcácer do Sal and Grândola, the main access is located less than 15 miles from the coastline.

Our proposed activities include actions to inform on environmental matters that concern all of us. The debate aims at shedding light onto the process of revision of the PDMG bringing to Grândola specialists that will share knowledge on sound policies and best-practices that result in sustainable development.

We wish you all a great summer 2022.

The Proteger Grândola Team

Proteger Grândola

The operation of the Association are assured exclusively by volunteers' work. Our income comes from the annual membership fee set at €25/year and any donations. This income will be used to cover expenses related to the website maintenance, book-keeping, and legal and other related fees that are incurred when we require specialized work.

The annual fee at €25 is set low to be able to be as inclusive as possible, however do not hesitate to increase this amount by way of a donation. Remember, the preservation of nature is priceless.

Would you volunteer your time to help PG ?

Should you have time available would you care to work pro-bono for PG? If you have specialist skills from your professional work or life experience that you feel may be helpful to our work please contact us.

For example: agricultural policy, biodiversity, land-use, zoning, land use law, sustainable tourism, water resources, social media, website maintenance, communications, Portuguese/English translation.

To make Proteger Grândola impactful we need your help !

- Visit our site www.protegergrandola.org where you will find additional information on our activities and relevant news about the region.
- Apply for membership:
Individual membership annual fee: €25/year
<https://protegergrandola.org/apoiar/#associado>
Company or association membership: please enquire and justify your application by email to info@protegergrandola.org
- If you are available to help as a volunteer please contact us how at info@protegergrandola.org

Proteger Grândola – Associação de Defesa do Ambiente
Av. Jorge de Vasconcelos Nunes 106, 7570-113 Grândola
e-mail: info@protegergrandola.org;
website: www.protegergrandola.org
NIF: 516 564 013
IBAN for payments: PT50 0018 0003 5444 2728 020 52