forestry, fisheries & the environment
Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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DFFE Reference: 14/12/16/3/3/2/2837
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PER EMAIL

Dear Mr Mlamla

ACCEPTANCE OF THE FINAL SCOPING REPORT FOR THE PROPOSED PLANETS ENERGY FACILITY (PHASE 1 GILIMBERG ENERGY CLUSTER) HYBRID SOLAR PV & BESS FACILITY AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE (UP TO 200MW$_{AC}$ / 150MW-600MWH) NEAR POLOKWANE, IN THE MOGALAKWENA AND POLOKWANE LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

The final Scoping Report (SR) and the Plan of Study for Environmental Impact Assessment dated 17 August 2026 and received by the Department on 18 August 2026, refer.

The Department has evaluated the submitted final SR and the Plan of Study for Environmental Impact Assessment dated 17 August 2026 and is satisfied that the documents comply with the minimum requirements of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations, 2014, as amended. The FSR is hereby accepted by the Department in terms of Regulation 22(a) of the EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended.

You may proceed with the environmental impact assessment process in accordance with the tasks contemplated in the Plan of Study for Environmental Impact Assessment as required in terms of the EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended. The Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAr) must comply with the requirements of Appendix 3 of the EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended.

Departement van Bosbou, Visserye en die Omgewing • Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment • UmNyango wezamaHlathi, zokuThiya neBhoduluko • iSebe lezamaHlathi, ezokuLoba noKusingqongileyo • Umnyango Wezamahlathi, Ezokudoba Nezemvelo • Kgoro ya Dithokgwa, Boreahlapi le Tikologo • Lefapha la Meru, Botshwasi ba ditlhapi le Tikoloho • Lefapha la Dikgwa, Ditlhapi le Tikologo • Litiko Letemahlatsi, Tinhlanti Netendzawo • Muhasho wa zwa Vhusima-maḓaka, Vhureakhovhe na Mupo • Ndzawulo ya Swihlahla, Vunjoveri na Mbango. The processing of personal information by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment is done lawfully and not excessively for the purpose of processing in compliance with the POPI Act, any codes of conduct issued by the Information Regulator in terms of the POPI Act, and/or relevant legislation providing appropriate security safeguards for the processing of personal information of others.

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In addition, the following is required for the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAr):

Project description and Listed Activities

1. The identified activities listed on pages 15 to 19 of the application form and pages 8 to 16 of the final SR are hereby noted. The information presented in the application form must be the same as that in the reports to be submitted for review, comments and decision making.
2. You are reminded to ensure that the activities applied for are consistent with the project description and vice versa. This information must be clear in the amended application and EIAr to be submitted.
3. For development of roads, it has been noted that activity 24 of Listing Notice 1 and activity 4 of Listing Notice 3 are applied for. However, there is no information regarding the road reserves for the roads. You are advised to provide the above-mentioned details in the column describing the applicability of the triggered activities.
4. It is also noted that activities 4 and 12 of Listing Notice 3 have been applied for, however, the relevant site sensitivities including the type of vegetation to be cleared are not specified. As such, you are requested to specify the applicable sensitivities, and this information must be clear in the amended application form and EIAr.
5. For activity 12 of Listing Notice 1, it is noted that the description provided includes reference to project components that are unlikely to trigger the listed activity have been included. Please ensure that only activities which do trigger the listed activity are included in the description. You are further **advised that listed activities are not based on a precautionary approach. Therefore, ensure that all the listed activities in the amended application form and EIAr are clear and final, for decision making purposes. Should it not be clear that a listed activity is triggered, such activity will not be considered in the decision-making process.**
6. Please ensure that all relevant activities listed are applied for are specific and can be linked to the development activity or infrastructure (including thresholds) as described in the project description. In addition, the onus is on the applicant and the Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) to ensure that all the applicable listed activities are included in the application form and the EIAr. Failure to do so may result in unnecessary delays in the processing of the application.
7. If the activities applied for in the application form differ from those mentioned in the SR, an amended application form must be submitted with the EIAr.

Alternatives

8. Alternatives to be considered as included on what should be page 68 of the final SR are hereby noted. You are required to provide all the alternatives considered for this development as per Appendix 2 (2) (1) (g) (i) (v) (vi) of the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014 as amended in the final report. Furthermore, the preferred options for all assessed alternatives must be determined and be clear throughout the EIA report to be circulated for review and comments and for decision making.
9. Alternatively, you should submit written proof of an investigation and motivation if no reasonable or feasible alternatives exist in terms of Appendix 2. However, note that no development will be allowed within sensitive areas, mitigation hierarchy should be considered to avoid impacts on sensitive environment.
10. You are advised to ensure that the alternatives assessed incorporate solutions as advised by specialist input and comments received during public consultation.

Layout and Sensitivity Maps

11. You are advised to include the following in the final layout map:
    a) The PV development area.
    b) Position of all infrastructure e.g., panels, BESS, on-site substations, powerline, internal roads, etc.

c) All supporting onsite infrastructure such as permanent laydown area and auxiliary buildings, dangerous goods facility etc.
d) All existing infrastructure on the site, especially railway lines and roads;
e) The location of sensitive environmental features on site e.g., CBAs, heritage sites, wetlands, drainage lines etc. that will be affected by the facility and its associated infrastructure.
f) Buffer areas; and
g) All "no-go" areas.

12. All available biodiversity information must be used in the finalisation of the map and infrastructure must not encroach on highly sensitive areas.
13. The above map must be overlain with a sensitivity map and a cumulative map which shows neighbouring renewable energy developments.
14. Ensure that similar colours are not used to differentiate between infrastructure. i.e., items must be easily distinguishable on the legend.
15. Google maps will not be accepted for decision-making purposes.

Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)

16. Applicable BESS technologies must be included under the Technology Alternatives section of the EIAr.
17. A risk assessment study is not required for the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) however, impacts associated with the risks must be identified, considered, and assessed as part of the EIAr.

Public Participation Process (PPP)

18. The PPP must be conducted in terms of Regulations 39, 40, 41, 42, 43 & 44 of the EIA Regulations 2014, as amended.
19. Comments from the Nkidikitlana Tribal Council and the Mashilabelong-Nkidikitlana Traditional Community dated 27 July 2026; the Department of Land reform and Rural Development dated 25 June 2026; and the Office of the Regional Land Claims Commissioner: Limpopo dated 30 November 2023, are noted.
    a) Please ensure that updated comments from the Regional Land Claims Commissioner: Limpopo are requested and addressed as part of the EIAr.
    b) Public participation regarding the tribal community occupying R/E of Gillimberg 861 LS, R/E of Jupiter 717 LS and Portion 1 of Mars 718 LS must be in accordance with the EIA Regulations 2014 (as amended), and Regulation 41(2)(e) in particular; where additional translations of reports and focus meetings are required.
20. Please ensure that all comments from the identified and relevant competent authorities as well as stakeholders are addressed, responded to, and incorporated in the EIAr. The identified stakeholders must include but are not limited to the Polokwane Local Municipality, this Department's Biodiversity Conservation Section at BCAdmin@dffe.gov.za and the relevant heritage authority i.e., the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA).
21. The Comments and Responses Report (C&RR) as incorporated is hereby noted. You are reminded that this report must be continuously updated throughout the EIA process for this proposed development starting with the draft SR. The C&RR must be a separate document from the main report and must be in the table format, which reflects the details of Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs), the date comments were received (actual comments received) and responses provided.
22. Comments made by I&APs must be comprehensively captured (copy verbatim if required) and responded to clearly and fully. Please note that a response such as "noted" is not regarded as an adequate response to I&AP's comments.
23. Comments from I&APs must not be split and arranged into categories. Comments from each submission must be responded to individually.

24. Proof of correspondence with the various stakeholders must be included in the EIAr. Should you be unable to obtain comments, proof must be submitted to the CA of the attempts that were made to obtain comments.
25. Please ensure that the EIAr indicates when and where the draft SR and EIAr were made available for a 30-day review and comment period.

Specialist Assessments

26. According to the Site sensitivity verification report (SSVr) dated February 2026 and plan of study for the EIA, the following specialist assessments will be undertaken and included in the EIAr:
    a) Terrestrial Biodiversity Impact Assessment- Inclusive of Plants species
    b) Aquatic Biodiversity Impact Assessment
    c) Paleontological Impact Assessment
    d) Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment
    e) Animal Species Impact Assessment
    f) Agricultural Impact Assessment
    g) Landscape/Visual Impact Assessment
    h) Avian Impact Assessment
    i) Socio-economic Impact Assessment
    j) Traffic Impact Assessment
27. Final comments from the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) must be addressed and incorporated in the EIAr.
28. You are requested to submit copies of signed Specialist Declaration of Interest forms (administered/ witnessed and signed by a commissioner of oaths) for **each** specialist study conducted.
29. All specialist studies must be final, and provide detailed/practical mitigation measures for the preferred alternative and recommendations, and must not recommend further studies to be completed post EA.
30. Specialist assessments must be conducted in accordance with the Government Notice No. 320 of 20 March 2020 (i.e. "the Protocols"), and Government Notice No. 1150 of 30 October 2020 (i.e. protocols for terrestrial plant and animal species).
31. Please note further that the protocols, if applicable, require certain specialists' to be SACNASP registered. Please ensure that the relevant specialist certificates are attached to the relevant reports.
32. Please note that the Department considers a 'no-go' area, as an area where no development of any infrastructure is allowed; therefore, no development of associated infrastructure including access roads is allowed in the 'no-go' areas.
33. Should the specialist definition of 'no-go' area differ from the Departments definition; this must be clearly indicated. The specialist must also indicate the 'no-go' area's buffer if applicable.
34. Should the specialist studies in the EIAr provide more detail regarding any of the project activity thresholds, please ensure that the project activity descriptions are amended accordingly in the application form and EIAr.
35. Should a specialist recommend specific mitigation measures, these must be clearly indicated.
36. Should the appointed specialists specify contradicting recommendations, the EAP must clearly indicate the most reasonable recommendation and substantiate this with defendable reasons; and where necessary, include further expertise advice.

PV Facility Environmental Management Programme

37. A construction and operational phase EMPr for the PV facility, which includes mitigation and monitoring measures must be submitted with the EIAr.
38. The EMPr must be developed in terms of Appendix 4 of the EIA Regulations, 2014 as amended and must include (but not limited to) the following plans and measures:

a) The chance finds procedures included in the EIAr Heritage and Palaeontological studies;
b) Re-vegetation and habitat rehabilitation plan;
c) Weed and invader plant management plan;
d) Traffic management plan;
e) Emergency Response plan;
f) Fire management plan;
g) Stormwater management;
h) Noise management;
i) Erosion management;
j) Waste management;
k) Dust management; and,
l) All recommendations and mitigation measures recorded in the EIAr and the specialist studies conducted.
m) An effective monitoring system to detect any leakage or spillage of all hazardous substances during their transportation, handling, use and storage. This must include precautionary measures to limit the possibility of oil and other toxic liquids from entering the soil or storm water systems.

39. The decommissioning chapter of the EMPr for the facility must contain information relating to the handling, repurposing or disposal of dysfunctional, severely damaged batteries, module and containers.
40. The EMPr must distinguish between impact management actions and impact management outcomes.
41. The EMPr must not contain any ambiguity. Where applicable, statements containing the word “should” or “may” are to be amended to “must”.

Generic Environmental Management Programme (EMPr)

42. It is noted that activity 11 of Listing Notice 1 has been applied for. Please ensure that the generic EMPr that complies with the GN 435 of March 2022 is developed for the management of impacts of the substation and power line that will be constructed for this development. The relevant generic EMPr(s) must be included in the EIAr, over and above the EMPr for the PV facility.
43. Part B: Section 2 of the generic EMPr(s) must be completed, and a copy of an originally signed EMPr(s) must be submitted with the EIAr. Please note that Point 7.1.1 in Part B: Section 2 needs to match the details of the applicant as contained in the application form. The generic EMPr(s) must be signed by the applicant and submitted with the EIAr. An unsigned Generic EMPr is regarded as incomplete.
44. If any specific environmental sensitivities/attributes are present on the site which require more specific impact management outcomes and impact management actions, not included in the pre-approved generic EMPr template, to manage impacts, those impact management outcomes and actions must be included in Part C of the generic EMPr.

Cumulative Assessment

45. The EIAr must include cumulative impact assessment for all identified and assessed impacts and must be refined to indicate the following:
    a) The cumulative impacts assessment must consider the existing, authorised but not yet developed, the proposed similar development and powerline in the area.
    b) Detailed process flow and proof must be provided, to indicate how the specialist’s recommendations, mitigation measures and conclusions from the various similar developments in the area were taken into consideration in the assessment of cumulative impacts and when the conclusion and mitigation measures were drafted for this project.
    c) The cumulative impacts significance rating must also inform the need and desirability of the proposed development.

d) A cumulative impact environmental statement on whether the proposed development must proceed.

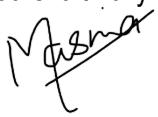
General

46. Please ensure that the numbering of pages in the EIAr is continuous, there are instances of the page numbers starting from number 1 in some sections of the report.
47. Please ensure that the final EIAr includes the period for which the Environmental Authorisation (EA) is required, the date on which the activity will be concluded, and the post-construction monitoring requirements finalised, as per Appendix 3(3)(1)(r) of the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended.
48. Details of the future plans for the site and infrastructure after decommissioning in 20-30 years and the possibility of upgrading the proposed infrastructure to more advanced technologies must be indicated.
49. The EAP must provide landowner consent for all farm portions affected by the proposed project, whether the project component is linear or not, i.e. all farm portions where the access road, solar panels and associated infrastructure is to be located.
50. Confirmation of the availability of services (e.g., sewage, water, etc. if required) must be included in the EIAr.
51. Should a Water Use License be required, proof of application for a license needs to be submitted.

The applicant is hereby reminded to comply with the requirements of Regulation 45 of GN R982 of 04 December 2014, as an amendment, with regard to the time period allowed for complying with the requirements of the Regulations.

You are hereby reminded of Section 24F of the National Environmental Management Act, Act No. 107 of 1998, as amended, that no activity may commence prior to an Environmental Authorisation being granted by the Department.

Yours faithfully



Dr Sabelo Malaza
Chief Director: Integrated Environmental Authorisations
Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment
Letter signed by: Ms Masina Morudu
Designation: Control Environmental Officer: National Integrated Authorisation Projects
Date: 01/10/2026.

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