

Comments Received

DEFF



environment, forestry & fisheries

Department:
Environment, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X 447· PRETORIA · 0001· Environment House ·473 Steve Biko Road, Arcadia, PRETORIA

DEA Reference: 14/12/16/3/3/1/2228

Enquiries: Mathodi Mogorosi

Telephone: (012) 399 9388 E-mail: MMogorosi@environment.gov.za

Ms Jo-Anne Thomas
Savannah Environmental (Pty) Ltd
PO Box 148
SUNNINGHILL
2191

Telephone Number: (011) 656 3237
Email Address: joanne@savannahsa.com

PER MAIL / E-MAIL

Dear Ms Thomas

COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT BASIC ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR THE PROPOSED GRID CONNECTION EXTENSION INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE GUNSTFONTEIN WIND FARM, NEAR SUTHERLAND WITHIN THE KAROO HOOGLAND LOCAL MUNICIPALITY IN THE NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE

The draft Basic Assessment Report (BAR) dated September 2020 and received by this Department on 04 September 2020, refer.

This letter serves to inform you that the following information must be included to the final BAR:

Listed Activities

- a) Please ensure that all relevant listed activities are applied for, are specific and can be linked to the development activity or infrastructure as described in the project description. Only activities applicable to the development must be applied for and assessed.
- b) If the activities applied for in the application form differ from those mentioned in the final BAR, an amended application form must be submitted. Please note that the Department's application form template has been amended and can be downloaded from the following link <https://www.environment.gov.za/documents/forms>.
- c) It is imperative that the relevant authorities are continuously involved throughout the basic assessment process as the development property falls within geographically designated areas in terms of GN R. 985 Activities. Written comments (or proof of the attempt to obtain such comments) must be obtained from the relevant authorities and submitted to this Department. In addition, a graphical representation of the proposed development within the respective geographical areas must be provided.
- d) It is noted that a number of listed activities within or near watercourses have been applied for, however an aquatic specialist assessment has not been undertaken, as the pylons may be able to span the watercourses, and existing access roads will be used as far as possible. Should the relevant listed activities still be applicable in these circumstances, please ensure that the BAR and EMPr contains appropriate, proven mitigation measures to mitigate the impacts on watercourses to acceptable levels.

Layout & Sensitivity Maps

- e) Please provide a layout map which indicates the following:
 - (i) The proposed grid connection extension infrastructure, overlain by the sensitivity map;

- (ii) All supporting onsite infrastructure e.g. roads (existing and proposed);
 - (iii) The location of sensitive environmental features on site e.g. CBAs, heritage sites, wetlands, drainage lines etc. that will be affected; and
 - (iv) Buffer areas; and, all "no-go" areas.
- f) The above map must be overlain with a sensitivity map and a cumulative map which shows neighbouring renewable energy developments and existing grid infrastructure.
- g) Google maps will not be accepted.

Alternatives

- h) Kindly provide extensive motivation if no reasonable or feasible alternatives exist in terms of Appendix 1(3)(1)(h) of the EIA Regulations 2014, as amended

Specialist Assessments

- i) Specialist studies to be conducted must provide a detailed description of their methodology, as well as all other associated infrastructures that they have assessed and are recommending for the authorisation.
- j) The specialist studies must also provide a detailed description of all limitations to their studies. All specialist studies must be conducted in the right season and providing that as a limitation, will not be accepted.
- k) Should the appointed specialists specify contradicting recommendations, the EAP must clearly indicate the most reasonable recommendation and substantiate this with defensible reasons; and where necessary, include further expertise advice.
- l) Specialist Declaration of Interest forms must be attached to the final BAR. You are therefore requested to submit signed Specialist Declaration of Interest forms for each specialist study conducted. The forms are available on Department's website (please use the Department's template).

Cumulative Assessment

- m) Should there be any other similar projects within a 30km radius of the proposed development site, the cumulative impact assessment for all identified and assessed impacts must be refined to indicate the following:
- (i) Identified cumulative impacts must be clearly defined, and where possible the size of the identified impact must be quantified and indicated, i.e. hectares of cumulatively transformed land.
 - (ii) 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.
 - (iii) The cumulative impacts significance rating must also inform the need and desirability of the proposed development.
 - (iv) A cumulative impact environmental statement on whether the proposed development must proceed.

Public Participation Process

- n) The following information must be submitted with the final BAR:
- (i) A list of registered interested and affected parties as per Regulation 42 of the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended;
 - (ii) Copies of all comments received during the draft BAR comment period; and
 - (iii) A comment and response report which contains all comments received and responses provided to all comments and issues raised during the public participation process for the draft BAR. Please note that comments received from this Department must also form part of the comment and response report.
- o) Please ensure that all issues raised and comments received during the circulation of the draft BAR from registered I&APs and organs of state which have jurisdiction (including this Department's Biodiversity Section) in respect of the proposed activity are adequately addressed in the final BAR.

- p) Proof of correspondence with the various stakeholders must be included in the final BAR. Should you be unable to obtain comments, proof should be submitted to the Department of the attempts that were made to obtain comments. The Public Participation Process must be conducted in terms of Regulation 39, 40, 41, 42, 43 & 44 of the EIA Regulations 2014, as amended.

Environmental Management Programme

- q) It is noted that the compulsory generic Environmental Management Programme (EMPr), contemplated in Regulations 19(4) for overhead electricity transmission and distribution infrastructure, where such facilities trigger activity 11 or 47 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations Listing Notice 1 of 2014, as amended, and any other listed and specified activities necessary for the realisation of such facilities, has been included in the BAR. Please ensure that the generic EMPr includes the expertise of the EAP to prepare an EMPr, including a curriculum vitae.
- r) It is noted that the generic EMPr states that audit reports are to be submitted to the Competent Authority at a frequency determined by the EA, however, please recommend a suitable frequency for submission of environmental audit reports to the Department. This may be done in the comments and response report, in response to this comment.

Environmental Impact Statement

- s) It is noted that an environmental impact statement is included in the draft BAR, however you are kindly requested to expand the impact statement to include the following –
- (i) a summary of the key findings of the environmental impact assessment;
 - (ii) a map at an appropriate scale which superimposes the proposed activity and its associated structures and infrastructure on the environmental sensitivities of the preferred site indicating any areas that should be avoided, including buffers; and
 - (iii) a summary of the positive and negative impacts and risks of the proposed activity and identified alternatives.

Please also ensure that the final BAR includes the period for which the Environmental Authorisation is required and the date on which the activity will be concluded as per Appendix 1(3)(1)(q) of the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended.

You are further reminded to comply with Regulation 19(1)(a) of the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended, which states that: *"Where basic assessment must be applied to an application, the applicant must, within 90 days of receipt of the application by the competent authority, submit to the competent authority - (a) a basic assessment report, inclusive of specialist reports, an EMPr, and where applicable a closure plan, which have been subjected to a public participation process of at least 30 days and which reflects the incorporation of comments received, including any comments of the competent authority."*

Should there be significant changes or new information that has been added to the BAR or EMPr which changes or information was not contained in the reports or plans consulted on during the initial public participation process, you are required to comply with Regulation 19(b) of the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended, which states: *"the applicant must, within 90 days of receipt of the application by the competent authority, submit to the competent authority – (b) a notification in writing that the basic assessment report, inclusive of specialist reports an EMPr, and where applicable, a closure plan, will be submitted within 140 days of receipt of the application by the competent authority, as significant changes have been made or significant new information has been added to the basic assessment report or EMPr or, where applicable, a closure plan, which changes or information was not contained in the reports or plans consulted on during the initial public participation process contemplated in subregulation (1)(a) and that the revised reports or, EMPr or, where applicable, a closure plan will be subjected to another public participation process of at least 30 days"*.

Should you fail to meet any of the timeframes stipulated in Regulation 19 of the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended, your application will lapse.

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 sincerely



Mr Sabelo Malaza

Chief Director: Integrated Environmental Authorisations

Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries

Signed by: Ms Sindiswa Dlomo

Designation: Deputy Director: National Infrastructure Projects

Date: 01/10/2020

cc:	Richard Gordon	Gunstfontein Wind Farm (Pty) Ltd	E-mail: stephnie.kot@aced.co.za
	Bryan Fisher	NC DENC	E-mail: Bfisher@ncpg.gov.za
	JJ Fortuin	Karoo Hoogland Local Municipality	E-mail: munman@karoohoogland.gov.za

DEFF

Biodiversity Conservation Unit



environment, forestry & fisheries

Department: Environment, Forestry
and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X447, Pretoria, 0001, Environment House, 473 Steve Biko Road, Pretoria, 0002 Tel: +27 12 399 9000, Fax: + 27 86 625 1042

Reference: Gunstfontein powerline

Enquiries: Ms Portia Makitla

Telephone: 012 399 9411 **E-mail:** pmakitla@environment.gov.za

Ms Nicolene Venter
Savannah Environmental
PO Box 148
SUNNINGHILL
2147

Telephone Number: +27 (11) 656 3237

Email Address: publicparticipation@savannahsa.com

PER E-MAIL

Dear Ms Venter

DRAFT BASIC ASSESSMENT REPORT COMMENTS FOR THE PROPOSED GRID CONNECTION EXTENSION INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE GUNSTFONTEIN WIND FARM, NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE

The Directorate: Biodiversity Conservation reviewed and evaluated the aforementioned draft report. Based on the information provided in the specialist report, the proposed extension of the grid connection is for the authorised Gunstfontein Wind Farm and the Gunstfontein Grid Connection. The project development site is located within the Komsberg Renewable Energy Development Zone (REDZ) and within the Central corridor of the Strategic Transmission Corridors. From a regional perspective, this area is considered favourable for the development of the proposed grid connection extension infrastructure. There are no known Important Bird Areas (IBAs) or wetlands of significant avifaunal importance within the vicinity (<50km) of the proposed grid development.

In Overall, there are no potential impacts associated with the proposed development that are considered to be of high significance and which cannot be mitigated to an acceptable level. As such, there are no fatal flaws or other major impediments that should prevent the development from going ahead.



Batho pele- putting people first

**DRAFT BASIC ASSESSMENT REPORT COMMENTS FOR THE PROPOSED GRID CONNECTION
EXTENSION INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE GUNSTFONTEIN WIND FARM, NORTHERN CAPE
PROVINCE**

In order to minimize the negative impacts that might occur as a result of the proposed development, the following recommendation must be considered:

- Suitable bird repelling structures and bird diverters must be considered to avoid collision of birds with the power lines;
- Areas with large trees must be avoided as they serve as potential roosting and breeding habitat for a variety of birds, including raptors;
- A specialist must be appointed to search and identify any active breeding site on site and if found must be demarcated as a NO-GO Zone and monitored during construction;
- All disturbed, exposed earth and cleared areas must be rehabilitated with indigenous perennial shrubs and grasses from the local area;
- Permits from relevant authorities must be obtained prior commencement of any construction activities for the removal or disturbance of any TOPs, Red Data listed or Provincially protected species;
- Sensitive areas in close proximity to the development footprint must be demarcated as no-go area i.e. drainage lines; and
- Erosion and Alien Plant Species Management Plan, and Rehabilitation Plan must be submitted as part of the final report to mitigate on habitat degradation due to erosion and alien plant invasion.

Lastly; the final report must also comply with all the requirements as outlined in the EIA guideline for renewable energy projects and the Revised Best Practice Guideline for Birds & Wind Energy for assessing and monitoring the impact of wind energy facilities on birds in Southern Africa.

Yours faithfully



Mr. Seoka Lekota
Control Biodiversity Officer Grade B: Biodiversity Conservation
Department of Environment, Forestry & Fisheries
Date: 05/10/2020

SAHRA



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Enquiries: Natasha Higgitt
Tel: 021 462 4502
Email: nhiggitt@sahra.org.za
CaseID: 15175

Date: Friday November 20, 2020
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Final Comment

In terms of Section 38(4), 38(8) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)

Attention: Savannah Environmental (Pty) Ltd

PO Box 148
Sunninghill
2157

Gunstfontein Wind Farm (Pty) Ltd proposes the construction and operation of a grid connection solution, known as the “grid extension infrastructure” for the authorised Gunstfontein Wind Farm (DEA Ref: 14/12/16/3/3/2/826), near Sutherland, Northern Cape Province. The grid connection solution will include the development of a double-circuit 132kV overhead power line (known as the Gunstfontein 132kV OHL extension double-circuit power line) to connect the Gunstfontein Wind Farm to the national grid, via the Hidden Valley substation. The proposed 132kV OHL extension will be an extension of the already authorised Gunstfontein Grid Connection (14/12/16/3/3/1/1619). Other associated infrastructure will also be required for the grid connection solution, such as access tracks/roads and laydown areas. A corridor 300m wide and approximately 7.5km long along with an assessment zone of 200m around the starting and terminating substation boundaries (collectively known as the grid corridor) is being assessed to allow for the optimisation of the grid (i.e. eventual micro siting) and associated infrastructure and to accommodate environmental sensitivities and other energy infrastructure currently under construction on the properties. It must be noted that the assessed corridor route is located directly adjacent and parallel to the approved Soetwater power line routing (this powerline connects the Heuwels and Hidden Valley substations, and is currently under construction by Soetwater and Karusa Wind Farms respectively). The proposed development consists of: A double-circuit 132kV overhead power line (known as the Gunstfontein 132kV OHL extension double-circuit power line); and Associated infrastructure: Laydown areas. Access and service tracks. A corridor 300m wide and approximately 7.5km long as well as a 200m wide assessment zone around each of the two substations is being assessed to allow for the optimisation of the grid and associated infrastructure and to accommodate environmental sensitivities. The grid infrastructure (including the power line and associated infrastructure) will be developed within the assessed 300m wide corridor and a 200m assessment zone around each of the substations (known as the grid connection infrastructure). The grid connection infrastructure will be located within a grid connection corridor located directly parallel and approximately 15m west of the authorised Soetwater WEF power line

Proposed Grid connection extension infrastructure for the Gunstfontein Wind Farm, Northern Cape.

Our Ref: 15175



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routing. The height of the power line towers of the 132kV double-circuit power line will be up to 32m and the servitude width of the power line will be up to 40m. The entire extent of the corridor proposed for the development is located within the Komsberg Renewable Energy Development Zone (REDZ) and within the central corridor of the Strategic Transmission Corridors. Access to the grid connection corridor is possible via numerous existing smaller farm roads in close vicinity to the corridor, primarily off the Regional 354 (R354) tarred road running between Matjiesfontein and Sutherland towns. Apart from these existing roads, the authorised Gunstfontein 132kV powerline provides for an access/service track along its length that can also be used to access the corridor. In addition, existing access roads to the Huewels and Hidden Valley substations (currently under construction) will be used to access the start- and end- point of the OHL extension. Formal roads will not be constructed underneath the power line for maintenance purposes, but rather access for maintenance purposes will be limited to jeep tracks running along the length of the line. Where possible, the existing service track for the Soetwater powerline will be utilised.

Savannah Environmental (Pty) Ltd has been appointed by Gunstfontein Wind Farm (Pty) Ltd to conduct an Environmental Authorisation (EA) Application process to extend the authorised Gunstfontein Grid Connection powerline to the authorised Gunstfontein Wind Farm, near Sutherland, Northern Cape Province

A draft Basic Assessment Report (DBAR) has been submitted in terms of the National Environmental Management Act, no 107 of 1998 (NEMA) and the NEMA Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations. The proposed extension of the powerline will include the construction of a 7.5 km single or double circuit 132KV overhead powerline, laydown areas and access and service tracks. It must be noted that while the DBAR notes that the Public Review period is from the 4th September 2020 to the 5th October 2020, the DBAR and appendices was only submitted to SAHRA on the 22nd October 2020. Therefore, in terms of the NEMA EIA timeframes, SAHRA has until the 21st November 2020 to provide comments.

It must be noted that the Gunstfontein Grid Connection application (DEFF Ref: 14/12/16/3/3/1/1619) was never submitted to SAHRA for comment, however the current powerline extension is located within the authorised Soetwater Powerline servitude, which has been commented on by SAHRA (see SAHRIS Case ID 8657 <https://sahris.sahra.org.za/cases/soetwater-facility-substation-complex-and-ancillaries-0> and SAHRIS Case ID 8658: <https://sahris.sahra.org.za/cases/soetwater-switching-station-ancillaries-power-line>). SAHRA had no objections to the proposed development and provided conditions for the development.

CTS Heritage has been appointed to provide heritage specialist input as part of the EA Amendment application report as required by section 24(4)b(iii) of NEMA and section 38(3) and 38(8) of the National

Proposed Grid connection extension infrastructure for the Gunsfontein Wind Farm, Northern Cape.

Our Ref: 15175



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Heritage Resources Act, Act 25 of 1999 (NHRA).

Lavin, J. 2020. Proposed Grid connection extension infrastructure for the Gunsfontein Wind Farm, Northern Cape

No heritage resources were previously identified within the proposed grid extension route.

Recommendations provided in the report include the following:

- If concentrations of historical and pre-colonial archaeological heritage material and/or human remains (including graves and burials) are uncovered during construction, all work in the vicinity must cease immediately and be reported to the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) so that systematic and professional investigation/excavation can be undertaken. Phase 2 mitigation in the form of test-pitting/sampling or systematic excavations and collections of the pre-colonial shell middens and associated artefacts will then be conducted to establish the contextual status of the sites and possibly remove the archaeological deposit before development activities continue;
- A person must be trained as a site monitor to report any archaeological sites found during the development. Construction managers/foremen and/or the Environmental Control Officer (ECO) should be informed before construction starts on the possible types of heritage sites and cultural material they may encounter and the procedures to follow when they find sites;
- Should substantial fossil remains such as vertebrate bones and teeth, plant-rich fossil lenses, fossil wood or dense fossil burrow assemblages be exposed during construction, the responsible ECO/EO/Environmental Representative should safeguard these, preferably in situ, and alert SAHRA, i.e. The South African Heritage Resources Authority, as soon as possible (Contact details: Mr P. Hine P.O. Box 4637, Cape Town 8000. Tel: 021 462 4502. Email: phine@sahra.org.za) so that appropriate action can be taken by a professional palaeontologist, at the Proponent's expense. Mitigation would normally involve the scientific recording and judicious sampling or collection of fossil material as well as associated geological data (e.g. stratigraphy, sedimentology, taphonomy) by a suitably qualified palaeontologist.

Final Comment

The following comments are made as a requirement in terms of section 3(4) of the NEMA Regulations and section 38(8) of the NHRA in the format provided in section 38(4) of the NHRA and must be included in the

Proposed Grid connection extension infrastructure for the Gunsfontein Wind Farm, Northern Cape.

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Final BAR and EMPr:

- 38(4)a – The SAHRA Archaeology, Palaeontology and Meteorites (APM) Unit has no objections to the proposed amendment to the authorised development;
- 38(4)b – The recommendations of the specialists are supported and must be adhered to. No further additional specific conditions are provided for the development;
- 38(4)c(i) – If any evidence of archaeological sites or remains (e.g. remnants of stone-made structures, indigenous ceramics, bones, stone artefacts, ostrich eggshell fragments, charcoal and ash concentrations), fossils or other categories of heritage resources are found during the proposed development, SAHRA APM Unit (Natasha Higgitt/Phillip Hine 021 462 5402) must be alerted as per section 35(3) of the NHRA. Non-compliance with section of the NHRA is an offense in terms of section 51(1)e of the NHRA and item 5 of the Schedule;
- 38(4)c(ii) – If unmarked human burials are uncovered, the SAHRA Burial Grounds and Graves (BGG) Unit (Thingahangwi Tshivhase/Mimi Seetelo 012 320 8490), must be alerted immediately as per section 36(6) of the NHRA. Non-compliance with section of the NHRA is an offense in terms of section 51(1)e of the NHRA and item 5 of the Schedule;
- 38(4)d – See section 51(1) of the NHRA;
- 38(4)e – The following conditions apply with regards to the appointment of specialists:
 - i) If heritage resources are uncovered during the course of the development, a professional archaeologist or palaeontologist, depending on the nature of the finds, must be contracted as soon as possible to inspect the heritage resource. If the newly discovered heritage resources prove to be of archaeological or palaeontological significance, a Phase 2 rescue operation may be required subject to permits issued by SAHRA;
 - The Final BAR and EMPr must be submitted to SAHRA for record purposes;
 - The decision regarding the EA Amendment Application must be communicated to SAHRA and uploaded to the SAHRIS Case application.

Should you have any further queries, please contact the designated official using the case number quoted above in the case header.

Yours faithfully

Proposed Grid connection extension infrastructure for the Gunsfontein Wind Farm, Northern Cape.

Our Ref: 15175



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Natasha Higgitt
Heritage Officer
South African Heritage Resources Agency

Phillip Hine
Manager: Archaeology, Palaeontology and Meteorites Unit
South African Heritage Resources Agency

ADMIN:

Direct URL to case: <http://www.sahra.org.za/node/537577>

Terms & Conditions:

1. This approval does not exonerate the applicant from obtaining local authority approval or any other necessary approval for proposed work.
2. If any heritage resources, including graves or human remains, are encountered they must be reported to SAHRA immediately.
3. SAHRA reserves the right to request additional information as required.

SARAO

Savannah Environmental Pty (Ltd)
First Floor, Block 2
5 Woodlands Drive Office Park
Cnr Woodlands Drive & Western Service Road
Woodmead
2191

Email: info@savannahsa.com
cc: nicolene@savannahsa.com

Date: 15 October 2020

To whom it may concern

RE: BASIC ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR GUNSTFONTEIN WIND FARM GRID CONNECTION INFRASTRUCTURE

SARAO has completed the preliminary risk re-assessment with regard to the electromagnetic emissions of the for the above mentioned project and its possible impact on the SKA radio telescope.

This project will pose a low risk of interference to the SKA and therefore, SARAO does not object to the development of the project.

Thank you for your patience and our office remains open for any discussion relating to this project and its impact on the SKA radio telescope.

Regards,



Mr Selaelo Matlhane
Spectrum & Telecommunication Manager
South African Radio Astronomy Observatory (SARAO)
Tel: 011 442 2434
Email: smatlhane@ska.ac.za

www.ska.ac.za

The South African Radio Astronomy Observatory (SARAO) is a National Facility managed by the National Research Foundation and incorporates all national radio astronomy telescopes and programmes. SARAO is responsible for implementing the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) in South Africa.