SCOPING REPORT

Draft – 24 February 2023

THE PROPOSED KHWEZI PHOTOVOLTAIC SOLAR POWER PLANT NEAR EXCELSIOR, FREE STATE PROVINCE

ENVIRONAMICS

PROJECT DETAIL

DFFE Reference No.	:	2023-01-0035
Project Title	:	The Proposed Khwezi Photovoltaic Solar Power Plant near Excelsior, Free State Province
Authors	:	Ms. Roschel Maharaj
Reviewed	:	Mrs. Marelie Botha
Client	:	Khwezi Solar PV (RF) (Pty) Ltd
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GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

BA	Basic Assessment
BAR	Basic Assessment Report
CEA	Cumulative Effects Assessment
DFFE	Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
DM	District Municipality
DMRE	Department of Mineral Resources and Energy
DWS	Department of Water and Sanitation
EA	Environmental Authorisation
EAP	Environmental Assessment Practitioner
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EMPr	Environmental Management Programme
EP	Equator Principles
EPFI	Equator Principles Financial Institutions
Environmental impact	Any change to the environment, whether adverse or beneficial, wholly or partially resulting from an organization's environmental aspects.
GNR	Government Notice Regulation
I&AP	Interested and affected party
IAP	Invasive Alien Plant
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IPP	Independent Power Producer
IRP	Integrated Resource Plan
kV	Kilo Volt
LM	Local Municipality
Mitigate	Activities designed to compensate for unavoidable environmental damage.
MW	Megawatt

NEMA	National Environmental Management Act No. 107 of 1998
NERSA	National Energy Regulator of South Africa
NWA	National Water Act No. 36 of 1998
PAOI	Project area of influence
POSA	Plants of South Africa
PPP	Public Participation Process
PV	Photovoltaic
REIPPP	Renewable Energy IPP Procurement Process
SAHRA	South African Heritage Resources Agency
SCC	Species of Conservation Concern
SDF	Spatial Development Framework
SPP	Solar Power Plant
VU	Vegetation Unit

CONTEXT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT

According to Eskom, the demand for electricity in South Africa has been growing at approximately 3% per annum. This growing demand, fueled by increasing economic growth and social development, is placing increasing pressure on South Africa's existing power generation capacity. Coupled with this, is the growing awareness of environmentally responsible development, the impacts of climate change and the need for sustainable development. The use of renewable energy technologies, as one of a mix of technologies needed to meet future energy consumption requirements is being investigated as part of the national Department of Mineral Resources and Energy's (DMRE) (previously referred to as the Department of Energy) long-term strategic planning and research process.

The primary rationale for the proposed solar photovoltaic (PV) facility is to add new generation capacity from renewable energy to the national electricity mix and to aid in achieving the goal of 42% share of all new installed generating capacity being derived from renewable energy forms, as targeted by DMRE (Integrated Resource Plan Update 2010-2030). The IRP also identifies the preferred generation technologies required to meet the expected demand growth up to 2030 and incorporates government objectives including affordable electricity, reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, reduced water consumption, diversified electricity generation sources and localisation and regional development. In terms of the Integrated Resource Plan Update (2019 IRP Update, 2010-2030), over the short term (of the next two or three years), clear guidelines arose; namely to continue with the current renewable bid programme with additional annual rounds of 1000 MW PV, with approximately 8.4 GW of the renewable energy capacity planned to be installed from PV technologies over the next twenty years.

The proposed project is intended to form part of the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy's (DMREs) Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement (REIPPP) Programme or any other programmes/opportunities to generate power in South Africa. The REIPPP Programme aims to secure 14 725 Megawatts (MW) of new generation capacity from renewable energy sources, while simultaneously diversifying South Africa's electricity mix. According to the 2021 State of the Nation Address, Government will soon be initiating the procurement of an additional 11 800 MW of power from renewable energy, natural gas, battery storage and coal in line with the Integrated Resource Plan 2019 and fulfilling their commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement which include the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Eskom, our largest greenhouse gas emitter, has committed in principle to net zero emission by 2050 and to increase its renewable capacity.

In response to the above, Khwezi Solar PV (RF) (Pty) Ltd is proposing the development of a photovoltaic solar facility and associated infrastructure for the purpose of commercial electricity generation on an identified site located on the Farm Koppiesdam No. 511 (PV facility); Farm Welgegund No. 100 and Farm Noodshulp No. 2052 (access road), Registration Division Winburg,

Free State Province situated within the Mantsopa Local Municipality area of jurisdiction (refer to Figure A for the locality map). The project entails the generation of up to 300 MW electrical power through photovoltaic (PV) technology. The total development footprint of the project will be approximately 500 hectares (including supporting infrastructure) within the 750 hectares identified and assessed as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. From a regional site selection perspective, this region is preferred for solar energy development due to its global horizontal irradiation value of around 2025 kWh/m^2.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Like many other small and developing municipalities in the country, the Mantsopa Local Municipality faces a number of challenges in addressing the needs of sustainable growth and improved quality of life (IDP, 2021/2022). The Mantsopa Local Municipality Integrated Development Plan (2021/2022) identifies specific threats and weaknesses experienced in the municipal area which includes providing democratic and accountable government for local communities, to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner, to promote a safe and healthy environment, to promote social and economic development, to encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in the matters of local Government. In line with its developmental mandate, Mantsopa Local Municipality understands its service delivery objectives as set out in the developmental strategies. Therefore, the developmental strategies as espoused in the IDP are directly linked to a specific developmental needs and objectives which must be measured in the organizational Performance Management System (PMS) and give effect to Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) targets/ goals.

Khwezi Solar PV (RF) (Pty) Ltd intends to develop a 300 MW photovoltaic solar facility and associated infrastructure on the Farm Koppiesdam No. 511 (PV facility); Farm Welgegund No. 100 and Farm Noodshulp No. 2052 (access road), situated within the Mantsopa Local Municipality area of jurisdiction. The town of Excelsior is located approximately 10 km southeast of the proposed development (refer to Figure A and B for the locality and regional map). The total footprint of the project will approximately be 500 hectares (including supporting infrastructure on site). The site was identified as being highly desirable due to its suitable climatic conditions, topography (i.e., in terms of slope), environmental conditions (i.e., agricultural potential, ecological sensitivity and archaeology), proximity to the R703 (i.e., to facilitate the movement of machinery, equipment, infrastructure and people during the construction phase).

In terms of the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998), with specific reference to Sections 24 and 24D, as read with GNR 324-327, as amended (2017), Environmental Authorisation is required for the Khwezi Solar Power Plant (SPP). The following listed activities have been identified with special reference to the proposed development and are listed in the EIA Regulations (as amended):

- Activity 11 (i) (GN.R. 327): *"The development of facilities or infrastructure for the transmission and distribution of electricity outside urban areas or industrial complexes with a capacity of more than 33 but less than 275 kilovolts."*
- Activity 12(ii)(a)(c) (GN.R. 327): "*The development of (ii) infrastructure or structures with a physical footprint of 100 square metres or more; (a) within a watercourse or (c) within 32 meters of a watercourse measured from the edge of a watercourse."*

- Activity 19 (GN.R. 327): *"The infilling or depositing of any material of more than 10 cubic metres into, or the dredging, excavation, removal or moving of soil, sand, shells, shell grit, pebbles or rock of more than 10 cubic metres from a watercourse."*
- Activity 24 (ii) (GN.R 327): *"The development of a road (ii) with reserve wider than 13,5 meters, or where no reserve exists where the road is wider than 8 meters."*
- Activity 27 (GN.R. 327): *"The clearance of an area of 1 hectares or more, but less than 20 hectares of indigenous vegetation…"*
- Activity 28 (ii) (GN.R. 327): *"Residential, mixed, retail, commercial, industrial or institutional developments where such land was used for agriculture or afforestation on or after 1998 and where such development (ii) will occur outside an urban area, where the total land to be developed is bigger than 1 hectare."*
- Activity 56 (ii) (GN.R 327): "*The widening of a road by more than 6 metres, or the lengthening of a road by more than 1 kilometre (ii) where no reserve exists, where the existing road is wider than 8 metres…"*
- Activity 1 (GN.R. 325): *"The development of facilities or infrastructure for the generation of electricity from a renewable resource where the electricity output is 20 megawatts or more..."*
- Activity 15 (GN.R. 325): *"The clearance of an area of 20 hectares or more of indigenous vegetation..."*
- Activity 10 (b)(i)(hh) (GN.R 324): *"The development and related operation of facilities or infrastructure for the storage, or storage and handling of a dangerous good, where such storage occurs in containers with a combined capacity of 30 but not exceeding 80 cubic metres (b) in the Free State, (i) outside urban areas, (hh) areas within a watercourse or wetland; or within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland."*
- Activity 12 (b)(vi) (GN.R 324): "*The clearance of an area of 300 square metres or more of indigenous vegetation except where such clearance of indigenous vegetation in (b) Free State (iv) Areas within a watercourse or wetland; or within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland".*
- Activity 14(ii)(a)(c)(b)(i)(ff) (GN.R 324): *"The development of (ii) infrastructure or structures with a physical footprint of 10 square metres or more, where such development occurs (a) within a watercourse or (c) within 32 metres of a watercourse, measured from the edge of a watercourse, (b) within the Free State, (i) outside urban areas within (ff) critical biodiversity areas or ecosystem service areas as identified in systematic biodiversity plans adopted by the competent authority or in bioregional."*
- Activity 18 (b)(i)(hh) (GN.R 324): *"The widening of a road by more than 4 metres, or the lengthening of a road by more than 1 kilometre (b) in the Free State (i) outside urban*

areas, within (hh) areas within a watercourse or wetland; or within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland."

Activities required for the development of the solar facility which are listed under Listing Notice 1, 2 and 3 (GNR 327, 325 and 324) implies that the development could potentially have a significant impact on the environment that will require mitigation. Subsequently a thorough assessment process is required as described in Regulations 21-24 of the EIA Regulations in order to obtain Environmental Authorisation (EA). Environamics has been appointed as the independent consultant to undertake the EIA on behalf of Khwezi Solar PV (RF) (Pty) Ltd.

Regulation 21 of the EIA Regulations requires that a scoping report must contain the information set out in Appendix 2 of the Regulations or comply with a protocol or minimum information requirements relevant to the application as identified and gazetted by the Minister in a government notice. Appendix 2 of GNR326 requires that information which is necessary for a proper understanding of the process, informing all preferred alternatives, including location alternatives, the scope of the assessment, and the consultation process undertaken be set out in the scoping report.

The potentially sensitive areas which have been identified through the environmental scoping study are detailed in the chapters to follow. The scoping phase provides a high-level overview of the sensitivity on the Khwezi SPP project site. The detail is based on the desktop review of available baseline information for the project site, as well as the sensitivity data received from specialist studies undertaken during the scoping phase. During the scoping phase, the affected area was investigated in sufficient detail in order to provide reliable insight into the potential for constraining factors on the site. The sensitivity map(s) must be used as a tool by the developer to avoid any areas flagged to be of higher risk or sensitivity which must in turn inform the development layout which can then be further investigated during the EIA Phase in order to develop an environmentally suitable, reasonable and practical facility layout for the Khwezi SPP.

Based on the high-level assessments undertaken to inform this scoping process, it has been predicted that the proposed development will have a net positive impact for the area and will subsequently ensure the optimal utilisation of resources and land. All negative environmental impacts can be effectively mitigated through the recommended mitigation measures and no residual negative impacts are foreseen. The potentially most significant environmental impacts associated with the development, as identified in this scoping phase, are briefly summarised below.

It must be noted that the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) phase of the project will consider the impacts on a more detailed level and provide feedback on the facility layout for the proposed project.

<u>Predicted impacts during the construction phase:</u>

During the construction phase minor negative impacts are foreseen over the short term. The latter refers to a period of 12-18 months. The potentially most significant impacts relate to habitat destruction caused by clearance of vegetation and socio-economic impacts such as the creation of direct and indirect employment opportunities, economic multiplier effects from the use of local goods and services and temporary increase in traffic disruptions and movement patterns.

Predicted impacts during the operational phase:

During the operational phase the site will serve as a solar PV energy facility and the potential impacts will take place over a period of 20 – 25 years. The negative impacts are generally associated with habitat destruction caused by clearance of vegetation, displacement of priority avian species from important habitats, collision and electrocutions of avifauna and visual impact of sensitive visual receptors occurring for motorists that drive passed the proposed solar power plant. The provision of sustainable services delivery also needs to be confirmed. The operational phase will have a direct positive impact through the creation of employment opportunities and skills development, development of non-polluting, renewable energy infrastructure and contribution to economic development and social upliftment.

Predicted impacts during the decommissioning phase:

The negative impacts generally associated with the decommissioning phase include: habitat destruction caused by clearance of vegetation and the loss of permanent employment. However, skilled staff will be eminently employable and a number of temporary jobs will also be created in the process. It is not expected that the facility will be decommissioned, but rather that the technology used will be upgraded.

Cumulative impacts:

Cumulative impacts could arise as other similar projects are constructed in the area. According to the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE) database only one similar development has been proposed in relatively close proximity to the proposed activity.

The potential for cumulative impacts is therefore limited but may still exist. The draft scoping report includes an assessment of the potential cumulative impacts associated with the proposed development. Potential cumulative impacts with a significance rating of negative medium during the construction phase relate to habitat destruction and fragmentation, displacement of priority avian species from important habitats, loss of important avian habitats, impacts of employment opportunities, business opportunities and skills development and impact associated with large-scale in-migration of people. Cumulative impacts during the operational phase relate to habitat destruction and fragmentation and visual intrusion. The cumulative effect of the generation of waste was identified as being potentially significant during the decommissioning phase.

Regulation 23 of the EIA Regulations determine that an EIA report be prepared and submitted for the proposed activity after the competent authority approves the final scoping report. The EIA report will evaluate and rate each identified impact and identify mitigation measures that may be

required. The EIA report will contain information that is necessary for the competent authority to consider the application for Environmental Authorisation and to reach a decision contemplated in Regulation 24 of the EIA Regulations.

1 INTRODUCTION

This section aims to introduce the scoping report and specifically to address the following requirements of the regulations:

Appendix 2. (2) A scoping report (...) must include- (a) details of:
(i) the EAP who prepared the report; and
(ii) the expertise of the EAP, including a curriculum vitae.

1.1 LEGAL MANDATE AND PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The National Environmental Management Act identifies listed activities (in terms of Section 24) which are likely to have an impact on the environment. These activities cannot commence without obtaining an Environmental Authorisation (EA) from the relevant competent authority, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE). Sufficient information is required by the competent authority to make an informed decision and the project is therefore subject to an environmental assessment process which can be either a Basic Assessment Process or a full Scoping and Environmental Impact Assessment process.

The Listing Notices 1, 2 and 3 (GNR 327, 325 and 324) outline the activities that may be triggered and therefore require EA. This implies that the development is considered as potentially having a significant impact on the environment. Subsequently a 'thorough S&EIA assessment process' is required as described in Regulations 21-24. A detailed description of the listed activities that are triggered are included in chapter 2 to follow. According to Appendix 2 of Regulation 326 the objective of the scoping process is to, through a consultative process:

- Identify the relevant policies and legislation relevant to the activity;
- Motivate the need and desirability of the proposed activity, including the need and desirability of the activity in the context of the preferred location;
- Identify and confirm the preferred activity and technology alternative through an identification of impacts and risks and ranking process of such impacts and risks;
- Identify and confirm the preferred site, through a detailed site selection process, which includes an identification of impacts and risks inclusive of identification of cumulative impacts and a ranking process of all the identified alternatives focusing on the geographical, physical, biological, social, economic, and cultural aspects of the environment;
- Identify the key issues to be addressed in the assessment phase;
- Agree on the level of assessment to be undertaken, including the methodology to be applied, the expertise required as well as the extent of further consultation to be

undertaken to determine the impacts and risks the activity will impose on the preferred site through the life of the activity, including the nature, significance, consequence, extent, duration and probability of the impacts to inform the location of the development footprint within the preferred site; and

- Identify suitable measures to avoid, manage or mitigate identified impacts and to determine the extent of the residual risks that need to be managed and monitored.

This Draft Scoping Report has been submitted to the DFFE for review and comment. According to Regulation 326 all registered I&APs and relevant State Departments (including Organs of State) must be allowed the opportunity to review and provide comment on the scoping report. The Draft Scoping Report has been made available to I&APs and all relevant State Departments. They have been requested to provide written comments on the report within 30 days of receiving it. All issues to be identified and comments received during the review period will be documented and compiled into a Comments and Response Report to be included as part of this Final Scoping Report. Where comments have been received prior to the release of the Draft Scoping Report for the 30-day review and comment period, these comments have been included in Appendix C5 and C6 and has also been included and responded to in the Comments and Responses Report (Appendix C7).

1.2 DETAILS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PRACTITIONER (EAP)

Environamics was appointed by the applicant as the independent EAP to conduct the EIA and prepare all required reports. All correspondence to the EAP can be directed to:

Contact person:	Marélie Botha
EAPASA Registration:	2021/3834
Postal Address:	14 Kingfisher Street, Tuscany Ridge Estate, Potchefstroom, 2531
Telephone:	082 493 5166 (Cell)
Electronic Mail:	marelie@environamics.co.za

And/or

Contact person:	Roschel Maharaj
EAPASA Registration:	2019/824
Postal Address:	14 Kingfisher Street, Tuscany Ridge Estate, Potchefstroom, 2531
Telephone:	063 062 7725 (Cell)
Electronic Mail:	roschel@environamics.co.za

Regulation 13(1)(a) and (b) determines that an independent and suitably qualified and experienced EAP should conduct the S&EIR process. In terms of the independent status of the EAP a declaration is attached as Appendix A to this report. The expertise of the EAP responsible for

conducting the S&EIR process is also summarized in the curriculum vitae included as part of Appendix A.

1.3 DETAILS OF SPECIALISTS

Table 1.1 provides information on the specialists that have been appointed as part of the S&EIR process. Regulation 13(1)(a) and (b) determines that an independent and suitably qualified, experienced and independent specialist should conduct the specialist study, in the event where the specialist is not independent, a specialist should be appointed to externally review the work of the specialist as contemplated in sub regulation (2), must comply with sub regulation 1. In terms of the independent status of the specialists, their declarations are attached as Appendix E to this report. The expertise of the specialists is also summarized in their respective reports.

Table 1.1: Details of specialists

Study	Prepared by	Contact Person	Postal Address	Tel	e-mail
Terrestrial Ecology Baseline and Impact Assessment	The Biodiversity Company	Andrew Husted	-	Cell: 081 319 1225	info@thebiodiversitycompany.com
Avifaunal Scoping Assessment	The Biodiversity Company	Andrew Husted	-	Cell: 081 319 1225	info@thebiodiversitycompany.com
Wetland Baseline and Risk Assessment	The Biodiversity Company	Andrew Husted	-	Cell: 081 319 1225	info@thebiodiversitycompany.com
Soil and Agricultural Assessment	The Biodiversity Company	Andrew Husted	-	Cell: 081 319 1225	info@thebiodiversitycompany.com
Heritage Impact Assessment	J van Schalkwyk Heritage Consultant	J van Schalkwyk	62 Coetzer Avenue Monument Park 0181	Cell: 076 790 6777	jvschalkwyk@mweb.co.za
Paleontological Study	Banzai Environmental (Pty) Ltd	Elize Butler	-	Cell: 084 447 8759	elizebutler002@gmail.com
Social Impact Assessment	Donaway Environmental Consultants	Johan Botha	30 Fouche Street Steynsrus 9515	Cell: 082 493 5166	johan@donaway.co.za
Visual Impact Assessment	Donaway Environmental Consultants	Johan Botha	30 Fouche Street Steynsrus 9515	Tel: 082 316 7749	johan@donaway.co.za

Traffic Impact Assessment	BVi Consulting Engineers	DJP van der Merwe	Edison Square c/o Edison Way & Century Avenue Century City 7441	-	-

1.4 STATUS OF THE EIA PROCESS

The Scoping and Environmental Impact Reporting (S&EIR) process is conducted strictly in accordance with the stipulations set out in Regulations 21-24 of Regulation No. 326. Table 1.3 provides a summary of the EIA process and future steps to be taken. It can be confirmed that to date:

- A site visit was conducted by the EAP on 7 October 2022.
- Site notices were erected on site on 7 October 2022 informing the public of the commencement of the EIA process.
- The Background Information Document (BID) was circulated to all I&APs and surrounding landowners on 7 October 2022.
- A newspaper advertisement was placed in the Bloemnuus on 13 October 2022, informing the public of the EIA process and for the public to register as I&APs.
- A pre-application meeting request was submitted to DFFE on 1 February 2023.
- The DFFE indicated that a pre-application meeting is not required, in an email dated 06 February 2023.
- An application form and the draft Scoping Report will be submitted to DFFE on 24 February 2023.
- The draft Scoping Report will be made available for a 30-day review and comment period from 24 February 2023 to 26 March 2023.

It is envisaged that the Final Scoping Report will be submitted to the Department in April 2023 and that the Final Scoping Report will be accepted by the Department in June 2023. The S&EIR process should be completed within approximately nine months of submission of the Draft Scoping Report, i.e., by November 2023 – see Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Estimated timeframe for completion of the 'scoping and EIA process'

Activity	Prescribed timeframe	Timeframe
Site visits	-	7 October 2022
Public participation (BID)	30 Days	07 October 2022 – 7 November 2022
Pre-application meeting	-	N/A
Conduct specialist studies	-	October 2022 – January 2023
Submit application form and DSR	-	February 2023

Public participation (DSR)	30 Days	Feb - March 2023
Submit FSR	44 Days	April 2023
Department acknowledges receipt	10 Days	April 2023
Department approves/reject	43 Days	June 2023
Public participation (DEIR)	30 Days	June – July 2023
Submit FEIR & EMPr	106 Days	August 2023
Department acknowledges receipt	10 Days	August 2023
Decision	107 Days	October – November 2023
Department notifies of decision	5 Days	November 2023
Registered I&APs notified of decision	14 Days	November 2023
Appeal	20 Days	November 2023

Table 1.3 below provides more detail on timeframes as well as process flow for the S&EIR process.

Table 1.3: Estimated Timeframe for Completion of the 'S&EIR Processes' for Khwezi SPP

Tasks to be performed	October				November				December				January				February				March				April				May				June				July				August			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
REGISTRATION PHASE																																												
Pre-application meeting (DFFE doesn't require meeting)							X																																					
Site visits	X																																										
Public participation																																											
– Press advertisement		X																																									
– On site advertisement	X																																										
– Distribution of notices							X																																				
– Complete PP report											X																																
Specialist inputs and reports																																											
– Draft terms of reference			X																																								
– Receive specialist studies										X																																	
'Draft' Scoping Report																																											
- Information gathering										X																																	
- Report writing																			X																								
- Circulate 'Draft' Scoping Report																								X																				
SCOPING PHASE																																												
Complete and submit application form																																												
– Information gathering																																												
– Complete and submit application form																		X																										
Authority acknowledges receipt of application form																																												
Final Scoping Report																																												
– Information gathering																																												
– Report writing																										X																		
– Submission of Final Scoping Report																											X																	
– Approval																																												
EIA PHASE																																												
Specialist inputs and reports																																												
– Draft terms of reference																																												
– Receive specialist studies																																												
Draft EIR Report																																												
- Circulate																																												
Final EIA Report & EMP																																												
- Submission																																												

The competent authority has 107 days for decision-making after the EIR has been submitted and an additional 5 days to notify the applicant in writing of their decision. The applicant must within 14 days of the date of the decision notify registered I&APs of the decision. Registered I&APs are then provided 20 days in which to lodge appeals. The appeal period expires 20 days after registered I&APs have been informed of the decision according to GNR326, Regulation 7.

1.5 SPECIALIST STUDIES IDENTIFIED IN THE DFFE SCREENING TOOL REPORT

In terms of GN R960 (promulgated on 5 July 2019) and Regulation 16(1)(b)(v) of the 2014 EIA Regulations (as amended), the submission of a Screening Report generated from the national web based environmental screening tool is compulsory for the submission of applications in terms of Regulations and 21 – 24 of the EIA Regulations. The requirement for the submission of a Screening Report for the Khwezi SPP is applicable as it triggers Regulation 21 of the EIA Regulations, 2014 (as amended).

The table included below provides an indication of the specialist studies identified by the DFFE Screening Tool Report (Appendix B), an indication of whether the studies were undertaken or not and a motivation or confirmation of the studies being included or not.

Table 1.4: Specialist studies Identified by the DFFE screening tool and specialist studies completed

Study identified in the DFFE Screening Tool and sensitivity	Study included?	Appendix
Agricultural Impact Assessment Sensitivity: High	Yes	A Soils and Agricultural Assessment Report is included in Appendix E4 of the Scoping Report.
Animal Species Assessment Sensitivity: Medium	Yes	A Terrestrial Ecology Baseline and Impact Assessment is included in Appendix E1 of the Scoping Report.
Aquatic Biodiversity Impact Assessment Sensitivity: Very High	Yes	A Wetland Baseline and Risk Assessment is included in Appendix E1. This assessment has been undertaken in terms of the Protocols of GNR320 – refer to the content of the report.
Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment Sensitivity: Low	Yes	A Heritage Impact Assessment is included in Appendix E5 of the Scoping Report, as per the requirements of the National Heritage Resources Act.
Avian Impact Assessment Sensitivity: Low	Yes	An Avifaunal scoping report is included in Appendix E2.

Civil Aviation Assessment Sensitivity: Low	No	The identification of the site as low sensitivity considering civil aviation is agreed to by the EAP. This is based on the current land use of the site being used for agricultural purposes. The Civil Aviation Authority has been consulted regarding the development of the project since the commencement of the S&EIR Process. No specific negative impacts or issues have been raised to date by the CAA regarding the project. The project is also not located within an area considered to be of a high sensitivity.
Defence Theme Sensitivity: Low	No	The affected property is confirmed to be used for agricultural purposes and therefore the development will not have any impact on defence installations. The sensitivity for the entire extent of the site is low and therefore no assessment has been included. The South African National Defence Force has been consulted regarding the development of the project since the commencement of the S&EIR Process. No specific negative impacts or issues have been raised to date regarding the project. The project is also not located within an area considered to be of a high sensitivity.
Landscape / Visual Impact Assessment Sensitivity: Very High	Yes	A Visual Impact Assessment is included in Appendix E3 of the Scoping Report.

Palaeontological Impact Assessment Sensitivity: Very High	Yes	A Palaeontological Impact Assessment is included in Appendix E6 of the Scoping Report, as per the requirements of the National Heritage Resources Act.
Plant species Assessment Sensitivity: Low	Yes	A Terrestrial Ecology Baseline and Impact Assessment is included in Appendix E1 of the Scoping Report.
RFI Assessment Sensitivity: Low	No	The RFI theme sensitivity is low for the entire extent of the project. The South African Radio Astronomy Observatory (SARAO) has been consulted regarding the development of the project since the commencement of the S&EIR Process. No specific negative impacts or issues have been raised to date by the SARAO regarding the project. The project is also not located within an area considered to be of a high sensitivity.
Terrestrial Biodiversity Impact Assessment Sensitivity: Very High	Yes	A Terrestrial Ecology Baseline and Impact Assessment is included in Appendix E1 of the Scoping Report. This assessment has been undertaken in terms of the Protocols of GNR320 – refer to the content of the report.
Geotechnical Assessment Sensitivity: Not indicated	No	The detailed Geotechnical Assessment will be conducted before construction begins as part of the micro-siting of the facility layout. The consideration of geotechnical aspects is considered to be of a

		technical concern rather than an environmental concern.
Socio-Economic Assessment Sensitivity: Not indicated	Yes	A Social Impact Assessment is included in Appendix E7.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report is structured in accordance with the prescribed contents stipulated in Appendix 2 of Regulation No.326. It consists of eight sections demonstrating compliance to the specifications of the regulations as illustrated in Table 1.5.

Table 1.5: Structure of the report

Requirements for the contents of a scoping report as specified in the Regulations		Section in report
(a)	details of -	1
	(i) the EAP who prepared the report; and	
	ii) the expertise of the EAP, including a curriculum vitae.	
(b)	the location of the activity, including-	2
	(i) the 21-digit Surveyor General code of each cadastral land parcel;	
	(ii) where available, the physical address and farm name;	
	(iii) where the required information in items (i) and (ii) is not available, the coordinates of the boundary of the property or properties;	
(c)	a plan which locates the proposed activity or activities applied for at an appropriate scale, or, if it is-	
	(i) a linear activity, a description and coordinates of the corridor in which the proposed activity or activities is to be undertaken; or	
	(ii) on land where the property has not been defined, the coordinates within which the activity is to be undertaken;	
(d)	a description of the scope of the proposed activity, including-	

	(i) all listed and specified activities triggered;	
	(ii) a description of the activities to be undertaken, including associated structures and infrastructure.	
(e)	A description of the policy and legislative context within which the development is proposed including an identification of all legislation, policies, plans, guidelines, spatial tools, municipal development planning frameworks and instruments that are applicable to this activity and are to be considered in the assessment process;	3
(f)	a motivation for the need and desirability for the proposed development including the need and desirability of the activity in the context of the preferred location;	4
(g)	a full description of the process followed to reach the proposed preferred activity, site and location of the development footprint within the site, including –	5
	(i) details of all the alternatives considered;	
	(ii) details of the public participation process undertaken in terms of regulation 41 of the Regulations, including copies of the supporting documents and inputs;	
	(iii) a summary of the issues raised by interested and affected parties, and an indication of the manner in which the issues were incorporated, or the reasons for not including them.	
	(iv) the environmental attributes associated with the alternatives focusing on the geographical, physical, biological, social, economic, heritage and cultural aspects;	
	(ix) the outcome of the site selection matrix;	
	(x) if no alternatives, including alternative locations for the activity were investigated, the motivation for not considering such and	
	(xi) a concluding statement indicating the preferred alternatives, including preferred location of the activity;	
(g)	(v) the impacts and risks which have informed the identification of each alternative, including the nature, significance, consequence, extent, duration and probability of such identified impacts, including the degree to which	6

	these impacts- (aa) can be reversed; (bb) may cause irreplaceable loss of resources; and (cc) can be avoided, managed or mitigated;	
	(vi) the methodology used in identifying and ranking the nature, significance, consequences, extent, duration and probability of potential environmental impacts and risks associated with the alternatives;	
	(vii) positive and negative impacts that the proposed activity and alternatives will have on the environment and on the community that may be affected focusing on the geographical, physical, biological, social, economic, heritage and cultural aspects;	
	(viii) the possible mitigation measures that could be applied and level of residual risk;	
(i)	a plan of study for undertaking the environmental impact assessment process to be undertaken, including-	8
	(i) a description of the alternatives to be considered and assessed within the preferred site, including the option of not proceeding with the activity;	
	(ii) a description of the aspects to be assessed as part of the EIA process;	
	(iii) aspects to be assessed by specialists;	
	(iv) a description of the proposed method of assessing the environmental aspects, including aspects to be assessed by specialists;	
	(v) a description of the proposed method of assessing duration and significance;	
	(vi) an indication of the stages at which the competent authority will be consulted;	
	(vii) particulars of the public participation process that will be conducted during the EIA process; and	
	(viii) a description of the tasks that will be undertaken as part of the EIA process;	
	(ix) identify suitable measures to avoid, reverse, mitigate or manage identified impacts and to determine the extent of the residual risks that need to be managed and monitored.	
(j)	an undertaking under oath or affirmation by the EAP in relation to-	

	(i) the correctness of the information provided in the report;	Appendix A to the report
	(ii) the inclusion of comments and inputs from stakeholders and interested and affected parties; and	
	(iii) any information provided by the EAP to I&APs and any responses by the EAP to comments or inputs made by I&APs;	
(k)	an undertaking under oath or affirmation by the EAP in relation to the level of agreement between the EAP and I&APs on the plan of study for undertaking the EIA;	
(l)	where applicable, any specific information required by the CA; and	N/A
(m)	any other matter required in terms of section 24(4)(a) and (b) of the Act.	N/A

2 ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

This section aims to address the following requirements of the regulations:

Appendix 2. (2) A scoping report (...) must include-

(b) the location of the activity, including-

(i) the 21-digit Surveyor General code of each cadastral land parcel;

(ii) where available, the physical address and farm name;

(iii) where the required information in items (i) and (ii) is not available, the coordinates of the boundary of the property or properties;

(c) a plan which locates the proposed activity applied for at an appropriate scale, or, if it is-

(i) a linear activity, a description and coordinates of the corridor in which the proposed activity or activities is to be undertaken; or

(ii) on land where the property has not been defined, the coordinates within which the activity is to be undertaken;

(d) a description of the scope of the proposed activity, including-

(i) all listed and specified activities triggered;

(ii) a description of the activities to be undertaken, including associated structures and infrastructure.

2.1 THE LOCATION OF THE ACTIVITY AND PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The activities entail the development of a photovoltaic solar power plant and associated infrastructure on Farm Koppiesdam No. 511 (PV facility); Farm Welgegund No. 100 and Farm Noodshulp No. 2052 (access road), Registration Division Winburg, Free State Province situated within the Mantsopa Local Municipality area of jurisdiction. The proposed development is located in the Free State Province in central interior of South-Africa (refer to Figure B for the regional map). The town of Excelsior is located approximately 10 km southeast of the proposed development (refer to Figure A for the locality map).

The project entails the generation of up to 300 MW electrical power through the installation and operation of photovoltaic (PV) panels. An area of 750 ha has been assessed as part of this Scoping Report (hereafter referred to as the "development area"). The full extent of the development area has been considered during scoping with the aim of confirming the suitability from an environmental and social perspective. A development footprint will be defined based on the outcomes of the scoping phase and will be further assessed in the EIA phase. It is envisioned that the development footprint for the Khwezi SPP will be ~500 ha in extent. The property on which

the facility is to be constructed will be leased by Khwezi Solar PV (RF) (Pty) Ltd from the property owner for the life span of the project (minimum of 20 years).

Energy generated by the facility will be transmitted from the facility substation/Eskom switching station to the Merapi Transmission Substation via a new 132kV powerline. A separate Basic Assessment is being undertaken to assess the grid connection infrastructure. Refer to Table 2.1 for the general site information.

Table 2.1: General site information

Description of affected farm portion	Solar PV Facility: • Farm Koppiesdam No. 511 Access Road: • Farm Koppiesdam No. 511 • Farm Welgegund No. 100 • Farm Noodshulp No. 2052
Province	Free State
District Municipality	Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality
Local Municipality	Mantsopa Local Municipality
Ward numbers	Ward 9
Closest towns	Excelsior is located approximately 10 km southeast of the proposed development.
21 Digit Surveyor General codes	Solar PV Facility: • Farm Koppiesdam No. 511 F04200000000051100000 Access Road: • Farm Koppiesdam No. 511 F04200000000051100000 • Farm Welgegund No. 100 F04200000000010000000 • Farm Noodshulp No. 2052

	F04200000000205200000

Title Deed	Solar PV Facility:
	• Farm Koppiesdam No. 511
	  ○ T13257/2012
	Access Road:
	• Farm Koppiesdam No. 511
	  ○ T13257/2012
	• Farm Welgegund No. 100
	  ○ T58501/2007
	• Farm Noodshulp No. 2052
	  ○ T8503/2007

Photographs of the site	Included in Plates as an appendix to the Report
Type of technology	Photovoltaic solar facility
Structure Height	• Panels ~6m • Buildings ~ 6m • Battery storage facility ~8m height
Battery storage	Within a 4 ha area within the development footprint
Surface area to be covered (Development footprint)	Approximately 500 ha
Structure orientation	Monofacial or Bifacial PV panels will be utilised. The panels will either be fixed to a single-axis and/or double horizontal tracking structure where the orientation of the panel varies according to the time of the day, as the sun moves from east to west or tilted at a fixed angle equivalent to the latitude at which the site is located in order to capture the most sun.
Laydown area dimensions (area assessed as part of the EIA)	Temporary laydown areas will occupy up to 10 hectares while 500 hectares will remain in place for the permanent laydown areas as required for facility operation.

Generation capacity	Up to 300 MW
Expected production	2200kWh/kWp (Expected production by 300MWdc modules Considering Bifacial and one-axis tracker). This may vary depending on the chosen technology.

The site is located within a rural setting and is bordered by agricultural land uses, as well as mining activities. The site survey revealed that the land capabilities associated with the assessment area are suitable for rainfed cropping, irrigated cropping and livestock grazing, which corresponds with the current land use. The site is also characterised by secondary grassland, degraded grassland and wetlands. Wetland types found within the project area include a Channelled Valley Bottom wetland and two (02) Unchanneled Valley Bottom wetlands – refer to plates 1 – 9 for photographs of the affected property and proposed development footprint area.

2.2 ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

The proposed development will trigger the following activities:

Table 2.2: Listed activities

Relevant notice:	**Activity No (s)**	**Description of each listed activity as per project description**:
GNR. 327 (as amended in 2017)	Activity 11(i)	• *"The development of facilities or infrastructure for the transmission and distribution of electricity (i) outside urban areas or industrial complexes with a capacity of more than 33 but less than 275 kilovolts".* • Activity 11(i) is triggered since the proposed photovoltaic solar facility includes an on-site HV/MV substation and switching station with a capacity of up to 132kV. It is expected that generation from the facility will tie in with the proposed Khwezi Grid Connection 132kV Overhead Power Line. Note, the proposed overhead powerline will be assessed as a part of a separate BA process.
GNR. 327 (as amended in 2017)	Activity 12(ii)(a)(c)	• *"The development of (ii) infrastructure or structures with a physical footprint of 100 square metres or more; (a) within a watercourse or (c) within 32 meters of a watercourse measured from the edge of a watercourse."*

		• Activity 12(ii)(a)(c) is triggered based on the presence of various wetland types that are found within the project area of influence including a channelled valley bottom wetland and two (02) unchanneled valley bottom wetlands. An artificial dam has been found to be located within the unchanneled valley bottom wetland. A pre-mitigation buffer zone of 30m is recommended for the identified wetlands, which means that development will take place within 32 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland. The project area also comprises of existing roads which potentially traverse water features. The existing access roads that traverse watercourses may be expanded to suit the project needs.
GNR. 327 (as amended in 2017)	Activity 19	• *"The infilling or depositing of any material of more than 10 cubic metres into, or the dredging, excavation, removal or moving of soil, sand, shells, shell grit, pebbles or rock of more than 10 cubic metres from a watercourse."* • Activity 19 is triggered as the project area comprises of existing roads which potentially traverse watercourse. The existing access roads that traverse watercourses may be expanded to suit the project needs and will require removal of more than 10 cubic metres of soil from a watercourse.
GNR. 327 (as amended in 2017)	Activity 24(ii)	• *"The development of a road (ii) with reserve wider than 13,5 meters, or where no reserve exists where the road is wider than 8 meters".* • Activity 24(ii) is triggered as the proposed main access road to Khwezi SPP will be between 8 m and 12 m wide, but with the inclusion of side drains and gavel embankments, will exceed the threshold of this activity.
GNR. 327 (as	Activity 27	• *"The clearance of an area of 1 hectares or more, but less than 20 hectares of indigenous vegetation…"*

amended in 2017)		• The development of the collector substation will require the clearance of more than 1 ha of indigenous vegetation.
GNR. 327 (as amended in 2017)	Activity 28(ii)	• *"Residential, mixed, retail, commercial, industrial or institutional developments where such land was used for agriculture or afforestation on or after 1998 and where such development (ii) will occur outside an urban area, where the total land to be developed is bigger than 1 hectare".* • Activity 28(ii) is triggered as the total area to be developed for the PV facility and associated infrastructure is greater than 1ha and occurs outside an urban area in an area currently zoned for agriculture. The property will be re-zoned to "special" use.
GNR. 327 (as amended in 2017)	Activity 56 (ii):	• *"The widening of a road by more than 6 metres, or the lengthening of a road by more than 1 kilometre (ii) where no reserve exists, where the existing road is wider than 8 metres…"* • Activity 56 (ii) is triggered as existing roads may require widening of up to 6 m and/or lengthening by more than 1 km, to accommodate the movement of heavy vehicles and cable trenching activities.
GNR. 325 (as amended in 2017)	Activity 1	• *"The development of facilities or infrastructure for the generation of electricity from a renewable resource where the electricity output is 20 megawatts or more".* • Activity 1 is triggered since the proposed photovoltaic solar facility will generate up to 300 megawatts electricity through the use of a renewable resource.
GNR. 325 (as amended in 2017)	Activity 15	• *"The clearance of an area of 20 hectares or more of indigenous vegetation."* • Activity 15 is triggered as the cumulative area of indigenous vegetation to be cleared for the entire Project (excluding linear components) will exceed 20 hectares.

GNR. 324 (as amended in 2017)	Activity 10(b)(i)(hh)	• "*The development and related operation of facilities or infrastructure for the storage, or storage and handling of a dangerous good, where such storage occurs in containers with a combined capacity of 30 but not exceeding 80 cubic metres (b) in the Free State, (i) outside urban areas, (hh) areas within a watercourse or wetland; or within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland."* • Activity 10(b)(i)(hh) is triggered since the proposed development will need to develop infrastructure for the storage and handling of dangerous goods (diesel and/or oils) in containers with a capacity exceeding 30 but not exceeding 80 cubic metres. According to the Wetland Baseline and Risk Assessment, a channelled valley bottom wetland and two (02) unchanneled valley bottom wetlands exists within the project area/site. An artificial dam is also found to be located within the unchanneled valley bottom wetland. A pre-mitigation buffer zone of 30m is recommended for the identified wetlands, which means that development will take place within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland. Access roads may traverse wetland features.
GNR. 324 (as amended in 2017)	Activity 12 (b)(iv)	• *"The clearance of an area of 300 square metres or more of indigenous vegetation except where such clearance of indigenous vegetation in (b) Free State (iv) Areas within a watercourse or wetland; or within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland".* • Activity 12 (b)(iv) is triggered since the project is located within the Free State Province and according to the Wetland Baseline and Risk Assessment, a channelled valley bottom wetland and two (02) unchanneled valley bottom wetlands exists within the project area/site. An artificial dam is also found to be located within the unchanneled valley bottom wetland. A pre-mitigation buffer zone of 30m is recommended for the identified wetlands, which means that development will take place within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse

		or wetland. Access roads may traverse wetland features.
GNR. 324 (as amended in 2017)	Activity 14(ii)(a)(c)(b)(i)(ff)	• *"The development of (ii) infrastructure or structures with a physical footprint of 10 square metres or more, where such development occurs (a) within a watercourse or (c) within 32 metres of a watercourse, measured from the edge of a watercourse, (b) within the Free State, (i) outside urban areas within (ff) critical biodiversity areas or ecosystem service areas as identified in systematic biodiversity plans adopted by the competent authority or in bioregional."* • Activity 14(ii)(a)(c)(b)(i)(ff) is triggered since the project is proposed within the Free State province and infrastructure is proposed to exceed the physical footprint of 10 square meters and is located within 32m of a watercourse. According to the Wetland Baseline and Risk Assessment, a channelled valley bottom wetland and two (02) unchanneled valley bottom wetlands exists within the project area/site. An artificial dam is also found to be located within the unchanneled valley bottom wetland. A pre-mitigation buffer zone of 30m is recommended for the identified wetlands, which means that development will take place within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland. Access roads may traverse wetland features. According to the Terrestrial Ecology Baseline and Impact Assessment, the project area overlaps with an Ecological Support Area 1 (ESA 1) and Ecological Support Area 2 (ESA 2).
GNR. 324 (as amended in 2017)	Activity 18 (b)(i)(hh)	• *"The widening of a road by more than 4 metres, or the lengthening of a road by more than 1 kilometre (b) in the Free State (i) outside urban areas, within (hh) areas within a watercourse or wetland; or within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland."* • Activity 18 (b)(i)(hh) is triggered as the existing access to the affected property does not have a reserve and will need to be widened by more than 6 metres. The project is proposed within the Free State province. According to the Wetland Baseline and Risk Assessment, a channelled valley bottom wetland and

		two (02) unchanneled valley bottom wetlands exists within the project area/site. An artificial dam is also found to be located within the unchanneled valley bottom wetland. A pre-mitigation buffer zone of 30m is recommended for the identified wetlands, which means that development will take place within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland. Access roads may traverse wetland features.

The potentially most significant impacts will occur during the construction phase of the development, which will include the following activities:

- Site clearing and preparation: Certain areas of the site and access road will need to be cleared of vegetation and some areas may need to be levelled.

- Civil works to be conducted:

- Terrain levelling if necessary – Levelling will be minimal as the potential site chosen is relatively flat.
- Laying foundation - The structures will be connected to the ground through cement pillars, cement slabs or metal screws. The exact method will depend on the detailed geotechnical analysis.
- Construction of access and inside roads/paths – The majority of the access road will follow existing, gravel farm roads that may require widening up to 6 to 10 m (inclusive of storm water infrastructure). Where new sections of road need to be constructed/lengthened, this will be gravel/hard surfaced access road and only tarred if necessary. A network of gravel internal access roads and a perimeter road of up to 40 km, each with a width of up to 6 m, will be constructed to provide access to the various components of the PV development.
- Trenching – all Direct Current (DC) and Alternating Current (AC) wiring within the PV plant will be buried underground. Trenches will have a river sand base, space for pipes, backfill of sifted soil and soft sand and concrete layers where vehicles will pass.

2.3 PHOTOVOLTAIC TECHNOLOGY

The term photovoltaic describes a solid-state electronic cell that produces direct current electrical energy from the radiant energy of the sun through a process known as the Photovoltaic Effect. This refers to light energy placing electrons into a higher state of energy to create electricity. Each PV cell is made of silicon (i.e., semiconductors), which is positively and negatively charged on either side, with electrical conductors attached to both sides to form a circuit. This circuit captures the released electrons in the form of an electric current (direct current).

The key components of the proposed project are described below:

- PV Panel Array - To produce up to 300 MW, the proposed facility will require numerous linked cells placed behind a protective glass sheet to form a panel. Multiple panels will be required to form the solar PV arrays which will comprise the PV facility. The PV panels will be tilted at a northern angle in order to capture the most sun or using one-axis tracker structures to follow the sun to increase the yield.

Figure 2.1: Typical example of solar PV array

- Wiring to Inverters - Sections of the PV array will be wired to inverters. The inverter is a pulse width mode inverter that converts direct current (DC) electricity to alternating current (AC) electricity at grid frequency.

- Connection to the Grid - Connecting the array to the electrical grid requires transformation of the voltage from 480V to 33kV to 132kV. The normal components and dimensions of a distribution rated electrical substation will be required. Output voltage from the inverter is 480V and this is fed into step up transformers to 132kV. An onsite substation will be required on the site to step the voltage up to 132kV, after which the power will be evacuated into the national grid. The project will entail the following:

    - Facility grid connection infrastructure, including:
        - 33 kV cabling between the project components and the facility substation.
        - A 132 kV facility substation.

- 33 kV or 132 kV cabling or powerline between the facility substation and the Eskom collector switching station.

Note: The grid connection will be assessed as a part of a separate Basic Assessment Application Process

- Supporting Infrastructure – The following auxiliary buildings with basic services including water and electricity will be required on site: a gate house, ablutions, workshops, storage and warehousing areas, site offices and a control centre. The project requires the need for both temporary and permanent laydown areas.
- Battery Storage – The Battery Storage Facility will occupy an area of up to 4 hectares with a maximum height of 8 m. The specifications and the exact capacity of the battery storage remains unspecified at this stage.
- Roads – The majority of the access road will follow existing, gravel farm roads that may require widening up to 6 -10 m (inclusive of storm water infrastructure). Where new sections of road need to be constructed/lengthened, this will be gravel/hard surfaced access road and only tarred if necessary. A network of gravel internal access roads and a perimeter road of approximately 40 km, each with a width of up to 6 m, will be constructed to provide access to the various components of the PV development. Access will be obtained via the R703 Regional Road to the south of the site. The access and internal roads will be constructed within a 25-meter corridor.
- Fencing - For health, safety and security reasons, the facility will be required to be fenced off from the surrounding farm. Fencing with a height of 3.5 meters will be used.

2.4 LAYOUT DESCRIPTION

The layout plan will consider and adhere to the limitations of the site and aspects such as environmentally sensitive areas, roads, fencing and servitudes on site– refer to Figures A to I. The total surface area proposed for the layout includes the PV panel arrays (spaced to avoid shadowing), access and maintenance roads and associated infrastructure (buildings, power inverters, power line, battery energy storage system, on-site substation and switching station and perimeter fences). Limited features of environmental significance exist on site, however the sensitivities that do exist have to be avoided in the layout of the solar facility. Table 2.3 below provides detailed information regarding the layout for the proposed facility which will be further assessed during the EIA phase (refer to Figures A to I).

Table 2.3: Technical details for the proposed facility

Component	Description / dimensions
Height of PV panels	Up to 6 meters
Area of PV Array	To be confirmed upon receipt of specialist verification findings. Estimated to be ~500 ha
Area occupied by inverter / transformer stations / substations / BESS	BESS: up to 4 ha Facility substation: up to 1 ha
Capacity of on-site substation	132kV
Capacity of the power line	132kV
Area occupied by both permanent and construction laydown areas	Permanent Laydown Area: 500 Hectares Construction Laydown Area: ~10 Hectares
Area occupied by buildings	Security Room, Office & Staff Locker and Changing Room: ~20 Hectares
Battery storage facility	Maximum height: 8m Maximum volume: Unspecified
Length of internal roads	Approximately 40 km

Table 2.4 provides the co-ordinate points for the proposed project site and associated infrastructure.

Table 2.4: Development co-ordinates

Co-ordinates			
Site Boundary	A	28°52'55.59"S	26°56'3.18"E
	B	28°50'44.69"S	26°57'0.20"E
	C	28°51'41.27"S	26°59'12.66"E
	D	28°52'57.81"S	26°57'30.61"E
Development Area 1	A	28°51'27.36"S	26°56'44.83"E
	B	28°51'57.20"S	26°56'39.92"E
	C	28°52'2.86"S	26°56'33.38"E
	D	28°52'5.15"S	26°56'35.33"E
	E	28°52'10.52"S	26°56'27.59"E
	F	28°52'9.72"S	26°56'33.84"E

	G	28°52'13.49"S	26°56'33.69"E
	H	28°52'19.36"S	26°56'36.54"E
	I	28°52'32.17"S	26°56'32.54"E
	J	28°52'56.00"S	26°56'33.76"E
	K	28°52'55.70"S	26°56'3.75"E
Development Area 2	A	28°50'52.93"S	26°57'16.28"E
	B	28°51'18.23"S	26°58'21.56"E
	C	28°51'30.99"S	26°58'18.99"E
	D	28°51'29.52"S	26°58'5.33"E
	E	28°51'49.02"S	26°58'0.78"E
	F	28°51'51.09"S	26°57'54.69"E
	G	28°51'49.33"S	26°57'32.09"E
	H	28°51'51.12"S	26°57'6.97"E
	I	28°51'46.74"S	26°57'2.54"E
	J	28°51'39.28"S	26°57'5.42"E
	K	28°51'36.76"S	26°57'21.00"E
	L	28°51'31.90"S	26°57'3.30"E
	M	28°51'18.38"S	26°57'4.98"E
	N	28°51'0.50"S	26°57'10.85"E
Development Area 3	A	28°51'56.12"S	26°57'0.48"E
	B	28°51'59.67"S	26°57'11.86"E
	C	28°51'58.38"S	26°57'17.82"E
	D	28°52'1.59"S	26°57'24.23"E
	E	28°52'7.95"S	26°57'29.59"E
	F	28°52'5.62"S	26°57'30.62"E
	G	28°52'14.58"S	26°57'38.25"E
	H	28°52'19.85"S	26°57'47.32"E

	I	28°52'23.87"S	26°57'41.86"E
	J	28°52'25.51"S	26°57'46.20"E
	K	28°52'42.78"S	26°57'42.40"E
	L	28°52'39.62"S	26°57'36.69"E
	M	28°52'40.63"S	26°57'33.61"E
	N	28°52'49.65"S	26°57'28.75"E
	O	28°52'50.69"S	26°57'29.46"E
	P	28°52'46.59"S	26°57'36.29"E
	Q	28°52'44.56"S	26°57'42.32"E
	R	28°52'45.47"S	26°57'44.48"E
	S	28°52'56.00"S	26°57'32.16"E
	T	28°52'55.90"S	26°56'51.02"E
	U	28°52'48.83"S	26°56'53.79"E
	V	28°52'47.78"S	26°57'0.14"E
	W	28°52'44.96"S	26°56'53.22"E
	X	28°52'34.37"S	26°56'54.95"E
	Y	28°52'33.41"S	26°56'57.70"E
	Z	28°52'30.40"S	26°56'55.24"E
	1	28°52'26.06"S	26°56'57.67"E
	2	28°52'22.79"S	26°56'56.63"E
	3	28°52'17.92"S	26°56'59.10"E
	4	28°52'12.37"S	26°57'1.23"E
	5	28°52'7.81"S	26°56'59.25"E
	6	28°52'3.56"S	26°57'1.50"E
	7	28°52'3.79"S	26°57'6.90"E
	8	28°51'59.88"S	26°56'59.99"E
Substation	A	28°52'51.54"S	26°57'22.34"E

	B	28°52'50.68"S	26°57'29.98"E
	C	28°52'46.44"S	26°57'36.26"E
	D	28°52'44.47"S	26°57'42.39"E
	E	28°52'45.26"S	26°57'44.65"E
	F	28°52'55.98"S	26°57'32.00"E
	G	28°52'55.60"S	26°57'21.96"E
Access Road 1 - Start	A	28°53'10.27"S	26°56'13.85"E
Bend Point	B	28°53'9.88"S	26°56'14.12"E
Bend Point	C	28°53'11.84"S	26°56'20.35"E
Bend Point	D	28°53'10.10"S	26°56'20.12"E
Bend Point	E	28°53'9.10"S	26°56'20.75"E
Mid-Point	F	28°53'2.44"S	26°56'22.39"E
Bend Point	G	28°52'56.42"S	26°56'24.00"E
Access Road 1 - End	H	28°52'55.28"S	26°56'23.34"E
Access Road 2 - Start	I	28°53'36.32"S	26°57'38.57"E
Mid-Point	J	28°52'39.10"S	26°57'52.42"E
Access Road 2 - End	K	28°51'49.10"S	26°58'0.05"E
Bend Point	L	28°52'43.36"S	26°57'43.19"E
Bend Point	M	28°52'42.44"S	26°57'42.19"E
Access Road 3	N	28°51'39.29"S	26°57'6.16"E
	O	28°51'36.57"S	26°57'6.34"E

The Figures provided below correspond to the point location as presented on Table 2.4 above.

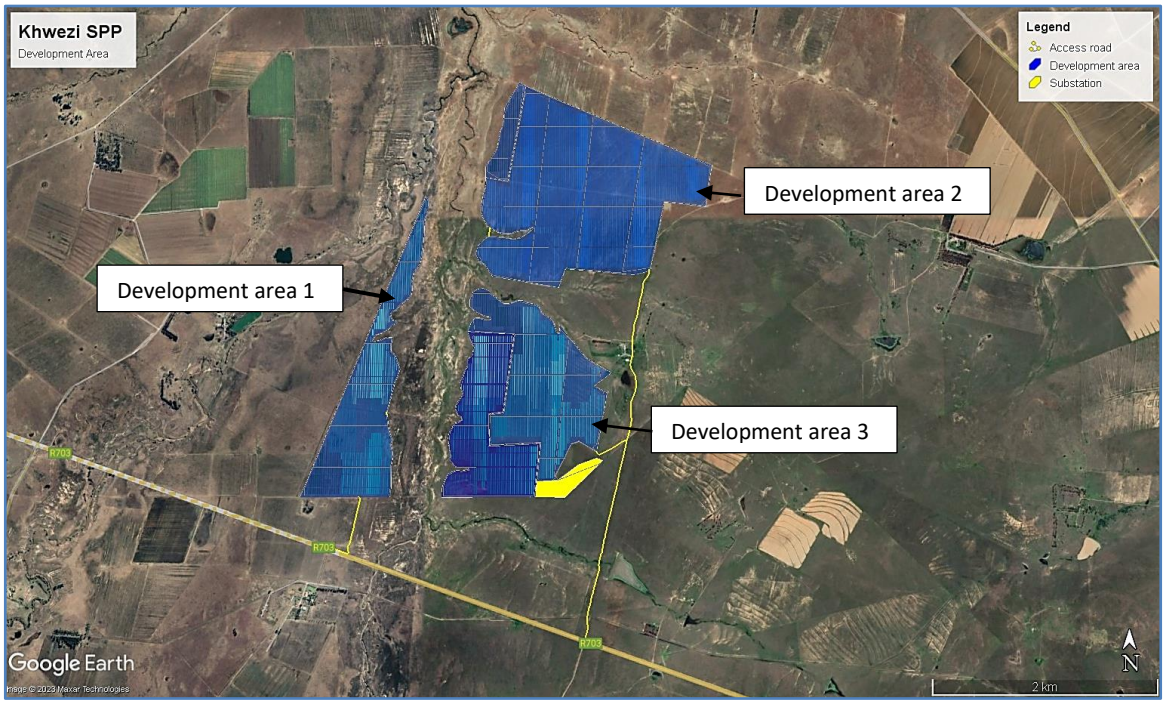


Figure 2.2: Development area

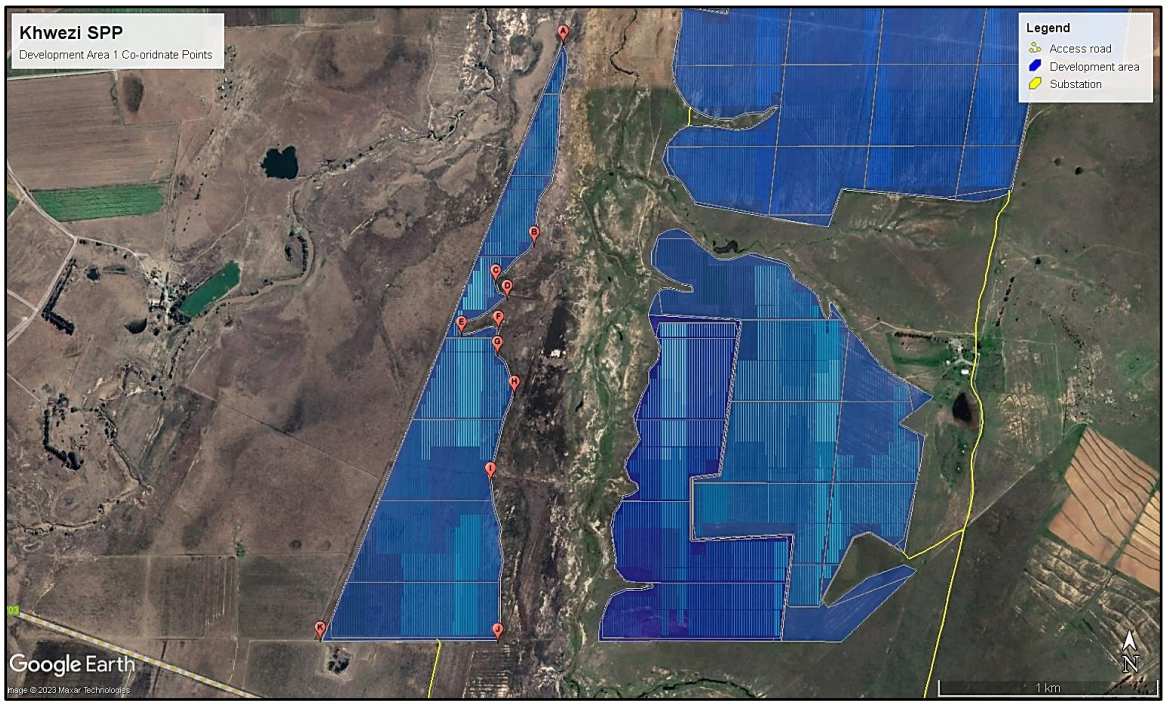


Figure 2.3: Co-ordinate points of development area 1

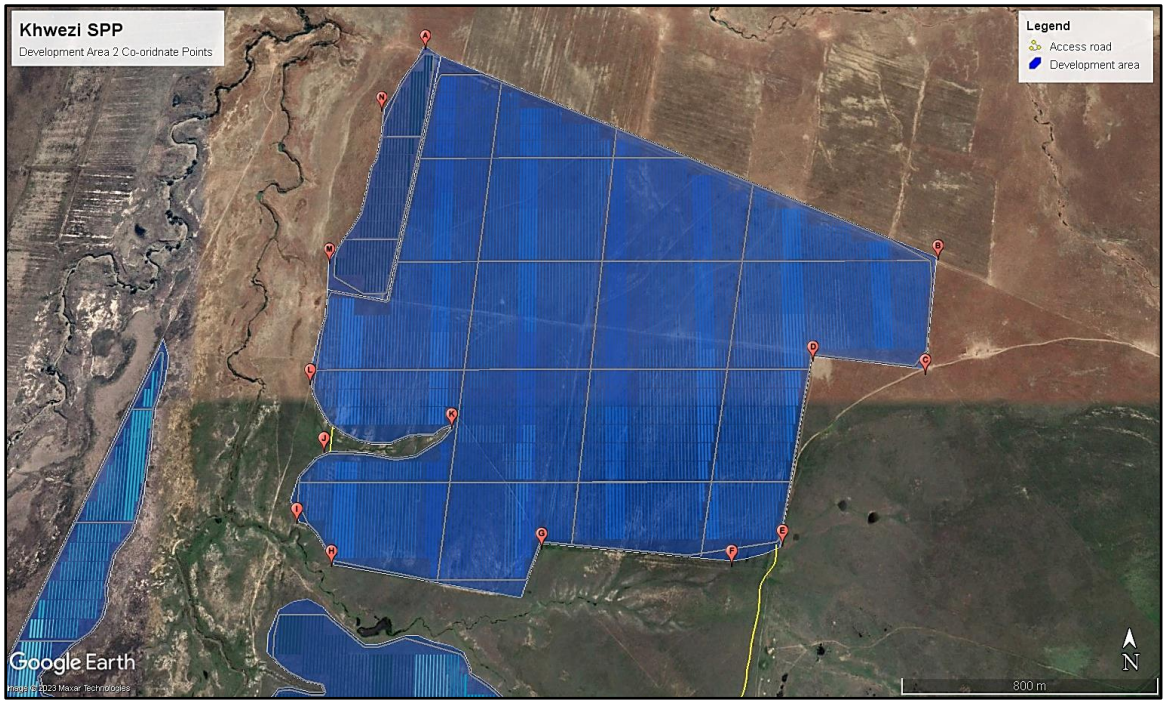


Figure 2.4: Co-ordinate points of development area 2

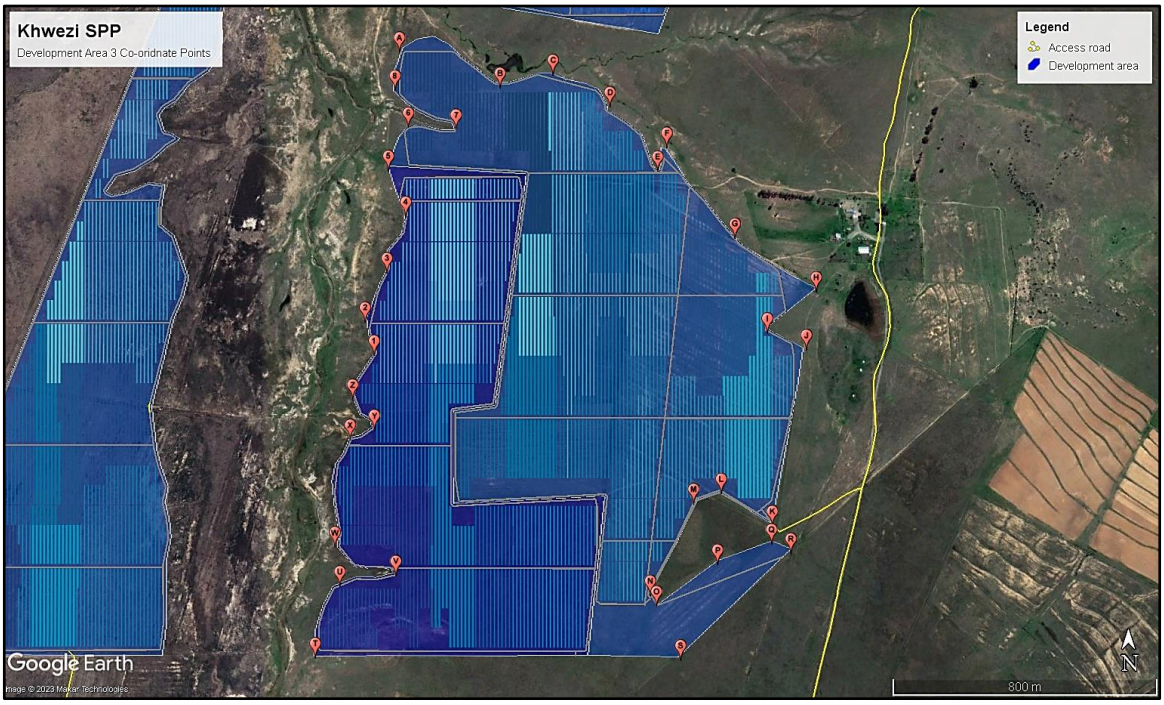


Figure 2.5: Co-ordinate points of development area 3

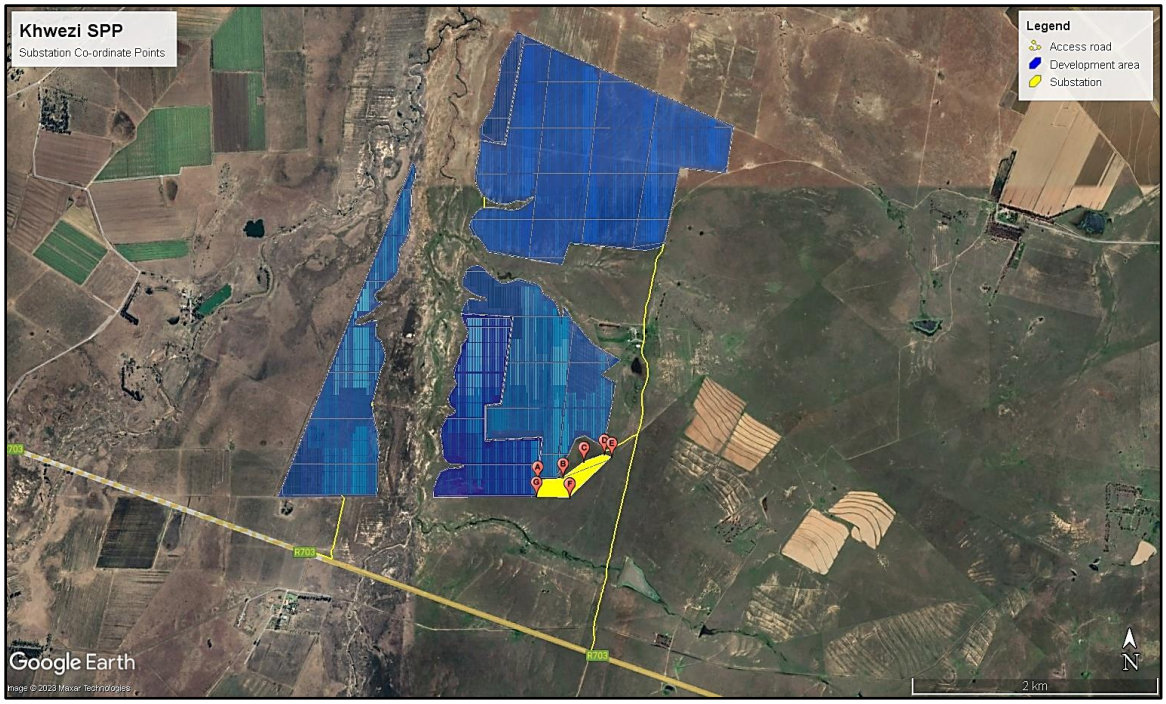


Figure 2.6: Co-ordinate points of substation

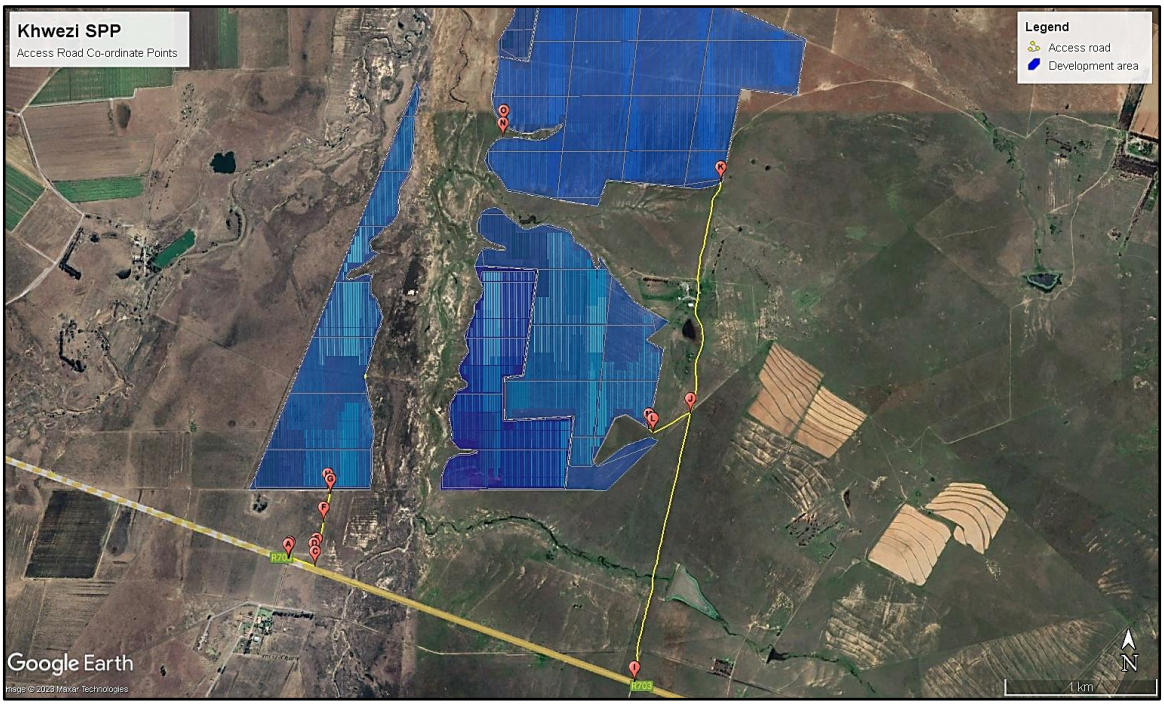


Figure 2.7: Co-ordinate points of access road

2.5 SERVICES PROVISION

The following sections provide information on services required on the site e.g., water, sewage, refuse removal, and electricity.

2.5.1 Water

Adequate provision of water will be a prerequisite for the development. Four options will be considered, in order of priority by the Developer:

1. Supply from the Local Municipality (LM). The Developer will approach the Local Municipality to enquire whether they can provide all or part of the total water requirements of the Project. Specific arrangements will be agreed with the Local Municipality in a Service Level Agreement (SLA), following the appointment of preferred bidder during the financial close period.
2. Supply from a Private Contractor, which may include extraction from any bulk water supply lines nearby to the site.
3. An existing borehole on site, subject to NWA requirements.
4. A new borehole on site, subject to NWA requirements.

The estimated amount of water required during construction is 180 Megalitres. The estimated maximum amount of water required during the operational phase is 9 547 kl per annum.

2.5.2 Stormwater

To avoid soil erosion, it is recommended that the clearing of vegetation be limited. Stormwater management and mitigation measures will be included in the Environmental Management Programme (EMPr) to be submitted as part of the EIR.

2.5.3 Sanitation

During construction phase, portable chemical toilets will be utilised, that will be serviced privately or by the local municipality. Wastewater will be disposed of at a licensed landfill site. Should the contractor decide to install a conservancy tanks/s, this will be done in accordance with the NWA.

No effluent will be produced during operation of the facility, except for normal sewage from site and operations staff. This will be collected and treated as per normal standards using a septic or conservancy tank. In cases where the Local Municipality does not permit the use of sceptic tanks, sewage will be stored in conservancy tank and collected by means of a honey-sucker and treated at an approved facility off site.

2.5.4 Solid Waste

During the construction phase, solid waste will mainly be in the form of construction material, excavated substrate and domestic solid waste. All waste will be disposed of in scavenger proof bins and temporarily placed in a central location for removal by an appointed contractor. Any other waste and excess material will be removed once construction is complete and disposed of at a registered waste facility. During the EIA, the applicant will request confirmation from the municipality that they have sufficient capacity at their registered landfills for the solid waste.

During the operational phase household waste will be removed to a licensed landfill site by a private contractor or by the local municipality.

2.5.5 Electricity

Electricity supply during construction will be provided by either diesel generators or arranged with the Local Municipality or Eskom Distribution, via an 11 kV or 22 kV feeder line.

During operation, the electricity will be supplied by the plant.

2.6 DECOMMISSIONING OF THE FACILITY

The operating period will be 20 years from the commencement date of the operation phase. Thereafter two rights of renewal periods of 40 years and 20 years will be relevant. It is anticipated that new PV technologies and equipment will be implemented, within the scope of the Environmental Authorisation, when influencing the profitability of the solar facility.

A likely extension of the plant's lifetime would involve putting new, more efficient, solar panels on the existing structures to improve the efficiency of the facility as the technology improves. The specifications of these new panels will be the same as the current panels under consideration, but the conversion efficiency of sunlight to energy will be greater (comparable to new computer chips, that is the same, but faster and more efficient). If, for whatever reason the plant halts operations, the Environmental Authorisation and contract with the landowner will be respected during the decommissioning phase.

<u>The decommissioning process will consist of the following steps:</u>

- The PV facility would be disconnected from the Eskom grid.
- The BESS, inverters and PV modules would be disconnected and disassembled.
- Concrete foundations (if used) would be removed and the structures would be dismantled.
- Wastewater storage conservancy tank would be responsibly removed and area would be rehabilitated.

- The underground cables would be unearthed and removed and buildings would be demolished and removed.
- The fencing would be dismantled and removed.
- The roads can be retained should the landowner choose to retain them, alternatively the roads will be removed and the compaction will be reversed.
- Most of the wires, steel and PV modules are recyclable and would be recycled to a reasonable extent. The Silicon and Aluminium in PV modules can be removed and reused in the production of new modules.
- Any rubble and non-recyclable materials will be disposed of at a registered landfill facility.

The rehabilitation of the site would form part of the decommissioning phase. The aim would be to restore the land to its original form (or as close as possible). The rehabilitation activities would include the following:

- Removal of all structures and rubble;
- Breaking up compaction where required, loosening of the soil and the redistribution of topsoil; and
- Restoration of the surface to the original contours and application of hydro seeding.

3 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

This section aims to address the following requirements of the regulations:

Appendix 2. (2) A scoping report (...) must include-

(e) a description of the policy and legislative context within which the development is proposed including an identification of all legislation, policies, plans, guidelines, spatial tools, municipal development planning frameworks and instruments that are applicable to this activity and are to be considered in the assessment process;

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Environmental decision making with regards to solar PV plants is based on numerous policy and legislative documents. These documents inform decisions on project level environmental authorisations issued by the National Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) as well as comments from local and district authorities. Moreover, it is significant to note that they also inform strategic decision making reflected in the IDPs and SDFs. Therefore, to ensure streamlining of environmental authorisations it is imperative for the proposed activity to align with the principles and objectives of key national, provincial and local development policies and legislation. The following acts and policies and their applicability to the proposed development are briefly summarised:

- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996)
- National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) [NEMA]
- The National Energy Act, 2008 (Act 34 of 2008)
- National Water Act, 1998 (Act No. 36 of 1998)
- National Environmental Management: Waste Act, 2008 (Act No. 59 of 2008)
- National Environmental Management: Air Quality Act, 2004 (Act No. 39 of 2004)
- The National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act No. 25 of 1999)
- Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act, 1983 (Act No. 85 of 1983)
- The National Forests Act, 1998 (Act 84 of 1998)
- The White Paper on the Energy Policy of the Republic of South Africa (1998)
- The White Paper on Renewable Energy (2003)
- Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) for South Africa (2010-2030)
- National Development Plan of 2030

- National Infrastructure Plan of South Africa (2012)
- New Growth Path Framework (2010)
- Climate Change Bill (2018)
- Climate Change Bill (2021) – for public comment
- Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs) (2010 – 2030)
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for wind and solar PV Energy in South Africa (2014)
- Free State Provincial Spatial Development Framework (PSDF) (2012)
- Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality Final Integrated Development Plan (IDP) 2020 – 2021 (2021)
- Mantsopa Local Municipality Integrated Development Plan 2021/2022 (2022)
- Mantsopa Municipal Spatial Development Framework Phase 4 (SDF) (2020/2021 – 2024/2025) (2021)

The key principles and objectives of each of the legislative and policy documents are briefly summarised in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 to provide a reference framework for the implications for the proposed activity.

3.2 LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

Table 3.1: Legislative context for the construction of photovoltaic solar plants

LEGISLATION	ADMINISTERING AUTHORITY	DATE	SUMMARY / IMPLICATIONS FOR PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
The Constitution of South Africa **(Act No. 108 of 1996)**	National Government	1996	The Constitution is the supreme law of the Republic and all law and conduct must be consistent with the Constitution. The Chapter on the Bill of Rights contains a number of provisions, which are relevant to securing the protection of the environment. Section 24 states that "everyone has the right to (a) an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being and (b) to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that – (i) prevent pollution and ecological degradation; (ii) promote conservation; and (iii) secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development. The Constitution therefore, compels government to give effect to the people's environmental right and places government under a legal duty to act as a responsible custodian of the country's environment. It compels government to pass legislation and use other measures to protect the environment, to prevent pollution and ecological degradation, promote conservation and secure sustainable development. The development of the Khwezi SPP and the aspects related thereto considers the creation of an environment which is not harmful or degraded through the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures.
The National Environmental Management Act **(Act No. 107 of 1998)**	National Department of Environmental Affairs (now known as the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the	1998	NEMA provides for co-operative governance by establishing principles and procedures for decision-makers on matters affecting the environment. An important function of the Act is to serve as an enabling Act for the promulgation of legislation to effectively address integrated environmental management. Some of the principles in the Act are accountability; affordability; cradle to grave management; equity; integration; open information; polluter pays; subsidiary;

	Environment) and the Free State Province Department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DESTEA)		waste avoidance and minimisation; co-operative governance; sustainable development; and environmental protection and justice. The mandate for EIA lays with the National Environmental Management Act (107 of 1998) and the EIA Regulations No. 324, 325, 326, and 327 promulgated in terms of Section 24 of NEMA. The EIA Regulations determine that an Environmental Authorisation is required for certain listed activities, which might have a detrimental effect on the environment. The EIA process undertaken for the Khwezi SPP is in-line with the requirements of NEMA for the Application for Environmental Authorisation.
The National Energy Act **(Act No. 34 of 2008)**	Department of Mineral Resources and Energy	2008	One of the objectives of the National Energy Act was to promote diversity of supply of energy and its sources. In this regard, the preamble makes direct reference to renewable resources, including solar: "To ensure that diverse energy resources are available, in sustainable quantities, and at affordable prices, to the South African economy, in support of economic growth and poverty alleviation, taking into account environmental management requirements (…); to provide for (…) increased generation and consumption of renewable energies…" (Preamble). Considering that the Khwezi SPP is proposed to make use of PV technology and the solar resource for the generation of electricity, the proposed project is in-line with the Act.
The National Water Act **(Act No. 36 of 1998)**	Department of Water Affairs (now known as Department of Water and Sanitation)	1998	Sustainability and equity are identified as central guiding principles in the protection, use, development, conservation, management and control of water resources. The intention of the Act is to promote the equitable access to water and the sustainable use of water, redress past racial and gender discrimination, and facilitate economic and social development. The Act provides the rights of access to basic water supply and sanitation, and environmentally, it provides for the protection of aquatic and associated ecosystems, the reduction and prevention of pollution and degradation of water resources. As this Act is founded on the principle that National Government has overall responsibility for and authority over water resource management, including the equitable allocation and

			beneficial use of water in the public interest, a person can only be entitled to use water if the use is permissible under the Act. Chapter 4 of the Act lays the basis for regulating water use. The wetland study has identified a Channelled Valley Bottom wetland and two (02) Unchanneled Valley Bottom wetlands on the project site. An artificial dam was found to be located within the unchanneled valley bottom wetland. Also, should a water use license be required for the project, the National Water Act will be applicable in terms of obtaining the relevant license.
National Environmental Management: Waste Act **(Act No. 59 of 2008)**	National Department Environmental Affairs (DEA) (now known as the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment)	2008	NEMWA has been developed as part of the law reform process enacted through the White Paper on Integrated Pollution and Waste Management and the National Waste Management Strategy (NWMS). The objectives of the Act relate to the provision of measures to protect health, well-being and the environment, to ensure that people are aware of the impact of waste on their health, well-being and the environment, to provide for compliance with the measures, and to give effect to section 24 of the Constitution in order to secure an environment that is not harmful to health and well-being. Regulations No. R921 (of 2013) promulgated in terms of Section 19(1) of the National Environmental Management: Waste Act (59 of 2008) determines that no person may commence, undertake or conduct a waste management activity listed in this schedule unless a license is issued in respect of that activity. It is not envisaged that a waste permit will be required for the proposed development as no listed activities in terms of waste management are expected to be triggered.
National Environment Management: Air Quality Act	National Department Environmental Affairs (DEA) (now known as the Department of Forestry, Fisheries	2004	The object of this Act is to protect the environment by providing reasonable measures for the protection and enhancement of the quality of air in the Republic; the prevention of air pollution and ecological degradation; and securing ecologically sustainable development while promoting justifiable economic and social development. Regulations No. R248 (of 31 March 2010) promulgated in terms of Section 21(1)(a) of the National Environmental Management Act: Air Quality Act (39 of 2004) determine that an

(Act No. 39 of 2004)	and the Environment)		Atmospheric Emission License (AEL) is required for certain listed activities, which result in atmospheric emissions which have or may have a detrimental effect on the environment. The Regulation also sets out the minimum emission standards for the listed activities. It is not envisaged that an Atmospheric Emission License will be required for the proposed development.
The National Heritage Resources Act **(Act No. 25 of 1999)**	South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA)	1999	The Act aims to introduce an integrated and interactive system for the management of heritage resources, to promote good governance at all levels, and empower civil society to nurture and conserve heritage resources so that they may be bequeathed to future generations and to lay down principles for governing heritage resources management throughout the Republic. It also aims to establish the South African Heritage Resources Agency together with its Council to co-ordinate and promote the management of heritage resources, to set norms and maintain essential national standards and to protect heritage resources, to provide for the protection and management of conservation-worthy places and areas by local authorities, and to provide for matters connected therewith. The Act protects and manages certain categories of heritage resources in South Africa. For the purposes of the Heritage Resources Act, a "heritage resource" includes any place or object of cultural significance. In this regard the Act makes provision for a person undertaking an activity listed in Section 28 of the Act to notify the resources authority. The resources authority may request that a heritage impact assessment be conducted if there is reason to believe that heritage resources will be affected. A case file with reference number 20122 has been opened on SAHRIS for the Khwezi SPP and all relevant documents were submitted for their comments and approval. The Heritage Impact Assessment undertaken for the SPP is included as Appendix E5, and the Palaeontological Impact Assessment is included as Appendix E6.

Conservation of Agricultural Resources **Act (Act No. 85 of 1983)**	National and Provincial Government	1983	The objective of the Act is to provide control over the utilisation of the natural agricultural resources of the Republic in order to promote the conservation of the soil, the water sources and the vegetation and the combating of weeds and invader plants; and for matters connected therewith. Consent will be required from the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (now known as the DFFE) in order to confirm that the proposed development is not located on high potential agricultural land and to approve the long-term lease agreement. A Soils and Agricultural Assessment has been undertaken for the Khwezi SPP and included as Appendix E4.
The National Forests Act, 1998 **(Act 84 of 1998)**	Department of Environmental Affairs (now known as the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment)	1998	The purposes of this Act are to: (a) promote the sustainable management and development of forests for the benefit of all; (b) create the conditions necessary to restructure forestry in State forests; (c) provide special measures for the protection of certain forests and trees: (d) promote the sustainable use of forests for environmental, economic, educational, recreational, cultural, health and spiritual purposes. (e) promote community forestry; (f) promote greater participation in all aspects of forestry and the forest products industry by persons disadvantaged by unfair discrimination. Section 12(1) read with s15(1) of the NFA stated that the Minister may declare a particular tree, group of trees, woodland; or trees belonging to a particular species, to be a protected tree, group of trees, woodland or species. A list of protected tree species was gazetted in GN 635 of 6 December 2019. The effect of the declaration is that no person may (a) cut, disturb, damage or destroy; or (b) possess, collect, remove, transport, export, purchase, sell, donate or in any other manner acquire or dispose of any protected tree, or any forest product derived from a protected tree, except under a license granted by the Minister; or in terms of an exemption published by the Minister in the Gazette.

	A Terrestrial Ecology Baseline and Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the Khwezi SPP and is included in Appendix E1.

3.3 POLICY CONTEXT

Table 3.2: Policy context for the construction of photovoltaic solar plants

POLICY	ADMINISTERING AUTHORITY	DATE	SUMMARY / IMPLICATIONS FOR PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
The White Paper on the Energy Policy of the Republic of South Africa	Department of Mineral Resources and Energy	1998	The White Paper on the Energy Policy of the Republic of South Africa establishes the international and national policy context for the energy sector, and identifies the following energy policy objectives: • Increasing access to affordable energy services • Improving energy governance • Stimulating economic development • Managing energy-related environmental and health impacts • Securing supply through diversity • Energy policy priorities The White Paper sets out the advantages of renewable energy and states that Government believes that renewables can in many cases provide the least cost energy service, particularly when social and environmental costs are included. The White Paper acknowledges that South Africa has neglected the development and implementation of renewable energy applications, despite the fact that the country's renewable energy resource base is extensive, and many appropriate applications exist. The White Paper notes that renewable energy applications have specific characteristics that need to be considered. Advantages include: • Minimal environmental impacts in operation in comparison with traditional supply technologies; and

			• Generally lower running costs, and high labour intensities. Disadvantages include: • Higher capital costs in some cases; • Lower energy densities; and • Lower levels of availability, depending on specific conditions, especially with sun and wind-based systems. Khwezi SPP is in line with this policy as it proposes the generation of renewable energy from the solar resource.
The White Paper on Renewable Energy	Department of Mineral Resources and Energy	2003	This White Paper on Renewable Energy supplements the *White Paper on Energy Policy*, which recognises that the medium and long-term potential of renewable energy is significant. This Paper sets out Government's vision, policy principles, strategic goals and objectives for promoting and implementing renewable energy in South Africa. The White Paper notes that while South Africa is well-endowed with renewable energy resources that have the potential to become sustainable alternatives to fossil fuels, these have thus far remained largely untapped. Government's long-term goal is the establishment of a renewable energy industry producing modern energy carriers that will offer in future years a sustainable, fully non-subsidised alternative to fossil fuels. The medium-term (10-year) target set in the White Paper is: *10 000 GWh (0.8 Mtoe) renewable energy contribution to final energy consumption by 2013, to be produced mainly from biomass, wind, solar and small-scale hydro. The renewable energy is to be utilised for power generation and non-electric technologies such as solar water heating and bio-fuels. This is approximately 4% (1667 MW) of the projected electricity demand for 2013 (41539 MW) (Executive Summary, ix).* The Khwezi SPP is in line with this paper as it proposes the generation of renewable energy from the solar resource.
Integrated Resource Plan	Department of Mineral	2010-2030	The Integrated Resource Plan for Electricity for South Africa of 2010–2030 (further referred to as the IRP) is a "living plan" which is expected to be revised and updated continuously as necessary due to changing

(IRP) for South Africa	Resources and Energy	circumstances. According to the Summary of the plan the current IRP for South Africa, which was originally initiated by the Department of Energy (DoE) in June 2010 (the Department is now known as Department of Mineral Resources and Energy), led to the Revised Balanced Scenarios (RBS) for the period 2010–2030. "*This scenario was derived based on the cost-optimal solution for new build options (considering the direct costs of new build power plants), which was then "balanced" in accordance with qualitative measures such as local job creation".* In addition to all existing and committed power plants, the RBS included 11,4 GW of renewables, which relates to the proposed Khwezi Solar Power Plant. In 2010 several changes were made to the IRP model. The main changes in the IRP were the disaggregation of renewable energy technologies to explicitly display solar photovoltaic (PV), concentrated solar power (CSP), and wind options (RSA, 2011a). The summary of the IRP further explains that traditional cost-optimal scenarios were developed based on the previously mentioned changes in the IRP. This resulted in the Policy-Adjusted IRP, which stated that: "*The installation of renewables (solar PV, CSP and wind) have been brought forward in order to accelerate a local industry*; *To account for the uncertainties associated with the costs of renewables and fuels, a nuclear fleet of 9,6 GW is included in the IRP; The emission constraint of the RBS (275 million tons of carbon dioxide per year after 2024) is maintained; and Energy efficiency demand-side management (EEDSM) measures are maintained at the level of the RBS*" (RSA, 2011a:6). *"The Policy-Adjusted IRP includes the same amount of coal and nuclear new builds as the RBS, while reflecting recent developments with respect to prices for renewables. In addition to all existing and committed power plants (including 10 GW committed coal), the plan includes 9,6 GW of nuclear; 6,3 GW of coal; 17,8 GW of renewables; and 8,9 GW of other generation sources"* (RSA, 2011a:6). The IRP highlights the commitments before the next IRP. The commitments pertaining to the purpose of the proposed project in renewable energy is: "*Solar PV programme 2012-2015: In order to facilitate the connection of the first solar PV units to the grid in 2012 a firm commitment to this capacity is necessary. Furthermore, to provide the security of investment to ramp up a sustainable local industry cluster, the first four years from 2012 to 2015 require firm commitment."*

"*Solar PV 2016 to 2019: As with wind, grid upgrades might become necessary for the second round of solar PV installations from 2016 to 2019, depending on their location. To trigger the associated tasks in a timely manner, a firm commitment to these capacities is necessary in the next round of the IRP at the latest. By then, the assumed cost decreases for solar PV will be confirmed*" (IRP, 2011a:17).

In conclusion the IRP recommends that an accelerated roll-out in renewable energy options should be allowed with regards to the benefits of the localization in renewable energy technologies (RSA, 2011a). It is however important to take note that since the release of the IRP in 2011 there has been a number of developments in the energy sector of South Africa. Therefore, the IRP was updated and was open for comments until March of 2017. The new IRP of 2019 was formally published in October 2019. For the revision scenario, analysis was conducted. The results revealed that for the period ending 2030 that: *"The committed Renewable Energy Independent Power Producers Programme, including the 27 signed projects and Eskom capacity rollout ending with the last unit of Kusile in 2022, will provide more than sufficient capacity to cover the projected demand and decommissioning of plants up to approximately 2025"; "Imposing annual build limits on renewable energy will not affect the total cumulative capacity and the energy mix for the period up to 2030*"; and *"the scenario without renewable energy annual build limits provides the least-cost option by 2030*" (RSA, 2018:34).

Lastly, the draft IRP of 2018 also included the scenario analysis for the period post 2030. Here it was observed that: "*Imposing annual build limits on renewable energy will restrict the cumulative renewable installed capacity and the energy mix for this period; adopting no annual build limits on renewables or imposing a more stringent strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions implies that no new coal power plants will be built in the future unless affordable cleaner forms of coal-to-power are available; and the scenario without renewable energy annual build limits provides the least-cost option by 2050*" (RSA, 2018:34–35).

In the final IRP of 2019 key considerations were taken into account together with required actions to be taken for the IRP of 2019 to be credible. In terms of renewable energy technologies like solar and wind, the IRP stated that *"The application of renewable build limits 'smoothes out' the capacity allocations for wind and solar PV which provides a constant pipeline of projects to investment; this addresses investor*

			confidence". The decision stated against this key consideration is to *"retain the current annual build limits on renewables (wind and PV) pending the finalization of a just transition plan"* (RSA, 2019:46). Hereby the IRP also recognises renewable technologies' potential to diversify the electricity mix, create new industries and job opportunities and localize across the value chain (RSA, 2019:13). The Khwezi SPP is in line with this plan as it proposes the generation of renewable energy from the solar resource and will contribute to the energy mix of the country as set out in this plan.
National Development Plan of 2030	The Presidency: National Planning Commission	-	The National Development Plan aims to "*eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030*" (RSA, undated). In order to eliminate or reduce inequality, the economy of South Africa needs to grow faster in order to benefit all South Africans. In May 2010 a Draft National development Plan was drafted, which highlighted the nine (9) key challenges for South Africa. The highest priority areas according to the plan are considered to be the creation of employment opportunities and to improve the quality of national education. In this regard, the plan sets out three (3) priority areas, namely, to raise employment by a faster growing economy, improve the quality of education, and to build the capability of the state in order to play a more developmental and transformative role. One of the key challenges identified was that the economy is unsustainably resource intensive and the acceleration and expansion of renewable energy was identified as a key intervention strategy to address this challenge. Khwezi SPP will contribute to the intervention strategy as identified within the plan.
National Infrastructure Plan of South Africa	Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission	2012	In the year 2012 the South African Government adopted a National Infrastructure Plan (hereafter referred to as the Plan). The aim of this Plan is to transform the economic landscape, while strengthening the delivery of basic services and creating new employment opportunities. This Plan also supports the integration of African communities, and also sets out the challenges and enablers that our country needs in order to respond to the planning and development of infrastructure with regards to fostering economic growth (RSA, 2012). The Plan has developed eighteen (18) strategic integrated projects (further referred to as SIPs). These SIPs stretch over all nine (9) provinces, covering social and economic infrastructure, and projects that enhances development and growth. Of the eighteen (18), five (5) are geographically focused, three (3) spatial, three (3) energy, three (3) social infrastructure, two (2) knowledge, one (1) regional

		integration, and one (1) water and sanitation focussed. The three (3) SIPs according to the Plan, which are energy focused and correlate to the proposed project are as follow: • SIP 8: Green energy in support of the South African economy; • SIP 9: Electricity generation to support socio-economic development; and • SIP 10: Electricity transmission and distribution for all. SIP 8 according to the Plan "*support sustainable green energy initiatives on a national scale through a diverse range of clean energy options as envisaged in the IRP 2010 and support bio-fuel production facilities*". The purpose of SIP 9 according to the Plan is to "*accelerate the construction of new electricity generation capacity in accordance with the IRP 2010 to meet the needs of the economy and address historical imbalances*". SIP 9 should also monitor the implementation of major projects such as new power stations like Medupi, Kusile and Ingula. Lastly, SIP 10 aims to "*expand the transmission and distribution network to address historical imbalances, provide access to electricity for all and support economic development*" (RSA, 2012:20). The Khwezi SPP is in line with this plan as it proposes the generation of renewable energy from the solar resource which supports socio-economic development and will contribute to meeting the electricity demand of the country as set out in this plan.
New Growth Path Framework	Department of - Economic Development	The New Growth Path was developed after 16 years of South Africa's democracy, to respond to emerging opportunities and risks while building on policies. This framework provides a dynamic vision on how to collectively achieve a more developed, equitable and democratic society and economy. This framework mainly reflects the commitment of the South African Government to create employment opportunities for its people in all economic policies (RSA, 2011b). This framework sets out the markers for job creation and growth and identify where there are viable changes in the character and structure of production, in order to create a more inclusive, greener economy in the long-term. It is stated in the framework that in order for this framework to reach its objectives, the Government is committed to:

			• Identify the possible areas of employment creation; and • Develop a policy to facilitate employment creation especially with regards to social equity, sustainable employment and growth in the creation of employment activities (RSA, 2011b). This framework also identifies investments in five key areas, one of which is energy. This framework also states that the green economy is a priority area, which includes the construction of and investment in renewable energy technologies like solar (RSA, 2011b). In this regard it will also assist creating employment opportunities over the medium- and long-term. Considering that the construction of and investment in renewable energy is a key area identified within the framework, the Khwezi SPP is considered to be in-line with the framework.
Climate Change Bill	National Department of Environmental Affairs (now known as the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment)	2018	On 08 June 2018 the Minister of Environmental Affairs published the Climate Change Bill ("the Bill") for public comment. The Bill provides a framework for climate change regulation in South Africa aimed at governing South Africa's sustainable transition to a climate resilient, low carbon economy and society. The Bill provides a procedural outline that will be developed through the creation of frameworks and plans. The following objectives are set within the Bill: • Provide for the coordinated and integrated response to climate change and its impacts by all spheres of government in accordance with the principles of cooperative governance; • Provide for the effective management of inevitable climate change impacts through enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change, with a view to building social, economic, and environmental resilience and an adequate national adaptation response in the context of the global climate change response; • Make a fair contribution to the global effort to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that avoids dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system within a timeframe and in a manner that enables economic, employment, social and environmental development to proceed in a sustainable manner.

			The Khwezi SPP comprises a renewable energy generation facility and would not result in the generation or release of emissions during its operation.
Climate Change Bill	National Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment	2021	The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment has published a new Climate Change Bill for public comment. The bill notes that climate change represents an urgent threat to human societies and the planet, and requires an effective, progressive and incremental response from both government and citizens. It recognises that South Africa has a global responsibility to reduce greenhouse gasses and that the anticipated impacts arising as a result of climate change have the potential to undermine achieving of the country's developmental goals. The main objective of the bill is to enable the development of an effective climate change response and the long-term, just transition to a climate-resilient and lower-carbon economy and society, and to provide for matters connected therewith. The Khwezi SPP comprises a renewable energy generation facility and would not result in the generation or release of emissions during its operation.
Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs)	The Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Committee	2010 - 2030	The Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Committee (PICC) is integrating and phasing investment plans across 18 Strategic Infrastructure Projects (SIPs) which have five core functions: to unlock opportunity, transform the economic landscape, create new jobs, strengthen the delivery of basic services and support the integration of African economies. A balanced approach is being fostered through greening of the economy, boosting energy security, promoting integrated municipal infrastructure investment, facilitating integrated urban development, accelerating skills development, investing in rural development and enabling regional integration. SIP 8 and 9 of the energy SIPs supports the development of the solar energy facility: • SIP 8: Green energy in support of the South African economy: Support sustainable green energy initiatives on a national scale through a diverse range of clean energy options as envisaged in the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP 2010 – 2030) and supports bio-fuel production facilities.

			• SIP 9: Electricity generation to support socio-economic development: The proposed Khwezi SPP is a potential SIP 9 Project as electricity will be generated and social and economic upliftment, development and growth will take place within the surrounding communities. It would become a SIP 9 project if selected as a Preferred Bidder project by the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy. SIP 9 supports the acceleration of the construction of new electricity generation capacity in accordance with the IRP 2010 to meet the needs of the economy and address historical imbalances. The Khwezi SPP could be registered as a SIP project once selected as a preferred bidder under the REIPPP Programme. The project would then contribute to the above-mentioned SIPs
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for wind and solar PV Energy in South Africa	National Department of Environmental Affairs (now known as the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment)	2014	The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) has committed to contribute to the implementation of the National Development Plan and National Infrastructure Plan by undertaking Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) to identify adaptive processes that integrate the regulatory environmental requirements for Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs) while safeguarding the environment. The wind and solar photovoltaic (PV) SEA was accordingly commissioned by DEA in support of SIP 8, which aims to facilitate the implementation of sustainable green energy initiatives. This SEA identifies areas where large scale wind and solar PV energy facilities can be developed in terms of SIP 8 and in a manner that limits significant negative impacts on the environment, while yielding the highest possible socio-economic benefits to the country. These areas are referred to as Renewable Energy Development Zones (REDZs). The REDZs also provide priority areas for investment into the electricity grid. Currently one of the greatest challenges to renewable energy development in South Africa is the saturation of existing grid infrastructure and the difficulties in expanding the grid. Proactive investment in grid infrastructure is the likely to be the most important factor determining the success of REDZs. Although it is intended for the SEA to facilitate proactive grid investment in REDZs, such investment should not be limited to these areas. Suitable wind and solar PV development should still be promoted across the country and any proposed development must be evaluated on its own merit.

		The Khwezi SPP is not located within a REDZ, but the development will contribute to the expansion of renewable energy facilities and infrastructure within the country, and provide the positive opportunities associated with it.
Free State Provincial Spatial Development Framework (PSDF)	Free State Provincial Government 2012	The Free State PSDF is a policy document that promotes a 'developmental state' in accordance with national and provincial legislation and directives. It aligns with the Free State Provincial Growth and Development Strategy which has committed the Free State to 'building a prosperous, sustainable and growing provincial economy which reduces poverty and improves social development'. The PSDF includes comprehensive plans and strategies that collectively indicate which type of land-use should be promoted in the Province, where such land-use should take place, and how it should be implemented and managed. In broad terms, the PSDF: • Indicates the spatial implications of the core development objectives of the Free State Provincial Growth and Development Strategy. • Serves as a spatial plan that facilitates local economic development. • Lays down strategies, proposals and guidelines as it relates to sustainable development. • Facilitates cross-boundary co-operation between municipalities, adjoining provinces, and bordering countries. • Serves as a manual for integration and standardisation of the planning frameworks of all spheres of government in the Province. The Free State Provincial Growth and Development Strategy states that sustainable economic development is the only effective means by which the most significant challenge of the Free State, namely poverty, can be addressed is. The PSDF gives practical effect to sustainable development, which is defined as development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The PSDF is prepared in accordance with bioregional planning principles that were adapted to suit the site-specific requirements of the Free State. It incorporates and complies with the relevant protocols,

			conventions, agreements, legislation and policy at all applicable levels of planning, ranging from the international to the local. The PSDF builds upon achievements and learns from mistakes of the past, reacts to the challenges of our time, incorporates the traditional knowledge of the people of the Free State, and builds upon international best-practice and technology. The development of the Khwezi SPP is in-line with the framework based on the contributions and opportunities presented by a development of this nature.
Thabo Matjhabeng Municipality Integrated Development Plan (IDP)	Mofutsanyana District Municipality	2021 – 2022 (2021)	The long-term vision of the Thabo Mofutsanyana DM is: *"to create integrated, self-reliant and sustainable communities throughout the Thabo Mofutsantana highlands, with financially viable, participate and developmental local municipalities"*. The above stated vision defines what Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality would like to attain over medium to long-term, and for that achievement to effectively materialize, their mission is that: *"Continuously improving and developing living conditions of our communities by providing efficient and effective bulk service and create a conductive environment for business opportunities and job creation"*. The strategic objectives are set to support the vision and mission. The Thabo Mofutsanyana DM has adopted Strategic objectives that will support its programmes to meet the government priorities. These key priorities are as follows: • Sustainable infrastructure • Local Economic development, Job Creation and Tourism • Agriculture and Rural Development • Social Development, Sports, Arts, and culture. • Good Governance and Community participation • Financial Stability.

			The development of the Khwezi SPP is in line with the plan, considering the relevant Key Performance Area stated in the IDP.
Mantsopa Local Municipality Integrated Development Plan (IDP)	Mantsopa Local Municipality	2021/ 2022	The vision of the Mantsopa LM is "*Serving community with excellence*." In order to achieve the vision, we have to start change processes immediately. This requires the development of a mission statement and the elucidation of the Strategic IDP Objectives. The Mission Statement is *"To achieve an accessible, integrated, sustainable and equitable social and economic development of the municipality".* It further requires of municipality to structure and manage its administration, budgeting and planning processes to give priority to the basic needs of the community and to promote the social and economic development of the community whilst participating in national and provincial development programmes. The following Development Strategies has been put in place to support the above vision and mission statements: • To provide democratic and accountable government for local communities • To ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner • To promote a safe and healthy environment • To promote social and economic development • To encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in the matters of local Government. In line with its developmental mandate, Mantsopa Local Municipality understands its service delivery objectives as set out in the developmental strategies. Therefore, the developmental strategies as espoused in this IDP, are directly linked to a specific developmental needs and objectives which must be measured in the organizational Performance Management System (PMS) and give effect to Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) targets/ goals. The development of the Khwezi SPP will contribute to the goals of the area, albeit to a limited extent.

3.4 OTHER LEGISLATION

Other legislation mainly refers to the following:

- Planning legislation governing the rezoning process and approval of the layout plan.
- Design standards and legislation for services provision such as water, sewerage, electricity, etc.
- Municipal bylaws related to building plans, building regulations, etc.

3.5 RELEVANT GUIDANCE

The following guidance was considered in conducting the EIA:

- The Equator principles III (2020)
- World Bank Group Environmental, Health and Safety General Guidelines (EHS Guidelines) (2007)
- Environmental, Health, and Safety Guidelines for Electric Power Transmission and Distribution (2007)
- International Finance Corporation's Policy on Environmental and Social Sustainability (2012)
- DEA. (2013). Draft National Renewable Energy Guideline. Department of Environmental Affairs, Pretoria, South Africa
- DEA, (2012), Guideline 5 – Final companion to the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations of 2010
- DEA, (2012), Guideline 7 – Public participation in the Environmental Impact Assessment process
- DEA, (2012), Guideline 9 – Need and desirability
- DEA, (2006), Guideline 3 – General guide to the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations
- DEAT, (2006), Guideline 4 – Public participation in support of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations
- DEAT, (2006), Guideline 5 – Assessment of alternatives and impacts in support of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations
- BirdLife, (2017). Best Practise Guidelines Birds & Solar Energy: Guidelines for assessing and monitoring the impact of solar power generating facilities on bird in southern Africa.

3.6 CONCLUSION

The EIA is being undertaken in accordance with the EIA Regulations (as amended) published in GNR 326, in terms of Section 24(5) and 44 of the NEMA as amended as well as all relevant National legislation, policy documents, national guidelines, the World Bank EHS Guidelines, the IFC Performance Standards, and the Equator Principles.

The legislative and policy context plays an important role in identifying and assessing the potential social impacts associated with the proposed development, as well as an indication of the need and desirability of the proposed development from a national, provincial and local level. For this reason, the proposed development project will be assessed in terms of its fit with the key legislative, policy and planning documents discussed above.

The main findings of the review of the policy documents on all spheres of Government indicated that strong support was given towards renewable energy, specifically PV solar energy and therefore it is concluded that there is support for the development of the Khwezi Solar Power Plant. The White Paper on the Energy Policy of the Republic of South Africa of 1998 stated that due to the fact that renewable energy resources operate from an unlimited resource base, i.e., the sun, renewable energy can increasingly contribute towards a long-term sustainable energy supply for future generations. This policy further highlights that due to the unlimited resources base of renewable energy in South Africa, renewable energy applications, like PV solar energy and associated infrastructure, are more sustainable in terms of social and environmental costs. The Integrated Resource Planning for Electricity for South Africa of 2010–2030, the National Infrastructure Plan of South Africa and the New Growth Path Framework all support the development of the renewable energy sector. In particular, the IRP also indicated that 43% of the energy generation in South Africa is allocated to renewable energy applications. On a District and Local level limited attention is given explicitly to renewable sources like PV solar energy, however the documents reviewed do make provision for such developments and efficiency in improving the quality of lives in terms of efficient physical infrastructure as well as socio-economic growth. At Provincial, District and Local level the policy documents support the applications of renewables.

The review of the relevant policies and documents related to the energy sector therefore indicate that renewables, like solar energy and the establishment of solar energy facilities and associated infrastructure, are supported on all spheres of Government. The proposed Khwezi SPP is therefore supported by the related policy and planning documents reviewed in this section of the report.

4 THE NEED AND DESIRABILITY

This section aims to address the following requirements of the regulations:

Appendix 2. (2) A scoping report (...) must include – (f) a motivation for the need and desirability of the activity in the context of the preferred location.

4.1 THE NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTIVITY

The proposed activity is a direct result of the growing demand for electricity and the need for renewable energy in South Africa. According to Eskom, the demand for electricity in South Africa has been growing at approximately 3% per annum. This growing demand, fuelled by increasing economic growth and social development, is placing increasing pressure on South Africa's existing power generation capacity. Coupled with this, is the growing awareness of environmentally responsible development, the impacts of climate change and the need for sustainable development.

Over 90% of South Africa's electricity generation is coal based, the World bank estimates that this results in an annual, per capita carbon emission of ~8.9 tons per person. Based on 2008 fossil-fuel CO_2 emissions statistics released by the Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Centre, South Africa is the 13th largest carbon dioxide emitting country in the world and the largest emitter in Africa (Boden, et al. 2011). In August 2021 an article confirmed that South Africa is the 12th highest greenhouse gas emitter in the world (source: https://www.news24.com/fin24/economy/eskom-will-only-able-to-meet-global-air-quality-standards-by-2050-owing-to-financial-woes-20210818).

The proposed project is intended to form part of the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy's (DMREs) Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement (REIPPP) Programme or any other appropriate energy generation programmes/opportunities. The REIPPP Programme aims to secure 14 725 Megawatts (MW) of new generation capacity from renewable energy sources, while simultaneously diversifying South Africa's electricity mix. According to the 2021 State of the Nation Address, Government will soon be initiating the procurement of an additional 11 800 MW of power from renewable energy, natural gas, battery storage and coal in line with the Integrated Resource Plan 2019 and fulfilling their commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement which include the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Eskom, the largest greenhouse gas emitter of South Africa, has committed in principle to net zero emission by 2050 and to increase its renewable capacity. During the 2022 State of the Nation Address it was indicated that during the past year the government had taken "firm steps" to bring additional generation capacity online as quickly as possible to close the shortfall in terms of electricity. As a result, it was confirmed that several new generation projects will be coming online over the next few years.

Besides capacity additions, several assumptions have changed since the promulgation of IRP 2010–2030. Key assumptions that changed include the electricity demand projection, Eskom's existing plant performance, as well as new technology costs. These changes necessitated the review and update of the IRP which resulted in the draft IRP 2018 that was made available for comment and updated to the draft IRP 2019 as per table 4.1 below:

Table 4.1: Published Draft IRP 2019 (Approved by Cabinet for Consultation)

	Coal	Coal (Decommissioning)	Nuclear	Hydro	Storage	PV	Wind	CSP	Gas & Diesel	Other (Distributed Generation, CoGen, Biomass, Landfill)
Current Base	37149		1860	2100	2912	1474	1980	300	3830	499
2019	2155	-2373					244	300		Allocation to the extent of the short term capacity and energy gap.
2020	1433	-557				114	300			
2021	1433	-1403				300	818			
2022	711	-844			513	400 1000	1600			
2023	750	-555				1000	1600			500
2024			1860				1600		1000	500
2025						1000	1600			500
2026		-1219					1600			500
2027	750	-847					1600		2000	500
2028		-475				1000	1600			500
2029		-1684			1575	1000	1600			500
2030		-1050		2500		1000	1600			500
TOTAL INSTALLED CAPACITY by 2030 (MW)	33364		1860	4600	5000	8288	17742	600	6380	
% Total Installed Capacity (% of MW)	43		2.36	5.84	6.35	10.52	22.53	0.76	8.1	
% Annual Energy Contribution (% of MWh)	58.8		4.5	8.4	1.2*	6.3	17.8	0.6	1.3	

Installed Capacity
Committed / Already Contracted Capacity
Capacity Decommissioned
New Additional Capacity
Extension of Koeberg Plant Design Life
Includes Distributed Generation Capacity for own use

According to the South African Energy Sector Overview (2021), there is currently 1 723MW of installed PV capacity, while an additional 2 600MW and 860MW from wind and solar has been rewarded as part of Bid window 5 and 6, respectively (latter announced in 2022).

4.2 THE DESIRABILITY OF THE PROPOSED ACTIVITY

The facility's contribution towards sustainable development and the associated benefits to society in general is discussed below:

- Lesser dependence on fossil fuel generated power - The deployment of the facility will have a positive macro-economic impact by reducing South Africa's dependence on fossil fuel generated power and assisting the country in meeting its growing electricity demand.
- Increased surety of supply - By diversifying the sources of power in the country, the surety of supply will increase. The power demands of South Africa are ever increasing and by adding solar power this demand can be met, even exceeded without increasing pollution in relation to the use of fossil fuels. The project has the potential of "securing" economic activity by assisting in removing supply constraints if Eskom generation activities result in a supply shortfall. When supply is constrained, it represents a limitation to economic growth. When a supply reserve is available, it represents an opportunity for economic growth.

- Local economic growth - The proposed project will contribute to local economic growth by supporting industry development in line with provincial and regional goals and ensuring advanced skills are drawn to the Free State Province. The project will likely encounter widespread support from government, civil society and businesses, all of whom see potential opportunities for revenues, employment and business opportunities locally. The development of the SPP will in turn lead to growth in tax revenues for local municipalities and sales of carbon credits, resulting in increased foreign direct investment. The location of the proposed development within the Mantsopa Local Municipality is desirable since the overall municipal unemployment rate was found to be 29.2% (Mantsopa IDP, 2020/2021).

- Lower costs of alternative energy - An increase in the number of solar facilities commissioned will eventually reduce the cost of the power generated through solar facilities. This will contribute to the country's objective of utilising more renewable energy and less fossil fuel-based power sources. It will assist in achieving the goal to generate 14 725 MW of electricity from renewable energy as per the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement (REIPPP) Programme of the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy. The Government will be initiating the procurement of an additional 11 800 MW of renewable energy as stated during the 2021 State of the Nation Address.

- Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions - The additional power supplied through solar energy will reduce the reliance on the combustion of fossil fuels to produce power. The South African electricity grid is predominantly coal-fired and therefore GHG emissions intensive (coal accounts for more than 92% of the fuel used in South Africa's electricity generation). The reduction of GHG emissions as a result of the project implementation will be achieved due to reduction of CO_2 emissions from combustion of fossil fuel at the existing grid-connected power plants and plants which would likely be built in the absence of the project activity.

- CDM Project - A solar energy facility also qualifies as a Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) project (i.e., a financial mechanism developed to encourage the development of renewable technologies).

- Climate change mitigation - On a global scale, the project makes a contribution to greenhouse gas emission reduction and therefore contributes toward climate change mitigation.

- Reduced environmental impacts - The reduction in non-renewable electricity consumed from the grid will not only result in a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, but also the prevention of negative impacts associated with coal mining. For example, coal power requires high volumes of water, in areas of South Africa where water supply is already over-stretched and water availability is highly variable. Photovoltaic solar energy technology also does not produce the sulphur emissions, ash or coal mining concerns associated with conventional coal fired electricity generation technologies resulting in a relatively low level of environmental impacts. It is a clean technology which contributes toward a better-quality environment for employees and nearby communities.

- Social benefits - The project activity is likely to have significant long-term, indirect positive social impacts that may extend to a regional and even national scale. The larger scale impacts are to be derived in the utilization of solar power and the experience gained through the

construction and operation of the power plant. In future, this experience can be employed at other similar solar installations in South Africa.

- Provision of job opportunities - The main benefit of the proposed development operating in the area is that local companies or contractors will be hired for the duration of the construction period. The operational phase will provide permanent job opportunities to the local communities from the surrounding area since security guards and general labourers will be required on a full-time basis. Approximately 200 employment opportunities will be created during the construction and operational phases.

- Indirect socio-economic benefits - The increase in the demand for services such as accommodation, transportation, security, general maintenance and catering will generate additional indirect socio-economic benefits for the local community members.

- Effective use of resources - Predominantly because of the climate and soil limitations, the site is totally unsuitable for cultivated crops, and the viable agricultural land use is limited to grazing and rainfed crops only. The proposed development in this specific area will generate alternative land use income through rental for the proposed energy facility, which will have a positive impact on agriculture. It will provide the farming enterprise with increased cash flow and rural livelihood, and thereby improve the financial sustainability of agricultural activities.

- Increased access to electricity: Despite the abundant availability of coal, electricity generation and the development of related infrastructure has been inadequate in providing access to electricity for entire population of approximately 60 million people. South Africa has been described as a country with an energy-deprived population with more than 1.5 million households comprising approximately 5 million people that are without electricity. According to the Mantsopa LM IDP, the national electricity crises of 2010 and the resultant effects on South African residents and the economy has highlighted how highly reliant we are on electricity as a source of energy. Government has committed to developing measures to promote energy saving, reduce energy costs to the economy, and reduce the negative impact of energy use on the environment.

- Cumulative impacts of low to medium significance – No cumulative impacts with a high residual risk have been identified. In terms of the desirability of the development of sources of renewable energy therefore, it may be preferable to incur a higher cumulative loss in such a region as this one, than to lose land with a higher environmental value elsewhere in the country.

5 DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

This section aims to address the following requirements of the regulations:

Appendix 2. (2) A scoping report (...) must include-

(h) a full description of the process followed to reach the proposed preferred activity, site and location of the development footprint within the site, including –

(i) details of all the alternatives considered;

(ii) details of the public participation process undertaken in terms of regulation 41 of the Regulations, including copies of the supporting documents and inputs;

(iii) a summary of the issues raised by interested and affected parties, and an indication of the manner in which the issues were incorporated, or the reasons for not including them.

(iv) the environmental attributes associated with the alternatives focusing on the geographical, physical, biological, social, economic, heritage and cultural aspects;

(ix) the outcome of the site selection matrix;

(x) if no alternatives, including alternative locations for the activity were investigated, the motivation for not considering such and

(xi) a concluding statement indicating the preferred alternatives, including preferred location of the activity;

5.1 CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES

The DEAT 2006 guidelines on assessment of alternatives and impacts proposes the consideration of four types of alternatives namely, the no-go, location, activity, and design alternatives. It is, however, important to note that the regulation and guidelines specifically state that only 'feasible' and 'reasonable' alternatives should be explored. It also recognises that the consideration of alternatives is an iterative process of feedback between the developer and EAP, which in some instances culminates in a single preferred project proposal.

An initial site screening was conducted on the Farm Koppiesdam No. 511 (PV facility); Farm Welgegund No. 100 and Farm Noodshulp No. 2052 (access road) and the farms were found favorable due to its close proximity to grid connections, solar radiation, ecology and relatively flat terrain. Where specific features of environmental sensitivity are identified by the independent specialists as part of the Scoping Phase, these areas and the associated required buffers will be considered by the developer to ensure that the facility layout is appropriate considering the sensitive features present. The site selection also took the site geology, land capability, water availability and land use into consideration before deciding on the specific site within the affected property.

The following sections explore different types of alternatives in relation to the proposed activity in more detail.

5.1.1 No-go Alternative

This alternative considers the option of 'do nothing' and maintaining the status quo of the affected environment. The description provided in section 5.3 of this report could be considered the baseline conditions (*status quo*) to persist should the no-go alternative be preferred. The site is currently zoned for agricultural land uses. Should the proposed activity not proceed, the site will remain unchanged and will continue to be used for the current land uses present. The area associated with the development footprint has limited agricultural potential and is unsuitable for cultivation, with grazing and rainfed crop considered to be the only agricultural option. The potential opportunity costs in terms of alternative land use income through rental for the energy facility and the supporting social and economic development in the area would be lost if the *status quo* persists.

5.1.2 Location Alternatives

This alternative asks the question, if there is not, from an environmental perspective, a more suitable location for the proposed activity. No other properties have at this stage been secured by Khwezi Solar PV (RF) (Pty) Ltd in the Excelsior area to potentially establish the Khwezi SPP. From a local perspective the Farm Koppiesdam No. 511 (PV facility); Farm Welgegund No. 100 and Farm Noodshulp No. 2052 (access road) are preferred due to its suitable climatic conditions, topography (i.e., in terms of slope), environmental conditions (i.e., low agricultural potential and archaeology), proximity to a grid connection point (i.e., for the purpose of electricity evacuation), as well as site access (i.e., to facilitate the movement of machinery, equipment, infrastructure and people during the construction phase).

Based on the above site-specific attributes, the study area is considered highly preferred in terms of the development of a solar PV facility. As such, no property / location alternatives will be considered. Refer to Figure 5.1.

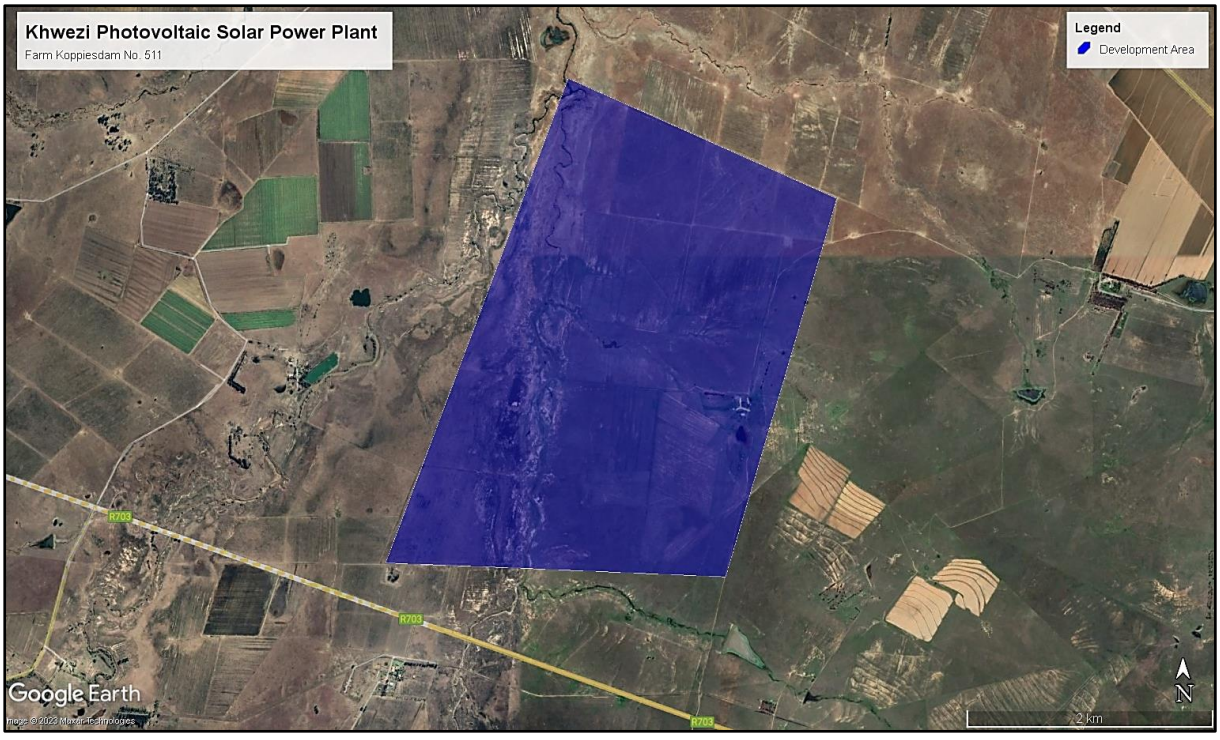


Figure 5.1: Location of the single preferred location alternative

5.1.3 Activity Alternatives

The scoping process also needs to consider if the development of a solar PV facility would be the most appropriate land use for the particular site.

- Photovoltaic (PV) solar facility – Khwezi Solar PV (RF) (Pty) Ltd is part of a portfolio of solar PV projects throughout South Africa.
- Wind energy facility - Due to the local climatic conditions a wind energy facility is not considered suitable as the area does not have the required wind resource. Furthermore, the applicant has opted for the generation of electricity via solar power rather than the use of wind turbines based on the renewable energy resource available for the area. This alternative is therefore regarded as not feasible and will not be evaluated further in this report.
- Concentrated solar power (CSP) technology - CSP technology requires large volumes of water, and this is a major constraint for this type of technology considering the water challenges and limitation experienced not only in the country but also within the local area. While the irradiation values are high enough to generate sufficient solar power (refer to Figure 5.2), the water constraints render this alternative not feasible. It must also be noted that the IRP no longer includes the use of CSP as part of the energy mix of the county. Therefore, this alternative will not be considered further in this report.

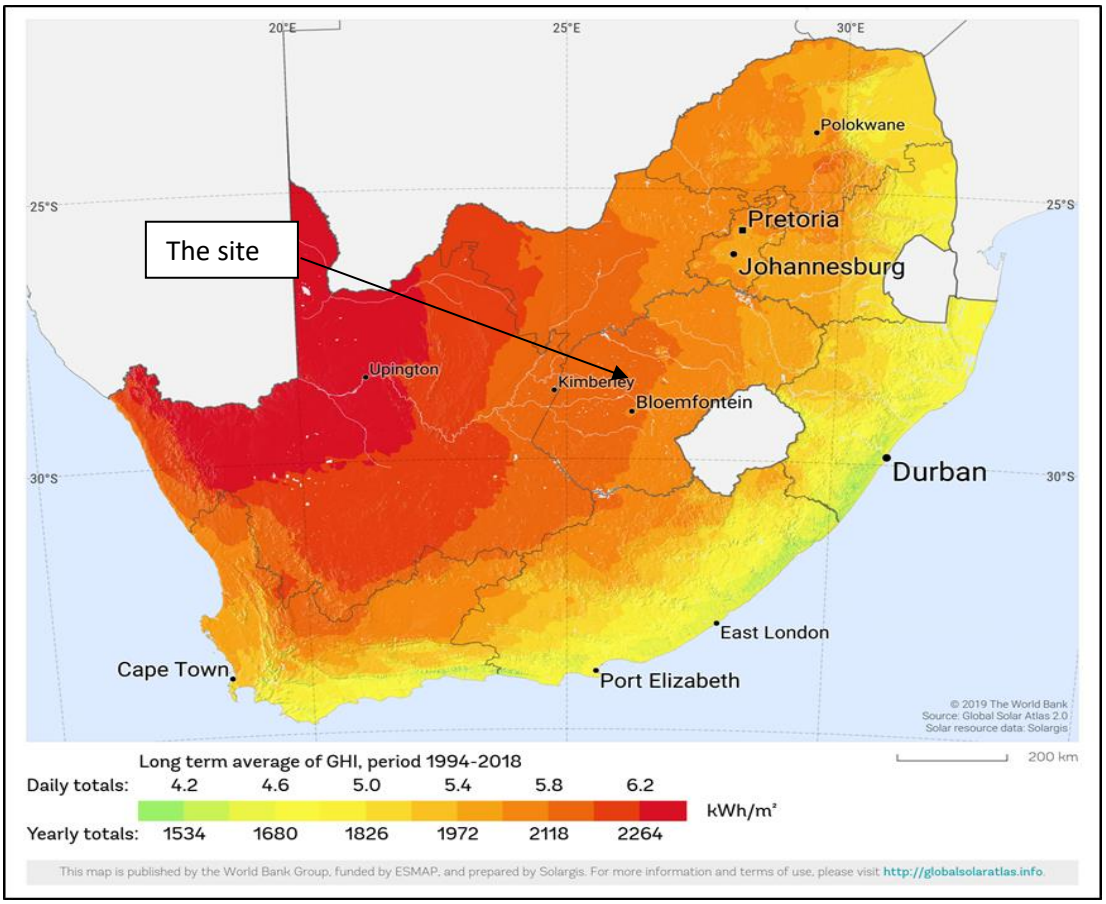


Figure 5.2: Global horizontal irradiation values for South Africa (Solar GIS, 2021) and the Khwezi SPP development footprint

5.1.4 Design and Layout Alternatives

Design alternatives were considered throughout the planning and design phase (i.e., what would be the best design option for the development?). In this regard discussions on the design were held between the EAP and the developer, which also included the consideration of sensitive environmental areas and features present as identified by the independent specialists that needs to be avoided by the placement of infrastructure. The draft layout plan is included as Figure I, but it should be noted that the final layout plan will be submitted as part of the EIA Report.

The draft layout follows the limitations of the site and aspects such as environmental sensitive areas (wetlands and koppies), roads, fencing and servitudes are considered. The total surface area proposed for layout options include the PV panel arrays spaced to avoid shadowing, access and maintenance roads and associated infrastructure (buildings, power inverters, power lines, BESS and perimeter fences). With regards to the structure orientation, the panels will either be fixed to a single-axis horizontal tracking structure where the orientation of the panel varies according to the time of the day, as the sun moves from east to west or tilted at a fixed angle equivalent to the latitude at which the site is located in order to capture the most sun.

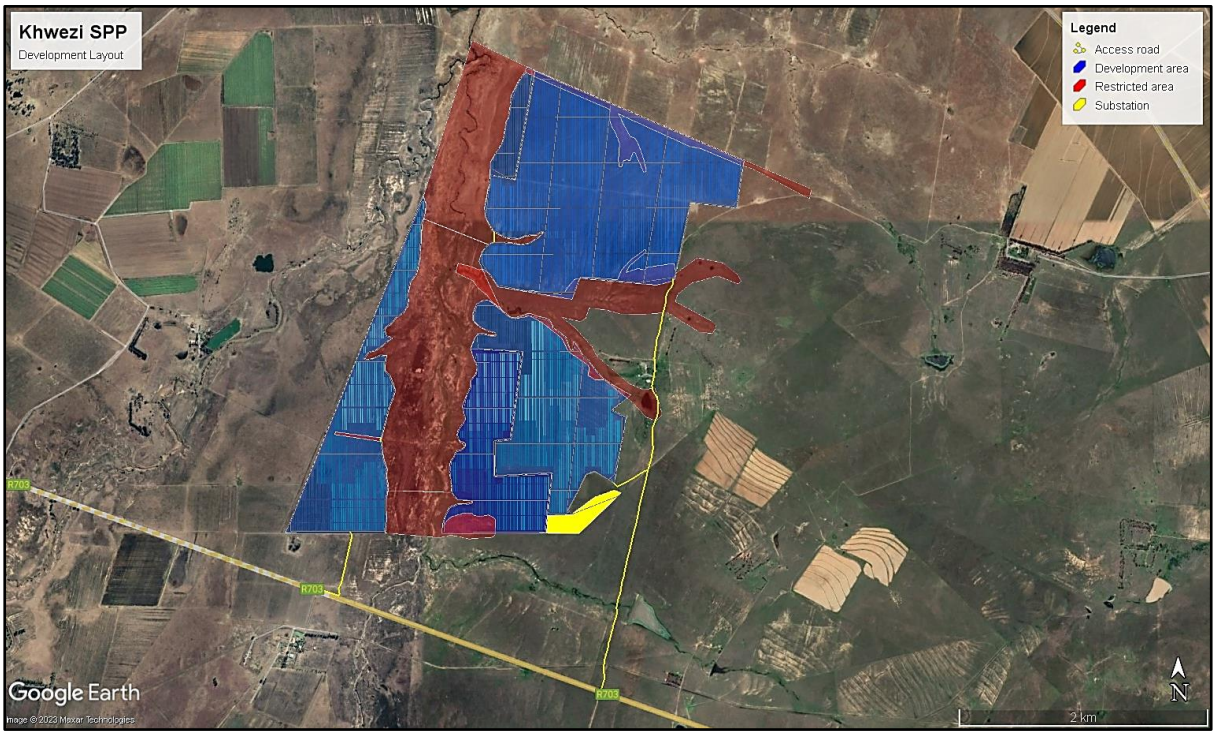


Figure 5.3: Draft layout plan for the Khwezi SPP

Note: It is customary to develop the final/detailed construction layout of the solar PV facility only once an Independent Power Producer (IPP) is awarded a successful bid under the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIPPPP) or an alternative programme, after which major contracts are negotiated and final equipment suppliers identified. For the purpose of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), site layout alternatives will not be comparatively assessed, but rather a single layout will be refined as additional information becomes available throughout the EIA process (e.g., specialist input, additional site surveys, ongoing stakeholder engagement).

The development area presented in the Scoping Report has been selected as a practicable option for the facility, considering technical preference and constraints, as well as initial No-Go layers informed by specialist site surveys. Following further site screening by the specialists (scheduled to take place during the EIA phase), the development footprint will be finalised for impact assessment.

5.1.5 Technology Alternatives

Battery Energy Storage Facility (BESS)

As technological advances within battery energy storage systems (BESS) are frequent, two BESS technology alternatives are considered:

- Solid state battery electrolytes; and
- Redox-flow technology.

Solid state battery electrolytes, such as lithium-ion (Li-ion), zinc hybrid cathode, sodium ion, flow (e.g., zinc iron or zinc bromine), sodium sulphur (NaS), zinc air and lead acid batteries, can be used for grid applications. Compared to other battery options, Li-ion batteries are highly efficient, have a high energy density and are lightweight. As a result of the declining costs, Li-ion technology now accounts for more than 90% of battery storage additions globally (IRENA, 2019).

Flow batteries use solid electrodes and liquid electrolytes. The most used flow battery is the Vanadium Redox Flow Battery (VRFB), which is a type of rechargeable flow battery that employs vanadium ions in different oxidative states to store chemical potential energy. Considering the nature of the project, only a solid-state technology type would be envisaged for implementation.

PV Panels:

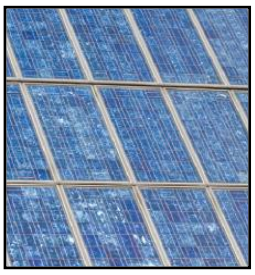
With regards to the structure orientation, the panels will either be fixed to a single-axis horizontal tracking structure where the orientation of the panel varies according to the time of the day, as the sun moves from east to west or tilted at a fixed angle equivalent to the latitude at which the site is located in order to capture the most sun.

There are several types of semiconductor technologies currently available and in use for PV solar panels. Two, however, have become the most widely adopted, namely crystalline silicon and thin film. These technologies are discussed in more detail below:

- <u>Crystalline (high efficiency technology at higher cost):</u>

  Crystalline silicon panels are constructed by first putting a single slice of silicon through a series of processing steps, creating one solar cell. These cells are then assembled together in multiples to make a solar panel. Crystalline silicon, also called wafer silicon, is the oldest and the most widely used material in commercial solar panels. Crystalline silicon modules represent 85-90% of the global annual market today. There are two main types of crystalline silicon panels that can be considered for the solar facility:

- Mono-crystalline Silicon - mono-crystalline (also called single crystal) panels use solar cells that are cut from a piece of silicon grown from a single, uniform crystal. Mono-crystalline panels are among the most efficient yet most expensive on the market. They require the highest purity silicon and have the most involved manufacturing process.



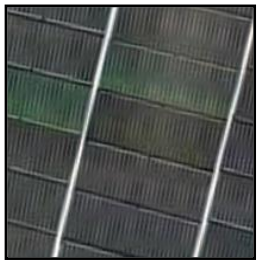
- Poly-crystalline Silicon – poly-crystalline panels use solar cells that are cut from multifaceted silicon crystals. They are less uniform in appearance than mono-crystalline cells, resembling pieces of shattered glass. These are the most common solar panels on the market, being less expensive than mono-crystalline silicon. They are also less efficient, though the performance gap has begun to close in recent years (First Solar, 2011).

- <u>Thin film (low-cost technology with lower efficiency):</u>

  Thin film solar panels are made by placing thin layers of semiconductor material onto various surfaces, usually on glass. The term *thin film* refers to the amount of semiconductor material used. It is applied in a thin film to a surface structure, such as a sheet of glass. Contrary to popular belief, most thin film panels are not flexible. Overall, thin film solar panels offer the lowest manufacturing costs, and are becoming more prevalent in the industry. Thin films currently account for 10-15% of global PV module sales. There are three main types of thin film used:

- Cadmium Telluride (CdTe) - CdTe is a semiconductor compound formed from cadmium and tellurium. CdTe solar panels are manufactured on glass. They are the most common type of thin film solar panel on the market and the most cost-effective to manufacture. CdTe panels perform significantly better in high temperatures and in low-light conditions.

- Amorphous Silicon - Amorphous silicon is the non-crystalline form of silicon and was the first thin film material to yield a commercial product, first used in consumer items such as calculators. It can be deposited in thin layers onto a variety of surfaces and offers lower costs than traditional crystalline silicon, though it is less efficient at converting sunlight into electricity.



- Copper, Indium, Gallium, Selenide (CIGS) - CIGS is a compound semiconductor that can be deposited onto many different materials. CIGS has only recently become available for small commercial applications, and is considered a developing PV technology (First Solar, 2011).

- Bifacial panels:

As the name suggests, bifacial solar panels have two faces, or rather, they can absorb light from both sides of the panel. A lot of potential energy transfer is lost in traditional solar cells when the light hits the back of a solar panel. Most bifacial solar panels use monocrystalline cells, whereas traditional cells use polycrystalline materials. The monocrystalline materials, alongside the clear light pathway on both sides of the panel, enable the light to be absorbed from either side of the cell, and it is thought that the overall efficiency of these cells can be up to 30% greater in commercial applications. Although, the exact amount is variable depending on the surface that they are installed on. The front side of the solar panel still absorbs most of the solar light, but the back side of the solar panel can absorb between 5-90% of the light absorbed by the front of the solar panel. Refer to Figure 5.4 for an illustration of Bifacial versus Monoficial Solar Panel absorption.

Traditional solar panels use an opaque back sheet. By comparison, bifacial solar panels either have a clear/reflective back sheet or have dual panes of glass. Most of these solar panels are frameless so any issues with potential-induced degradation (PID) are reduced. To efficiently convert light into electricity from both sides, bifacial solar cells have selective-area metallization schemes that enable light to pass between the metallized areas, rather than the conventional thick metal collectors as seen with monofacial solar panels.

The technology that (at this stage) proves to be most feasible and reasonable with respect to the proposed solar facility is crystalline silicon panels, due to it being non-reflective, more efficient, and with a higher durability. However, due to the rapid technological advances being made in the field of solar technology the exact type of technology to be used, such as bifacial panels, will only be confirmed at the onset of the project.

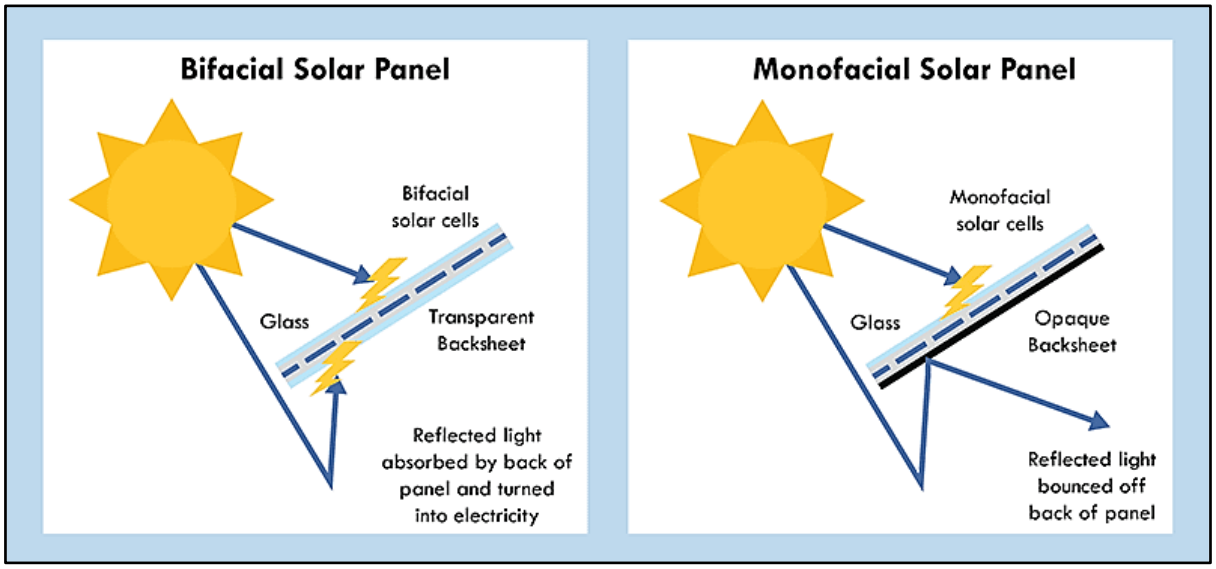


Figure 5.4: Bifacial vs Monoficial Solar Panel absorption.

5.2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The following sections provide detailed information on the public participation process conducted in terms of Regulations 39 to 44.

5.2.1 General

The following three categories of variables were taken into account when deciding the required level of public participation:

- The scale of anticipated impacts;
- The sensitivity of the affected environment and the degree of controversy of the project; and
- The characteristics of the potentially affected parties.

Since the scale of anticipated impacts is low, the general land use of the area is related to mining and agriculture, the limited environmental sensitivity of the site and the fact that no conflict was foreseen between potentially affected parties, no additional public participation mechanisms are considered at this stage of the process. The following actions have already been undertaken:

- Site notices
  Site notices (size 60cm x 42cm) was placed on site in Afrikaans and English on 7 October 2022 to inform surrounding communities and immediately adjacent landowners of the proposed development and the commencement of the S&EIR process. I&APs were given the opportunity to raise comments by 7 November 2022. Photographic evidence of the site notices is included in Appendix C2.

- Background Information Document (BID)
  The release of a BID providing information on the proposed development, the Scoping process and inviting Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) to register on the project's I&AP database was sent to the identified I&APs, including the adjacent landowners, key stakeholders and relevant organs of state on 7 October 2022.

- Direct notification of identified I&APs
  Identified I&APs, including key stakeholders representing various sectors, were directly informed of the EIA process on 7 October 2022 via registered post, telephone calls, WhatsApp's and emails (as relevant). The BID was distributed with the notification. For a complete list of I&APs with their contact details see Appendix C3 to this report. It was expected from I&APs to provide their inputs and comments by 7 November 2022.

- Direct notification of surrounding landowners and occupiers
  Written notices were also provided via registered post, WhatsApp or email (as relevant) to all surrounding landowners and occupiers on 7 October 2022. The surrounding landowners were given the opportunity to raise comments within 30 days. For a list of surrounding landowners see Appendix C3.

- Newspaper advertisement
  An advertisement was placed in English in the Bloemnuus Local Newspaper on 13 October 2022 (see Appendix C1) notifying the public of the S&EIR process and the (then) proposed application for Environmental Authorisation. The advertisement invited Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) to register on the project I&AP database and submit any comments to Environamics Environmental Consultants. I&APs were given the opportunity to raise comments within 30 days of the advertisement (i.e., up until 11 November 2022). Since the proposed development is unlikely to result in any impacts that extend beyond the municipal area where it is located, it was deemed sufficient to advertise in a local newspaper.

- Circulation of Draft Scoping Report
  Copies of the draft Scoping report has been provided to all I&APs via courier, Dropbox and/or email (as relevant). Hard copies of the report will be made available on request and where an I&AP does not have the resources to view the report on an online platform. I&AP's and organs of state are requested to provide their comments on the report by 26 March 2023. The comments will be documented and compiled into a Comments and Response Report to be included as part of the Final Scoping Report for decision-making.

5.2.2 Consultation Process

Regulation 41 requires that the landowner, surrounding landowners, municipality, relevant ward councillor, any organ of state having jurisdiction in respect of any aspect of the activity should be given written notice of the activity. A complete list of all the consultees who received written notice as well as proof of correspondence is attached as Appendices C4 and C5. Refer to Figure 5.5 for the location of the surrounding land owners.

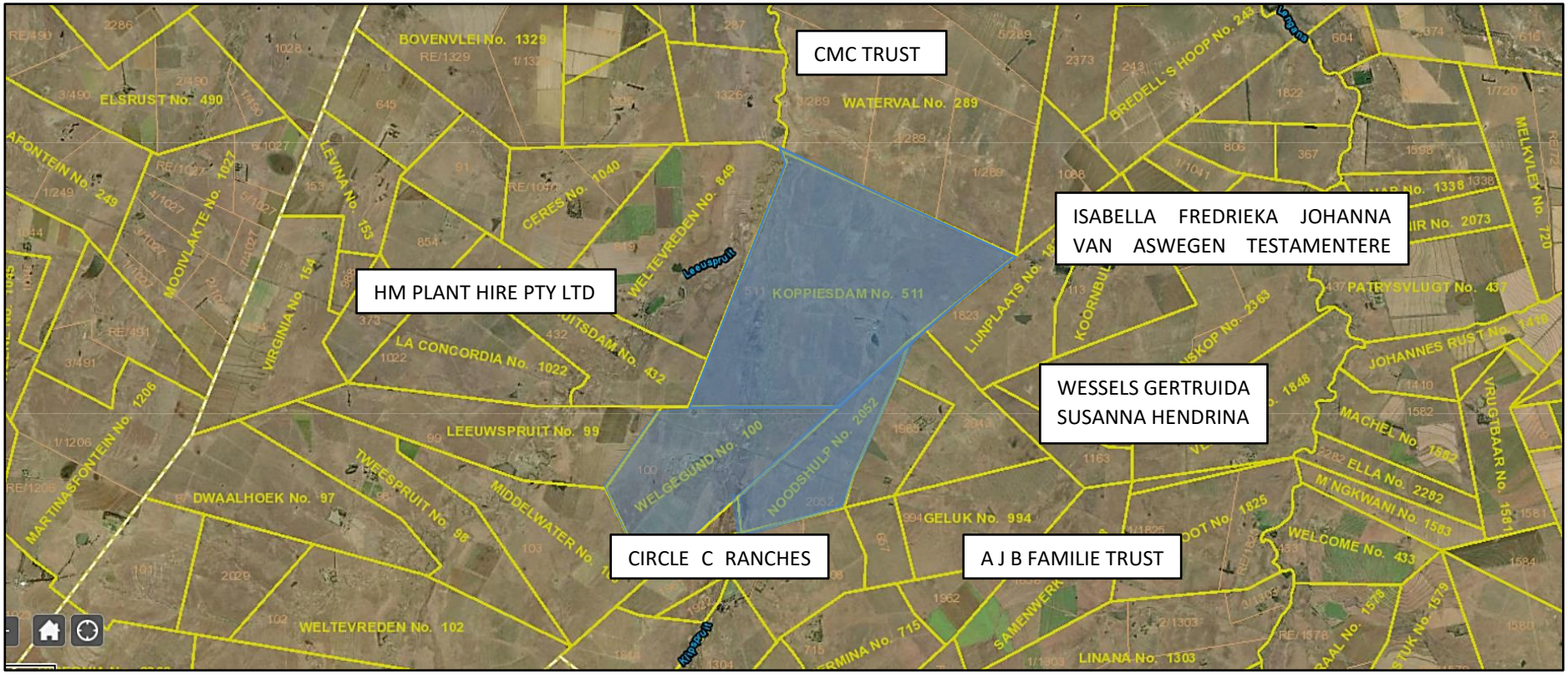


Figure 5.5: Affected properties (Blue) in relation to surrounding landowners

5.2.3 Registered I&APs

I&APs include all stakeholders who deem themselves affected by the proposed activity. According to Regulation 43(1) "*A registered interested and affected party is entitled to comment, in writing, on all reports or plans submitted to such party during the public participation process contemplated in these Regulations and to bring to the attention of the proponent or applicant any issues which that party believes may be of significance to the consideration of the application, provided that the interested and affected party discloses any direct business, financial, personal or other interest which that party may have in the approval or refusal of the application*."

This report is the Draft Scoping Report which will be made available to all potential and/or registered I&APs and State Departments. They will be provided with a copy of the Draft Scoping Report and will be requested to provide written comments on the report within 30 days. All issues identified during the review period will be documented and compiled into a Comments and Response Report to be included as part of the Final Scoping report.

All comments received prior to the release of the Draft Scoping Report for the 30-day review and comment period have been included in this report as Appendix C4, Appendix C5 and Appendix C6 to provide I&APs an opportunity to confirm that their comments raised during the initial public participation phase has been included and considered as part of the EIA process.

5.2.4 Issues Raised by I&APs and Consultation Bodies

To date the interim comment from SAHRA has been received and is summarised in the Comments and Response Report included in Appendix C6. Any comments received during the circulation of the draft Scoping Report will be summarised in the final Scoping Report. The full wording and original correspondence are included in Appendix C5.

5.3 THE ENVIRONMENTAL ATTRIBUTES ASSOCIATED WITH THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The following sections provide general information on the biophysical and socio-economic attributes associated with the preferred alternative (i.e., the location of the development footprint within the affected property).

5.3.1 Biophysical Environment

The biophysical environment is described with specific reference to geology, soils, agricultural potential, vegetation and landscape features, climate, biodiversity, heritage features (in terms of archaeology and palaeontology), the visual landscape and the social environment to be affected. A number of specialists were consulted to assist with the compilation of this chapter of the report – refer to the Table 1.1.

However, due to the fact that the area proposed for development (i.e., the development footprint) exclusively consists of land used for grazing, limited sensitive areas from an ecological, heritage or conservation point have been identified apart from the wetland features and the burial site on the site. These features are described in more detail below.

5.3.1.1 Geology, Soils and Agricultural Potential

According to the land type database (Land Type Survey Staff, 1972 - 2006), the project area is characterised by the Db 37 land type. This land type consists of prismacutanic and/or pedocutanic diagnostic horizons with the addition of one or more of the following. Additionally, vertic, melanic and red structured diagnostic horizons occur frequently within this land type.

The geology of this area is characterised by the Adelaide Subgroup's Sandstone and Sedimentary mudstone are found in the extreme northern section of this vegetation type together with that of the Ecca Group. This geology gives rise to Melanic, Vertic and red soils typically from the Dc land type (Mucina and Rutherford, 2006).

According to the Soil and Agricultural Assessment Report (attached in Appendix E4), agricultural potential is determined by a combination of soil, terrain and climate features. Land capability classes reflect the most intensive long-term use of land under rain-fed conditions. The land capability is determined by the physical features of the landscape including the soils present. The land potential or agricultural potential is determined by combining the land capability results and the climate capability for the region.

Based on the methodology used within the Soil and Agricultural Assessment Report, the climate capability of the region falls within a Climatic Capability Class "C8" which has a very severe limitation rating. The class C8 rating is associated with very severely restricted choice of crops due to heat and moisture stress. Suitable crops are at high risk of yield loss.

In terms of the Land Capability of the project area, the most sensitive soil forms are restricted to land capability 4 and 6 classes as follows:

- Land capability class 4 – The land capability has severe limitations, low arable potential and is a high erosion hazard. The land is considered arable with a moderate sensitivity.
- Land capability class 6 – The land capability limitations preclude cultivation and the land is suitable for perennial vegetation.

Table 5.1: Land capability for the soils within the project area

Capability Class	Definition of Class	Conservation Need	Use-Suitability	Land Capability Group	Sensitivity
4	Severe limitations. Low arable potential. High erosion hazard.	Intensive conservation practice.	Long-term leys (75%)	Arable	Moderate
6	Limitations preclude cultivation. Suitable for perennial vegetation.	Protection measures for establishment, e.g., sod-seeding.	Veld, pastures, suitable for wildlife.	Non-Arable	Low

The following land potential levels have been determined:

- Land potential level 6 - This land potential level is characterised by very restricted potential. Regular and/or severe limitations exist due to soil, slope, temperatures or rainfall. The land is considered non-arable.
- Land potential level 7 - This land potential level is characterised by low potential. Severe limitations exist due to soil, slope, temperatures or rainfall. This land is considered non-arable.

Table 5.2: Land potential for the soils within the project area

Land Potential	Description of Land Potential Class	Sensitivity
6	**Very restricted potential:** Regular and/or moderate to severe limitations due to soil, slope, temperatures, or rainfall. Non-arable.	Moderate
7	**Low potential.** Severe limitations due to soil, slope, temperatures or rainfall. Non-arable.	Moderate
Disturbed	N/A	None

The land capability sensitivity (DAFF, 2017) indicates a range of sensitivities expected throughout the project focus area, which is predominantly covered by “Moderately Low” sensitivities, with small patches of “Very Low to Low” sensitivities. Refer to Figure 5.6 below.

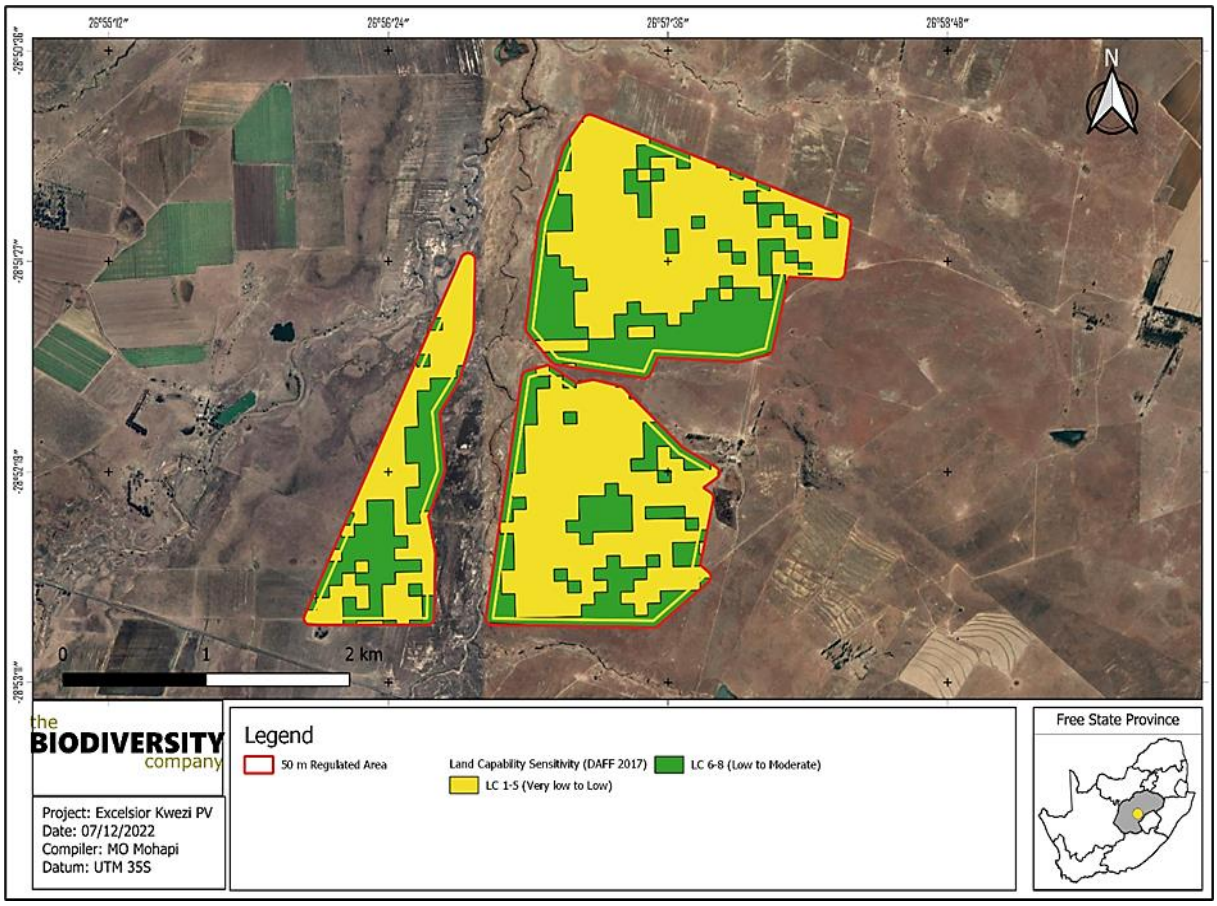


Figure 5.6: The land capability sensitivity (DAFF, 2017)

Furthermore, various crop field boundaries were identified by means of the DEA Screening Tool (2022), which are predominantly characterised by “High” sensitivities as per Figure 5.7. below.

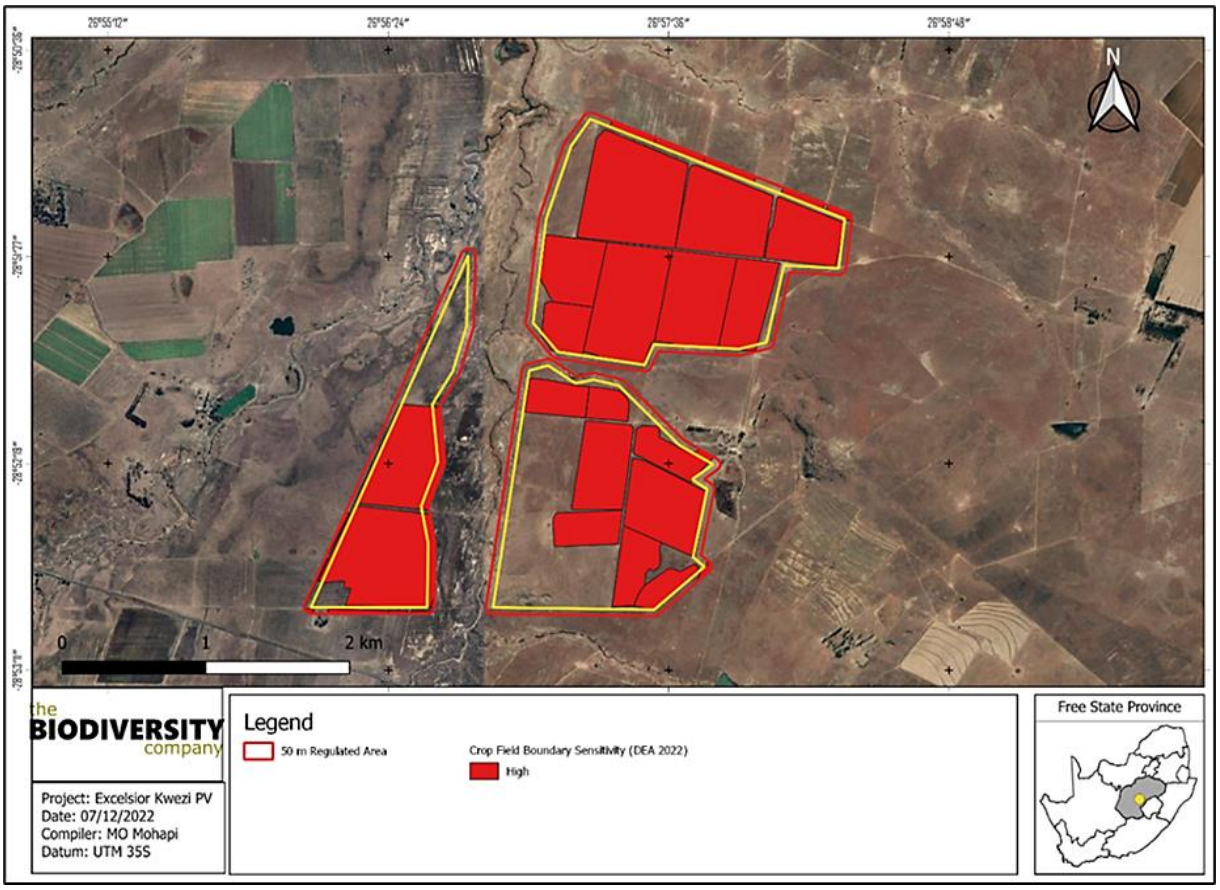


Figure 5.7: Crop boundary sensitivity (DEA Screening Tool, 2022)

The assessment area is associated with non-arable soils. The area consists of subsurface horizons with high clay content, resulting into restrictive permeability. Furthermore, the available climatic conditions of low annual rainfall and high evapotranspiration potential severely limits crop production significantly resulting in land capabilities with "Moderate" sensitivities. The land capabilities associated with the assessment area are suitable for rainfed cropping, irrigated cropping and livestock grazing, which corresponds with the current land use.

It is the specialist's opinion that the proposed Khwezi PV facility project, associated infrastructure will have an overall low residual impact on the agricultural production ability of the land. It is, therefore, the specialist`s recommendation that the proposed Khwezi PV facility project and associate infrastructure may be favourably considered for development with implementation of mitigation measure to ensure low expected significant impacts occurrence.

5.3.1.2 Vegetation, Topography and Landscape Features

According to the Terrestrial Ecology Baseline and Impact Assessment (attached as Appendix E1), the project area is situated within the Grassland Biome. The Grassland Biome in South Africa occurs mainly on the Highveld, the inland areas of the eastern seaboard, the mountainous areas of KwaZulu-Natal and the central parts of the Eastern Cape. The topography is mainly flat to rolling, but also includes mountainous regions and the Escarpment (Mucina & Rutherford, 2006). Major macroclimatic traits that characterise the Grassland Biome include summer to strong summer rainfall and winter drought;

and frost is common, fog is found on the upper slopes of the Great Escarpment and seaward scarps (Mucina & Rutherford, 2006).

Grasslands characteristically contain herbaceous vegetation of a relatively short and simple structure that is dominated by graminoids, usually of the family Poaceae. Woody plants are rare (usually made up of low or medium-sized shrubs), absent, or confined to specific habitats such as smaller escarpments or koppies. Core grassland areas usually have deep, fertile soils although a wide spectrum of soil types do occur (Mucina & Rutherford, 2006). The Grassland Biome is comprised of four (04) parent bioregions and a total of 72 different vegetation types. On a fine-scale vegetation type, the project area overlaps with the Central Free State Grassland vegetation type of the Dry Highveld Grassland Bioregion.

The Central Free State Grassland vegetation type occurs on undulating plains supporting short grassland, in natural condition dominated by *Themeda triandra* while *Eragrostis curvula* and *E. chloromelas* become dominant in degraded habitats. Dwarf karoo bushes establish in severely degraded clayey bottomlands. (Mucina & Rutherford, 2006). This vegetation type occurs in the Free State Province and marginally in Lesotho within low-lying areas of the eastern regions of the province, covering the vicinities of Wepener (south), Petrus Steyn (north), Excelsior and east of Winburg (west) and Warden (east) and a thin extension between Maseru and Fouriesburg. Important plant taxa are those species that have a high abundance, a frequent occurrence or are prominent in the landscape within a particular vegetation type (Mucina & Rutherford, 2006).

Conservation status of the vegetation type

According to Mucina and Rutherford (2006), this vegetation type is classified as Vulnerable (VU). The national target for conservation protection for both these vegetation types is 24%. Only small portions enjoy statutory conservation (Willem Pretorius, Rustfontein and Koppies Dam Nature Reserves) as well as some protection in private nature reserves. Almost a quarter of the area has been transformed either for cultivation or by building of dams (Allemanskraal, Erfenis, Groothoek, Koppies, Kroonstad, Lace Mine, Rustfontein and Weltevrede).

Indigenous Flora

The vegetation assessment was conducted throughout the extent of the project area. Several indigenous species associated with the Central Free State Grassland vegetation type were observed across the project area. The dominant floral species observed included, *Asparagus laricinus, Gazania krebsiana, Felicia muricata, Aristida congesta, Eragrostis chloromelas, Eragrostis curvula Themeda triandra* and *Elionurus muticus.*

During the assessment *Ammocharis coranica, Aloe maculate, Helichrysum dregeanum* and *Helichrysum argyrosphaerum* listed as protected under Schedule 6 of the Free State Nature Conservation Ordinance 8 of 1969 were recorded within the project area. Refer to the Figure 5.8. for photos of flora species observed.

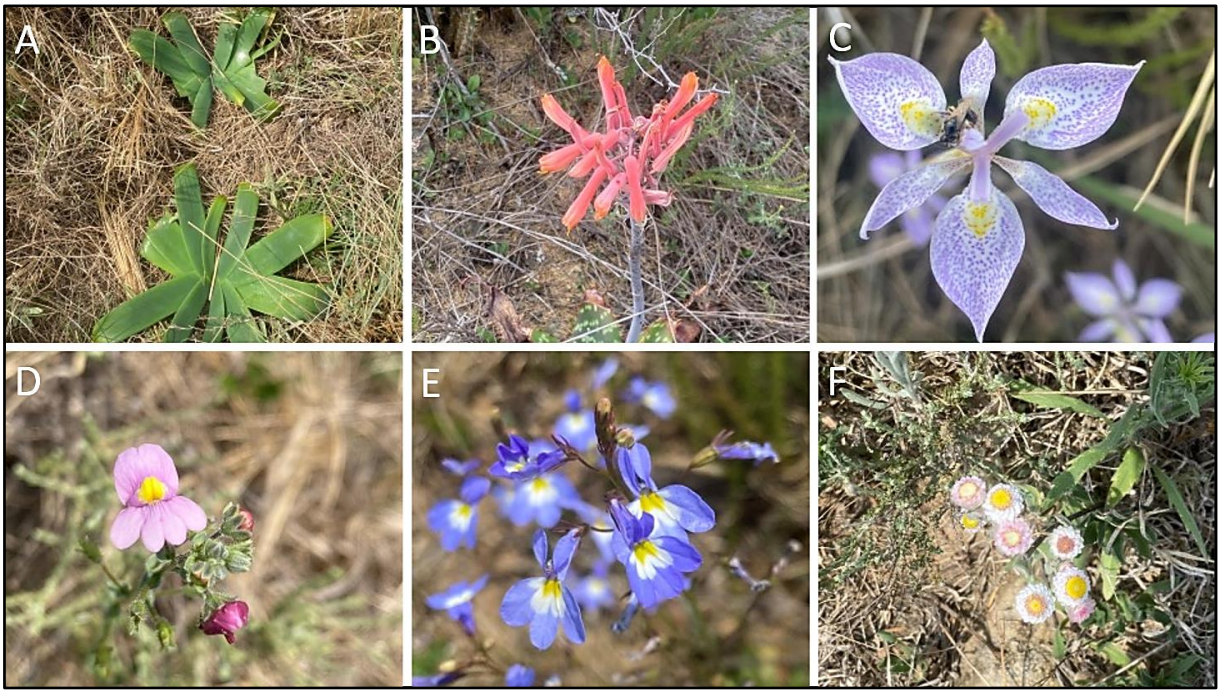


Figure 5.8: Photographs Illustrating Some of the Flora Species Recorded – A) *Ammocharis coranica* (protected); B) *Aloe maculata* (Protected); C) *Moraea simulans*; D) *Nemesia fruticans*; and E) *Lobelia erinus*; and F) *Helichrysum argyrosphaerum* (Protected)

Invasive Alien Plants (IAP)

The National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, Act No. 10 of 2004, (NEM:BA) is the national legislation that incorporates the mandatory regulation of Invasive Alien Plant (IAP) species, and in September 2020 the most current lists of IAP Species were published in terms of NEM:BA (in Government Gazette No. 43726 of 18 September 2020). The Alien and Invasive Species Regulations serve to define and regulate the various categories of Alien and Invasive Species and were recently updated and published in terms of NEM:BA in the Government Gazette No. 43735 of 25 September 2020. The 2020 Alien and Invasive Species Regulations and Lists were recently extended as published in the Government Gazette No. 44182, 24th of February 2021.

The legislation calls for the removal and/or control of IAP species (Category 1 species). In addition, unless authorised thereto in terms of the National Water Act, no land user shall allow Category 2 plants to occur within 30 meters of the 1:50 year flood line of a river, stream, spring, natural channel in which water flows regularly or intermittently, lake, dam or wetland. Category 3 plants are also prohibited from occurring within proximity to a watercourse. Below is a brief explanation of the three categories in terms of the NEM:BA:

- Category 1a: Invasive species requiring compulsory eradication. Remove and destroy. Any specimens of Category 1a listed species need, by law, to be eradicated from the environment. No permits will be issued.
- Category 1b: Invasive species requiring compulsory control as part of an invasive species control programme. Remove and destroy. These plants are deemed to have such a high

invasive potential that infestations can qualify to be placed under a government sponsored invasive species management programme. No permits will be issued.

- Category 2: Invasive species regulated by area. A demarcation permit is required to import, possess, grow, breed, move, sell, buy or accept as a gift any plants listed as Category 2 plants. No permits will be issued for Category 2 plants to exist in riparian zones. Species existing outside of a regulated area shall be classified as category 1b.
- Category 3: Invasive species regulated by activity. An individual plant permit is required to undertake any of the following restricted activities: import, possess, grow, breed, move, sell, buy or accept as a gift - involving a Category 3 species. No permits will be issued for Category 3 plants to exist in riparian zones as these will be classified as category 1b species.

Seven (7) IAP species were recorded during the field survey, of which two (2) are Category 1b species which must be controlled through the implementation of an IAP Management Programme. Photographs of the observed species are presented in Figure 5.9. below.

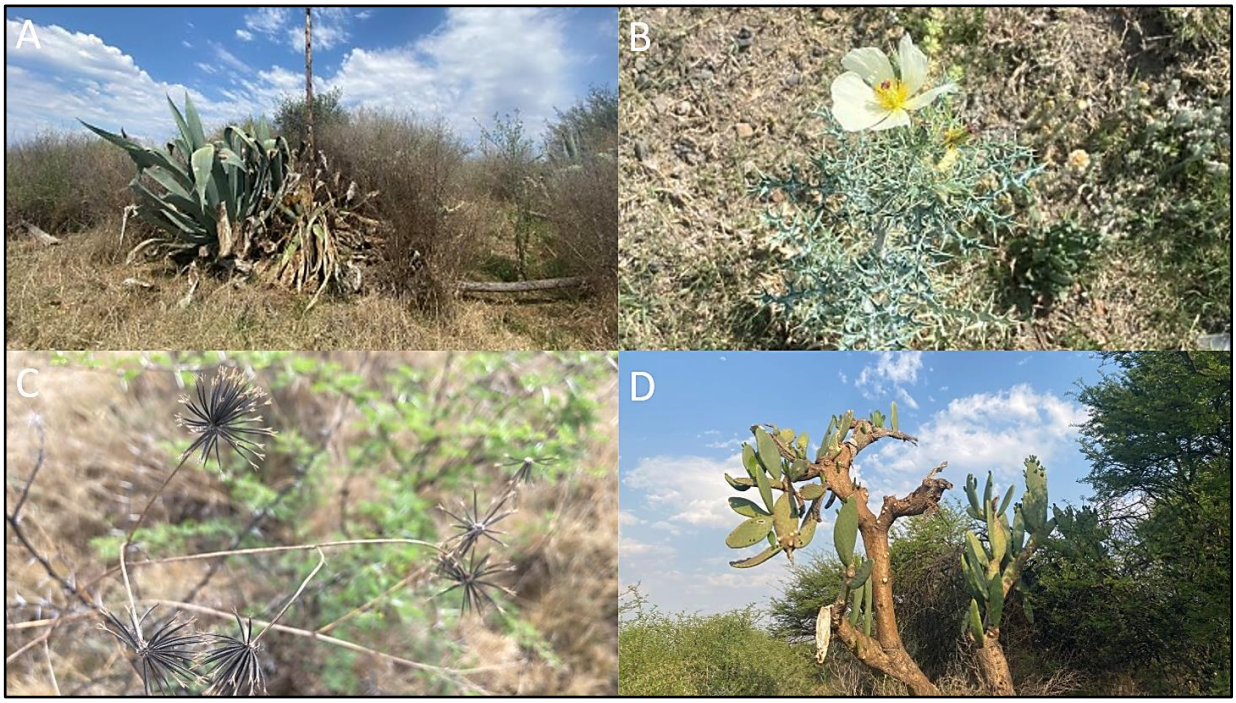


Figure 5.9: Photographs Illustrating the Category 1b IAP Flora Species Recorded within the Project Area – A) *Agave americana*; B) *Argemone mexicana*; C) *Bidens pilosa* and D) *Opuntia ficus-indica*.

Protected Areas, Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBA) and Ecological Support Areas (ESA)

The Free State Province Biodiversity Plan classifies areas within the province on the basis of their contributions to reaching the associated conservation targets within the province. These areas are primarily classified as either Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) or Ecological Support Areas (ESAs). These biodiversity priority areas, together with protected areas, are important for the persistence of a viable representative sample of all ecosystem types and species, as well as the long-term ecological functioning of the landscape as a whole.

- CBAs are areas of the landscape that need to be maintained in a natural or near-natural state to ensure the continued existence and healthy functioning of important species and ecosystems and the delivery of ecosystem services. Thus, if these areas are not maintained in a natural or near natural state then provincial biodiversity targets cannot be met (SANBI, 2017).
- ESAs are areas that are not essential for meeting biodiversity representation targets but play an important role in supporting the ecological functioning of ecosystems as well as adjacent Critical Biodiversity Areas, and/or in delivering ecosystem services that support socio-economic development (SANBI, 2017).

Provincial CBAs and ESAs are often further classified into sub-categories, such as CBA1 and CBA2 or ESA1 and ESA2. These present fine scale habitat and biodiversity area baseline requirements and associated land management objectives or outcomes. The highest categorisation level is often referred to as an 'Irreplaceable Critical Biodiversity Area' which usually represents pristine natural habitat that is very important for conservation.

According to the 2015 Free State CBA and ESA map dataset the project area overlaps with an Ecological Support Area 1 (ESA 1) and Ecological Support Area 2 (ESA 2) as per Figure 5.10. below. The following functional description can be noted for ESA 1 and 2 areas:

- ESA 1 sites are those with minimal degradation; and
- ESA 2 sites are more degraded (they can be totally degraded, but not totally transformed).

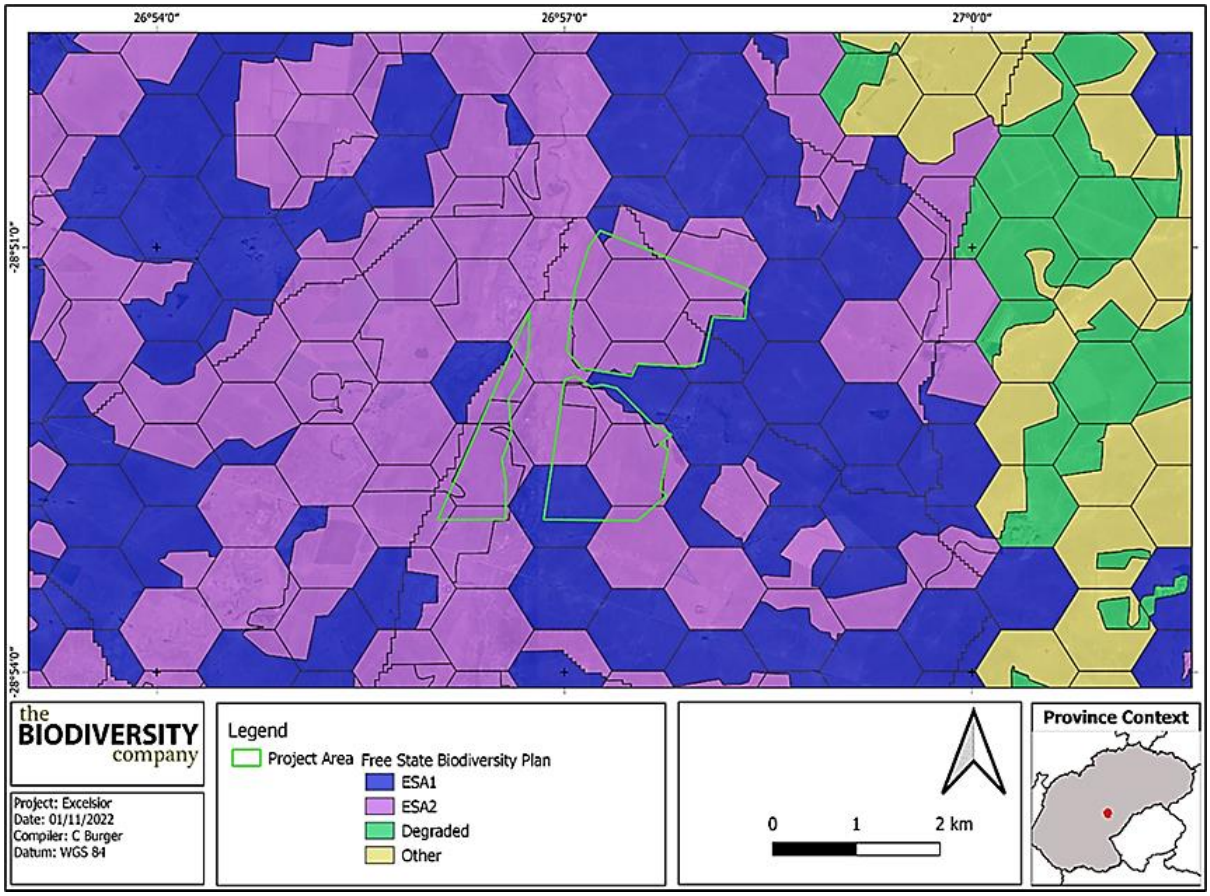


Figure 5.10: Map illustrating the Free State Biodiversity Plan Relevance

According to the 2018 NBA spatial dataset the project area overlaps with a 'Least Concern' and 'Poorly Protected' ecosystem. A 'Least Concern' ecosystem type is one which has experienced little or no loss of natural habitat or deterioration in condition and a 'Poorly Protected' ecosystems are those which have between five and 50% of their biodiversity target included in one or more protected areas (SANBI, 2019).

According to the protected area spatial datasets from SAPAD (2022) and SACAD (2022), the project area is located 16 km east of the Bosbok Game Reserve and 24 km west of the Korannaberg Private Nature Reserve (i.e., outside of the 5 km regulated buffer of this protected area). Refer to Figure 5.11 below.

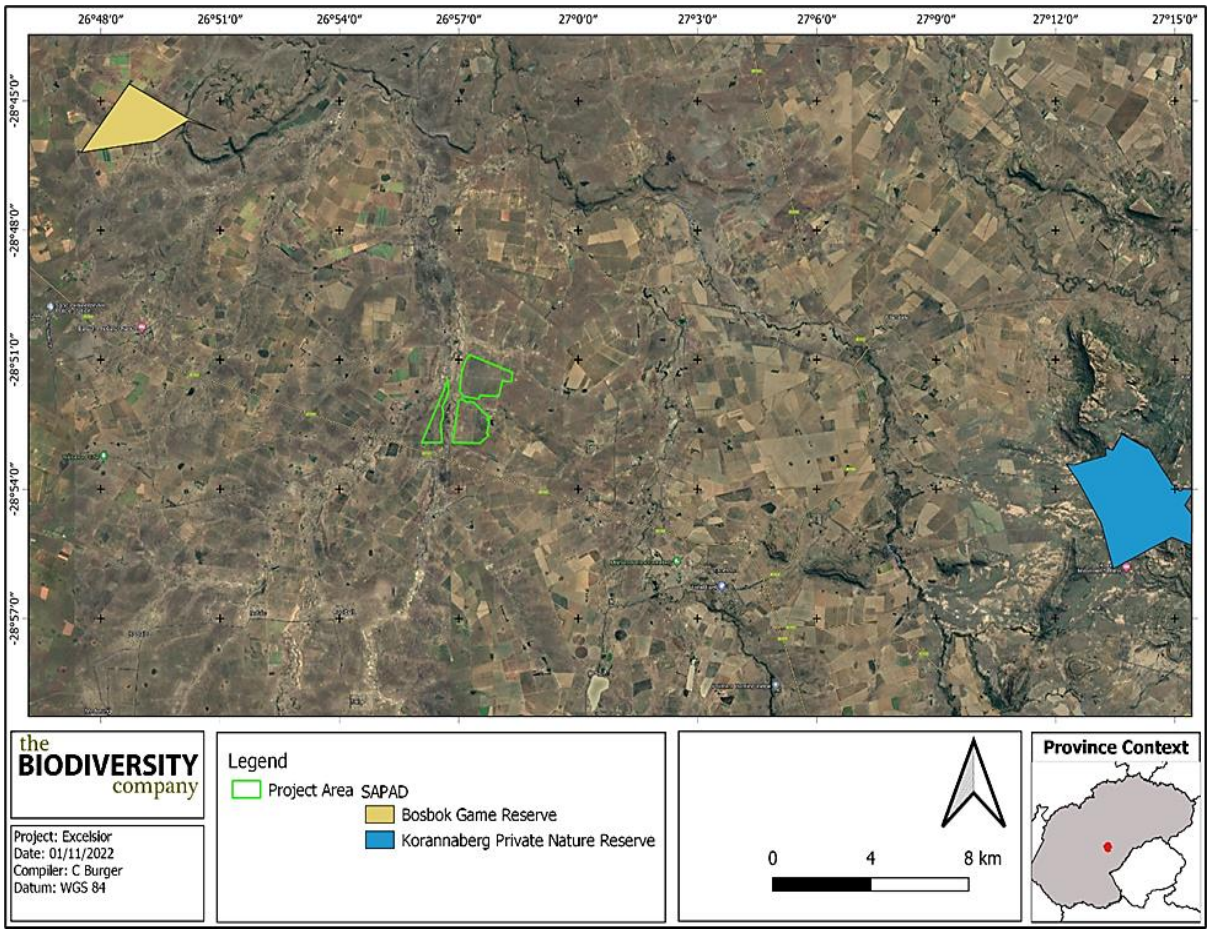


Figure 5.11: Map illustrating the project area in relation to the Protected Areas

As per the National Protected Area Expansion Strategy 2016 (NPAES), areas were identified through a systematic biodiversity planning process. They present the best opportunities for meeting the ecosystem-specific protected area targets set in the NPAES and were designed with a strong emphasis on climate change resilience and requirements for protecting freshwater ecosystems. These areas should not be seen as future boundaries of protected areas, as in many cases only a portion of a particular focus area would be required to meet the protected area targets set in the NPAES. They are also not a replacement for fine scale planning which may identify a range of different priority sites based on local requirements, constraints and opportunities (NPAES, 2016).

The project area does not overlap with any NPAES areas, but is located approximately 2 km from the closest classified area.

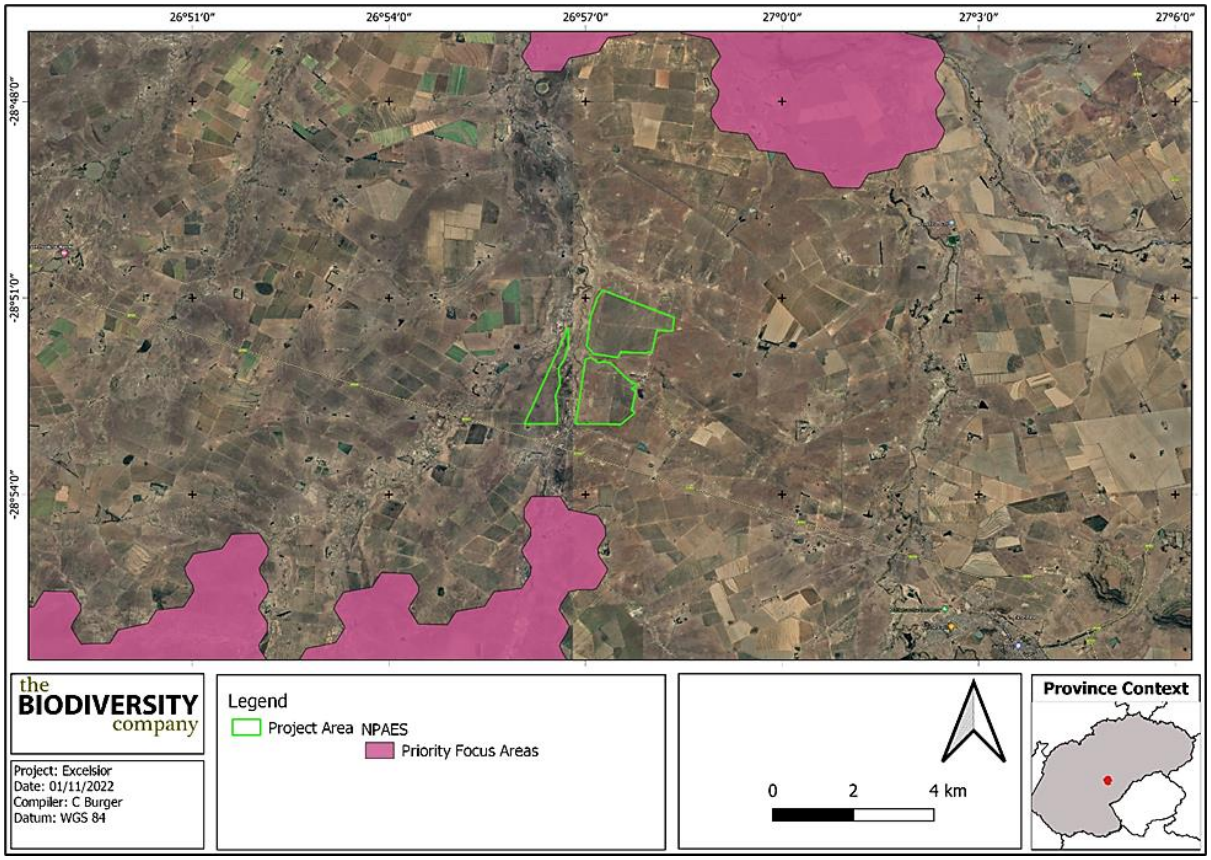


Figure 5.12: The project area in relation to the National Protected Area Expansion Strategy

Habitat Assessment

The following habitats were delineated across the project area:

- Secondary Grassland – Majority of the project area is comprised of secondary grassland habitat. Based on the current ecological condition of this habitat the driving forces are inconsistent due to the current land uses. The condition difference within this habitat depends on the extent of the disturbance in some areas being more severe, usually related to one being more overgrazed and exposed to current anthropogenic activities than the other.
- Degraded Grassland – The degraded grassland habitat can be found in the northern and western sections of the project area. These habitats aren't entirely transformed but in a constant disturbed state, as they can't recover to a more natural state due to ongoing disturbances and impacts as a result of grazing and anthropogenic related activities.
- Wetlands – The ecological integrity, importance and functioning of the wetland areas associated with the project area plays a crucial role as a water resource system and an important habitat for various fauna and flora.

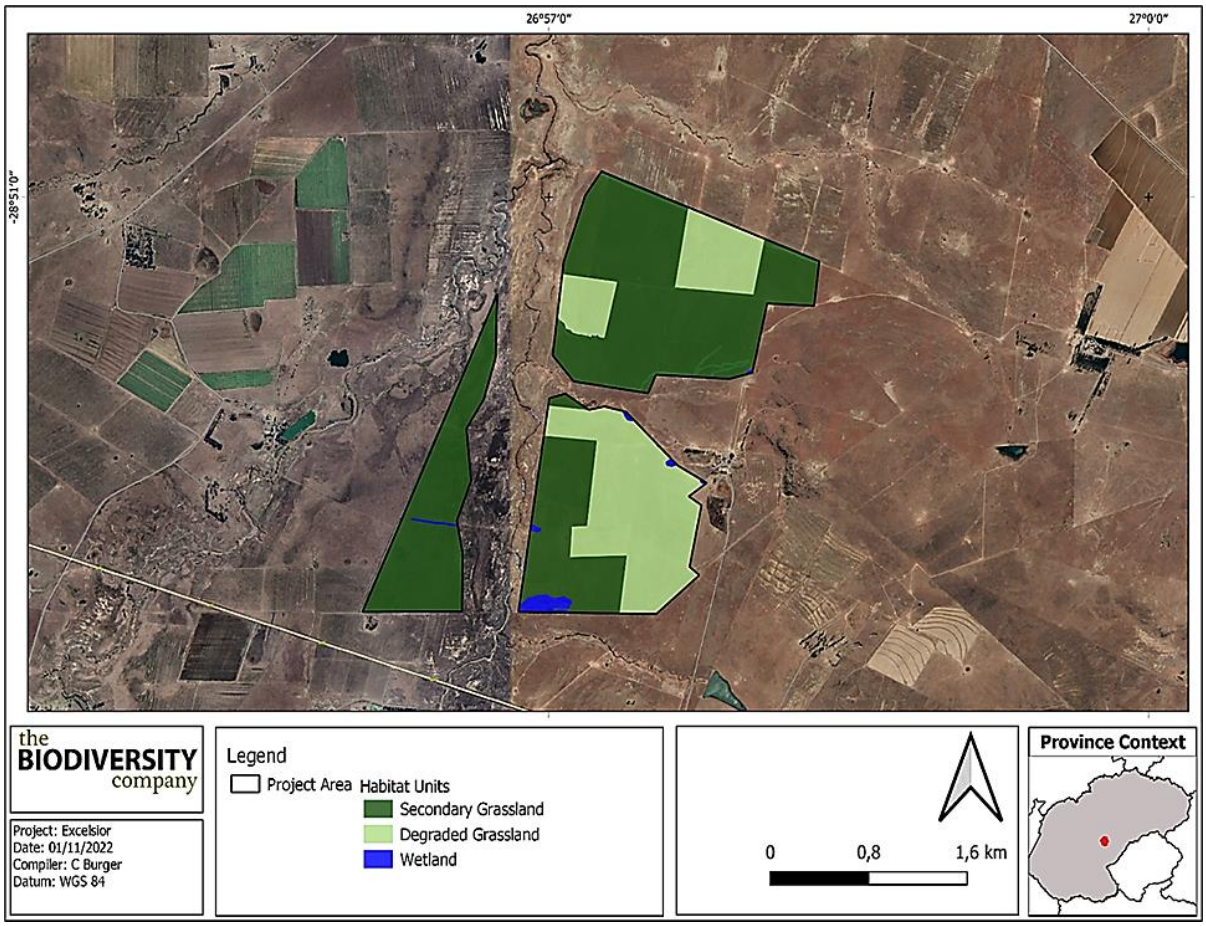


Figure 5.13: Map illustrating the habitats identified in the project area

The three delineated habitat types have each been allocated a sensitivity category, Site Ecological Importance (SEI).

Table 5.3: Sensitivity summary of the habitat types delineated within the project area of influence

Habitat	Conservation Importance	Functional Integrity	Biodiversity Importance	Receptor Resilience	Site Ecological Importance
Wetland	Medium	High	**Medium**	Low	**High**
Secondary Grassland	Medium	Medium	**Medium**	Medium	**Medium**
Degraded Grassland	Low	Medium	**Low**	Medium	**Low**

Consider the following guidelines when interpreting SEI in the context of any proposed development or disturbance activities (noted in conjunction with provincial guidelines pertaining to CBA and ESA areas):

- **Low:** Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
- **Medium:** Minimisation and restoration mitigation – Development activities of medium impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.

- **High:** Avoidance mitigation wherever possible. Minimisation mitigation – changes to project infrastructure design to limit the amount of habitat impacted, limited development activities of low impact acceptable. Offset mitigation may be required for high impact activities

In order to identify and spatially present sensitive features in terms of the relevant specialist discipline, the sensitivities of each of the habitat types delineated within the project area are mapped in Figure 5.14 below.

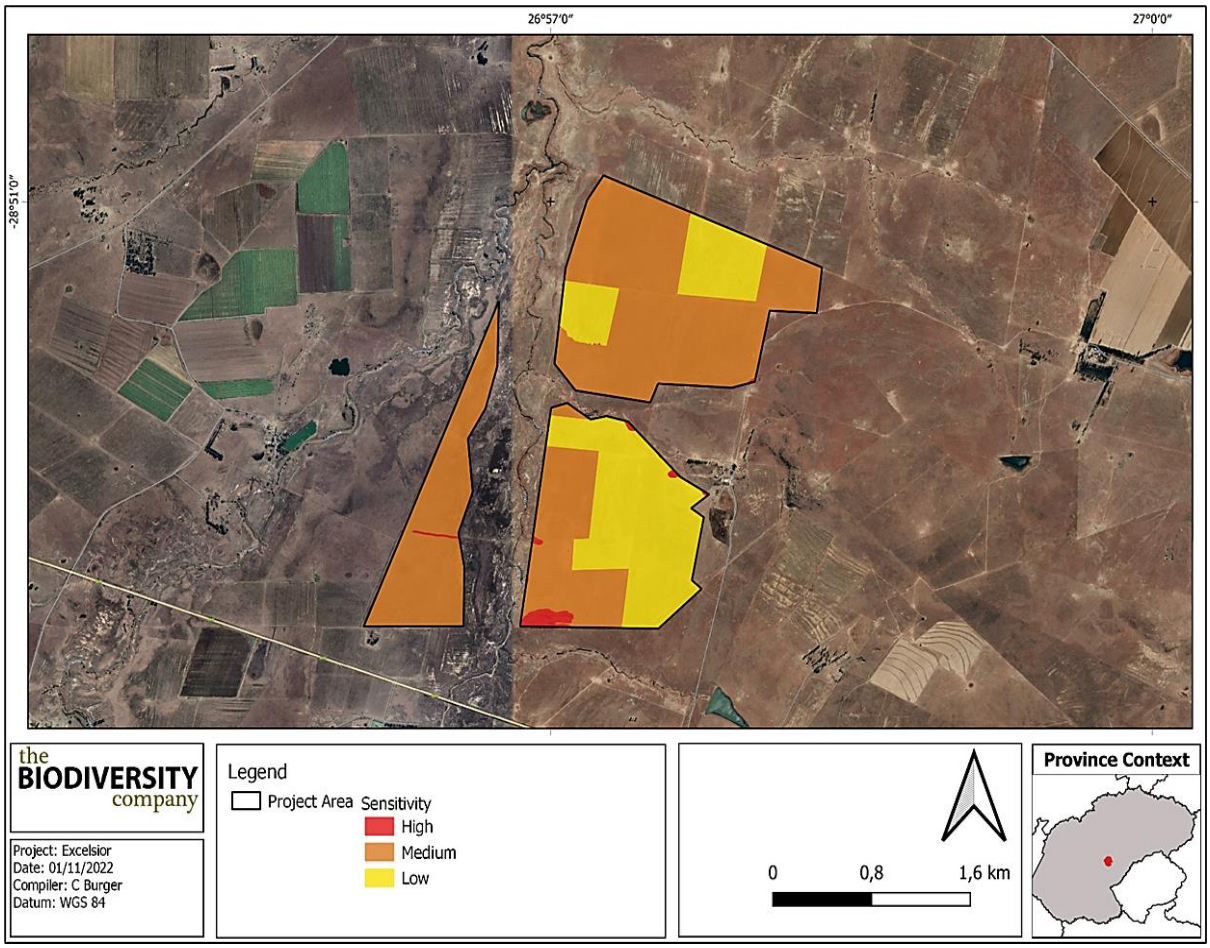


Figure 5.14: Map illustrating the sensitivities of the habitats delineated within the overall project area

The screening report classified plant species theme as being of a "Low" sensitivity. Following the findings of the field survey, the plant species theme should retain its "Low" sensitivity.

5.3.1.3 Wetlands and Riparian Features

According to the Wetland Baseline and Risk Assessment (attached as Appendix E1), three Hydrogeomorphic (HGM) units were identified within the Project Area Of Influence (PAOI). The wetland areas were delineated in accordance with the DWAF (2005) guidelines. HGM units have been classified as a Channelled Valley Bottom wetland and two (02) Unchanneled Valley Bottom wetlands. A single artificial wetland, namely a dam was identified within the PAOI. The delineation of the wetland systems and functional assessment have been completed for the unchanneled valley bottom wetland in which the dam is located.

Drainage features (or lines) were also identified throughout the PAOI. These features are referred to as 'A' Section channels that convey surface runoff immediately after a storm event and are not associated with a baseflow (DWAF, 2005).

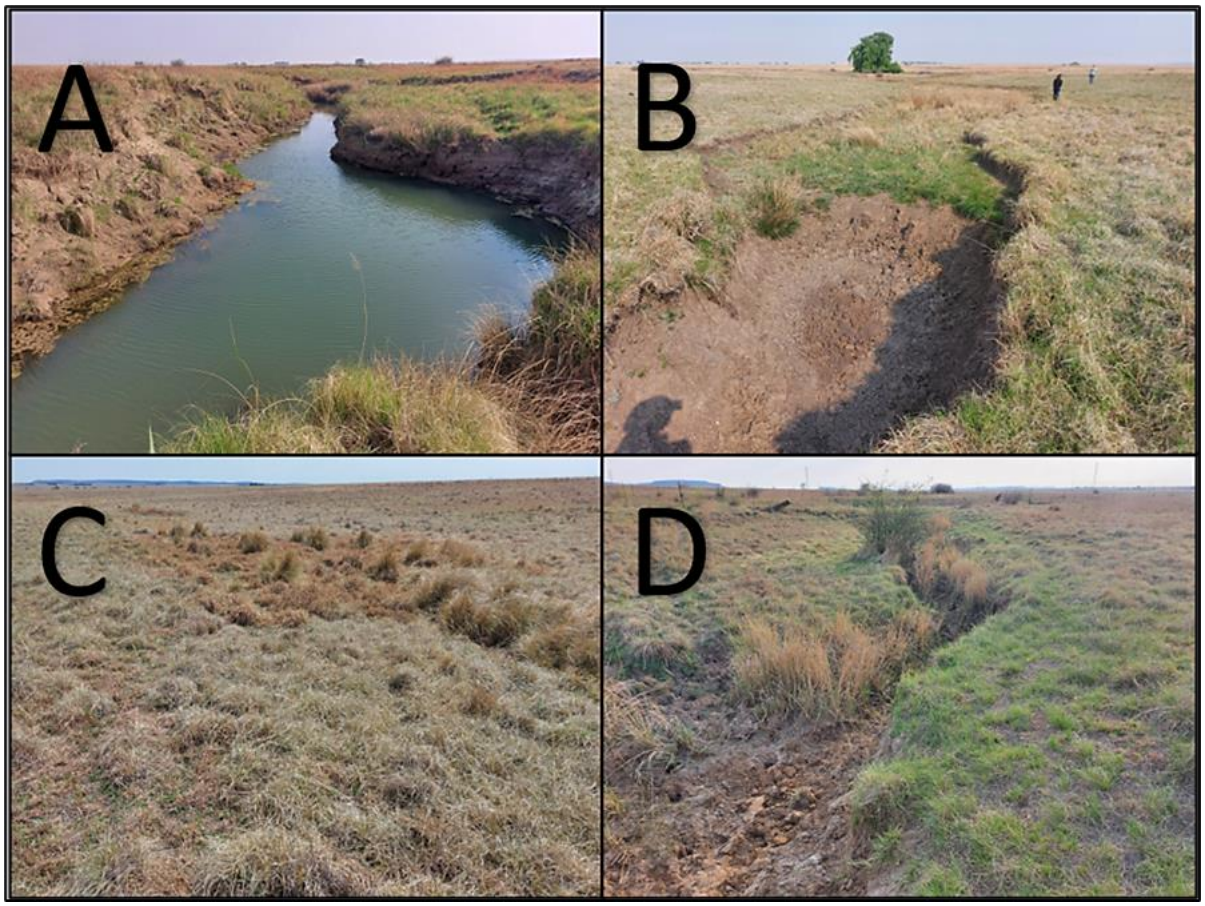


Figure 5.15: Photographical Evidence of the Different Wetland Types Found Within the Project Area of Influence, A) Channelled Valley Bottom wetland, B & C) Unchanneled Valley Bottom wetlands, D) Drainage feature

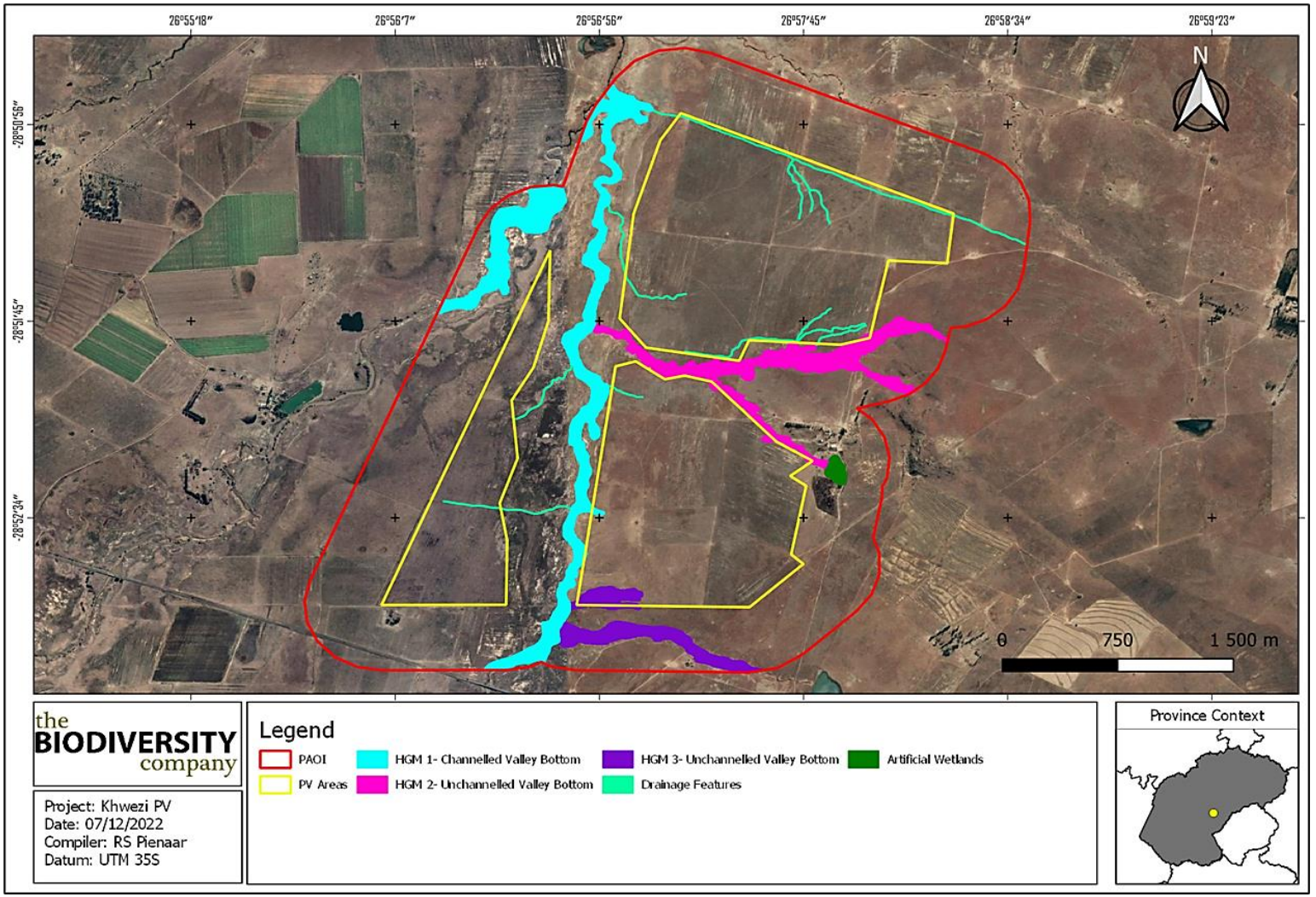


Figure 5.16: Delineation and location of the different HGM units identified within the PAOI

The ecosystem services provided by the wetland units identified on site were assessed and rated using the WET-EcoServices method (Kotze et al., 2008). The average ecosystem service scores for the delineated systems are illustrated in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Average ecosystem service scores for delineated wetlands

Moderately High	Intermediate
HGM 1	HGM 2
HGM 3	

HGM 2, is an unchanneled valley bottom system flowing through the middle of the PAOI, and scored the lowest for ecosystem services from the identified wetlands. The wetland plays a role in sediment trapping and the assimilation of phosphates, nitrates and toxicant. The wetland scored lower ecosystem services due to the fact that the wetland drains into HGM 1 and will have little to no water during the dry seasons. Vegetation cover inside the wetland is moderately low which lower the wetland's ability to provide resources.

The remaining wetlands score moderately high. These wetlands however have high vegetation cover which will play an important role in biodiversity maintenance providing habitat for a wide variety of fauna. The vegetation will also help with streamflow regulation and flood attenuation during the rainy season. Vegetation also plays a vital role in the assimilation of toxicants. HGM 1 will also have water for most of the year providing resources for human use.

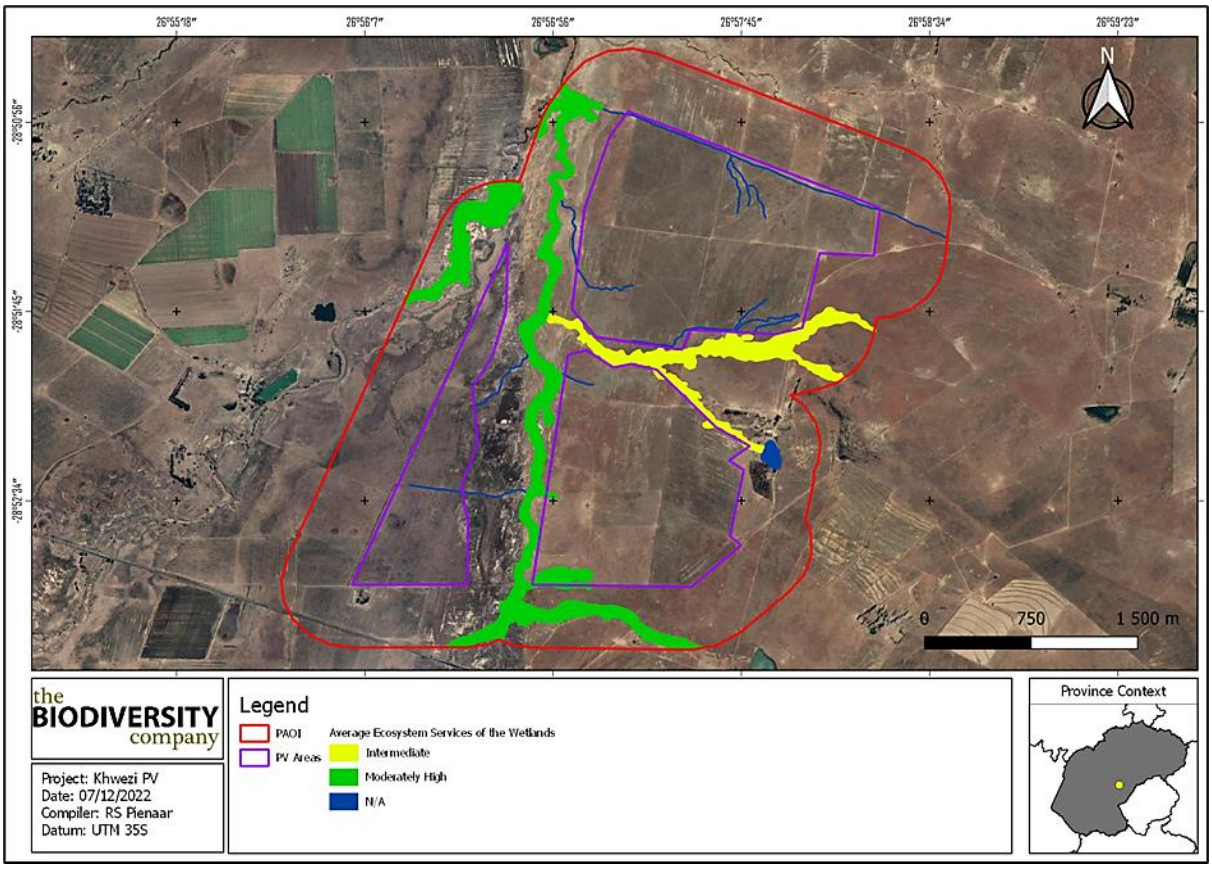


Figure 5.17: Average ecosystem services scores for the delineated wetlands

The delineated wetland systems have been scored overall PES (Present Ecological State) ratings ranging from moderately modified (class C) to largely modified (class D), depending on the level of modification. The findings from the PES assessment indicate significant disturbances to HGM 2, and 3 that has been rated a largely modified score.

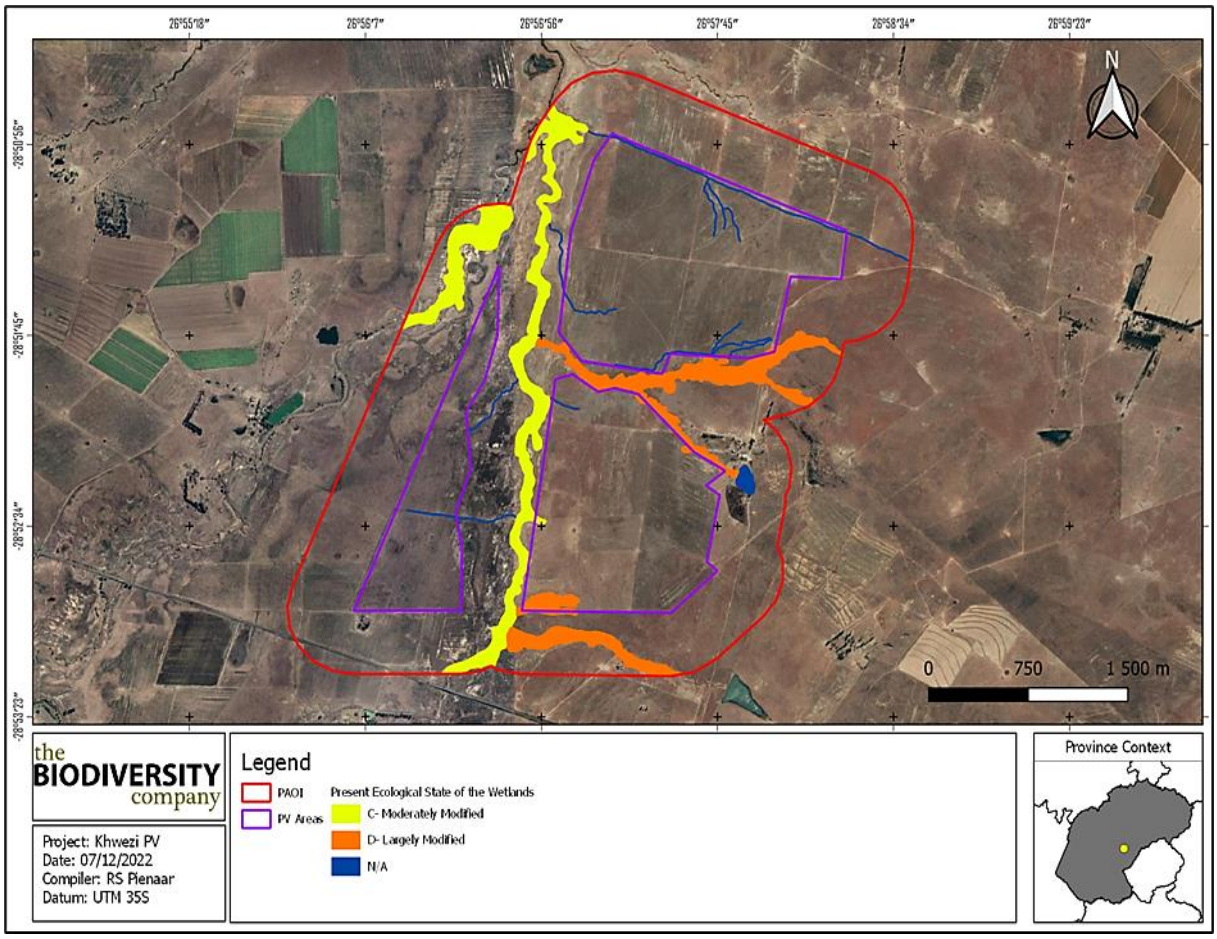


Figure 5.18: Overall Present Ecological State of delineated wetlands

The results of the ecological Importance and Sensitivity (IS) assessment are shown in Table 5.5. below. Various components pertaining to the protection status of a wetland are considered for the IS, including Strategic Water Source Areas (SWSA), the NFEPA wetland vegetation (wet veg) threat status and the protection status of the wetland. The IS for the channelled valley bottom was rated to be "High" and the unchannelled valley bottom wetland units have been calculated to be "Moderate", which combines the relatively low threat status and protection level with the low condition and threat status of the wetland.

Table 5.5: The IS results for the delineated HGM units

HGM Type	NFEPA Wet Veg			NBA Wetlands			SWSA (Y/N)	Calculated IS
	Type	Ecosystem Threat Status	Ecosystem Protection Level	Wetland Condition	Ecosystem Threat Status 2018	Ecosystem Protection Level		
Channelled Valley Bottom	Dry Highveld Grassland Group 4	Critical	Not Protected	A/B Largely Natural	Critical	Not Protected	N	High
Unchannelled Valley Bottoms	Dry Highveld Grassland Group 4	Critical	Not Protected	A/B Largely Natural	N/A	N/A	N	Moderate

A pre-mitigation buffer zone of 30 m is recommended for the identified wetlands, which can be decreased to 15 m with the addition of all prescribed mitigation measures as per the wetland assessment.

Based on the results and conclusions presented in the wetland assessment, it is expected that the proposed activities will pose low residual risks on the wetlands and thus no fatal flaws were identified for the project.

5.3.1.4 Climate

The vegetation type is characterised by a summer rainfall with a Mean Annual Precipitation (MAP) of 630 mm which peaks through thunderstorms between November and March. It is classified as being one of the coldest regions of the Highveld with frequent frost in the winter (Mucina & Rutherford, 2006). Major macroclimatic traits that characterise the Grassland Biome include:

- Summer to strong summer rainfall and winter drought; and
- Frost is common, and fog is found on the upper slopes of the Great Escarpment and seaward scarps (Mucina & Rutherford, 2006).

5.3.1.5 Biodiversity

The primary cause of loss of biological diversity is habitat degradation and loss (IUCN, 2004; Primack, 2006). In the case of this study special attention was given to the identification of sensitive species or animal life and birds on site. The following section will discuss the state of biodiversity on the site in more detail.

Avifauna

According to the Avifaunal Scoping Assessment (Appendix E2), the SABAP2 Data lists 217 avifauna species that could be expected to occur within the project area. Twelve (12) of these expected species are regarded as threatened. One of these species *Sagittarius serpentarius* (Secretarybird) has been recorded from the project area and is considered Confirmed. Three (3) species are considered as having a High likelihood of occurrence due to the presence of suitable extensive grassland and agricultural habitat.

During the field assessment, ninety-seven (97) bird species were recorded in and around the PAOI with 91 species recorded from point counts and an additional 6 species recorded as incidental sightings. Dominant avifaunal species within the assessment area as defined as those species whose

relative abundances cumulatively account for more than 84% of the overall abundance shown alongside the frequency with which a species was detected among point counts. The Avifaunal data collected shows that the Cloud cisticola (*Cisticola textrix*), South African Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon spilodera*) and Long-tailed Widowbird (*Euplectes progne*) were the most common species recorded in point counts. Figure 5.19 illustrates a portion of the avifauna species recorded in the assessment area.

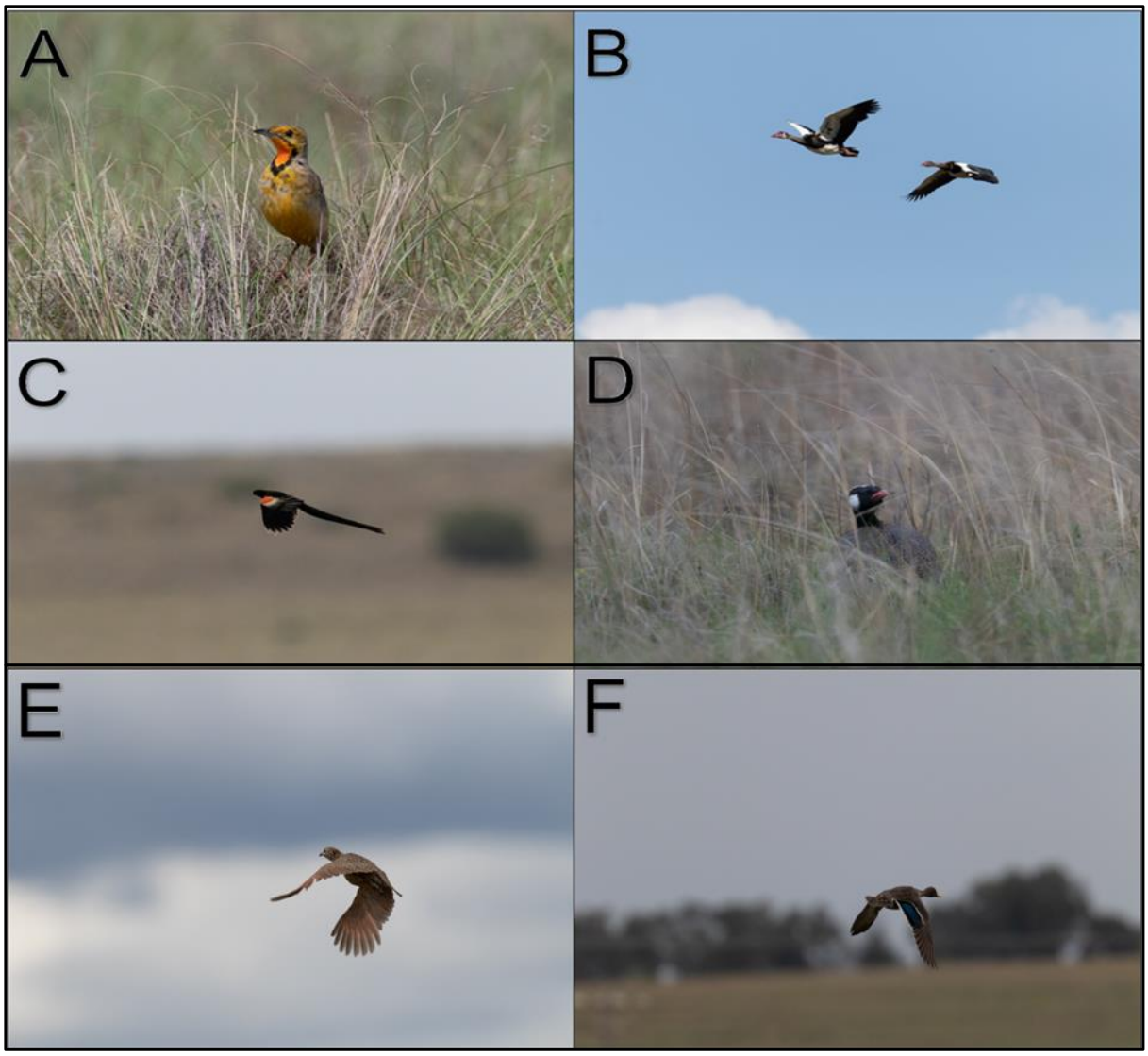


Figure 5.19: Photographs illustrating a portion of the avifauna species recorded in the assessment area: A: Cape Longclaw (*Macronyx capensis*), B: Spur-winged Goose (*Plectropterus gambensis*), C: Long-tailed Widowbird (*Euplectes progne*), D: Northern Black Korhaan (*Afrotis afraoides*), E: Orange River Francolin (*Scleroptila gutturalis*), F: Yellow-billed Duck (*Anas undulata*)

Species of Conservation Concern (SCC)

One (1) SCC was recorded from the PAOI, namely the *Sagittarius serpentarius* (Secretarybird) which occurs in sub-Saharan Africa and inhabits grasslands, open plains, and lightly wooded savanna. It is also found in agricultural areas and sub-desert (IUCN, 2017). The study area comprises extensive grasslands and wetland areas, as well as the agricultural areas in which this species may forage. The likelihood of occurrence is rated as confirmed as this species has been recorded from the study area.

Risk Species

Risk species are species that would be sensitive to habitat loss, that are regarded as collision prone species and species that would have a high electrocution risk. These could be species that are not necessarily SCC but would be impacted on by this development. Even though the panels do not pose an extensive collision risk for larger birds, powerlines associated with the infrastructure, guidelines (anchor lines) and connection lines do pose a risk. The fence could also pose a collision risk for various species. Species that are found to be at risk are detailed in Table 5.6 below.

Table 5.6: At risk species found in the surveys

Scientific Name	Alphabetical Name	Collisions	Electrocution	Disturbance/Habitat Loss
Alopochen aegyptiaca	Goose, Egyptian	X	X	
Ardea cinerea	Grey Heron		X	
Ardea melanocephala	Heron, Black-headed	X	X	
Bubulcus ibis	Western Cattle Egret	X		
Elanus caeruleus	Kite, Black-winged	X	X	
Fulica cristata	Red-knobbed Coot	X		
Haliaeetus vocifer	African Fish Eagle	X	X	
Melierax canorus	Pale Chanting Goshawk	X		
Plectropterus gambensis	Spur-winged Goose	X	X	
Sagittarius serpentarius	Secretarybird	X		X

No nests of SCC were observed. The low number of species recorded nesting within the PAOI should be interpreted with caution because the survey was undertaken using point surveys, and the full assessment area was not covered. It is postulated that more species are likely to be nesting once the additional survey is undertaken (walked over) during the EIA phase of the project.

Habitat Sensitivity

Six (6) habitat types were subjected to the Site Ecological Importance (SEI) methods and were allocated a sensitivity category as per Table 5.7 below.

Table 5.7: Summary of habitat delineated within the field assessment area of the project

Habitat	Conservation Importance	Functional Integrity	Biodiversity Importance	Receptor Resilience	Site Ecological Importance
Transformed	Very Low	Very Low	**Very Low**	Very High	**Very Low**
Agriculture	Very Low	Very Low	**Very Low**	Very High	**Very Low**
Secondary grassland	Medium	Low	**Low**	High	**Very Low**
Degraded grassland	Medium	Medium	**Medium**	Medium	**Medium**
Koppie	Medium	Medium	Medium	Very Low	**High**
Water Resource	Very High	Medium	High	Medium	**High**

The habitat SEI can be interpreted as follows:

- Very Low: Minimisation mitigation – Development activities of medium to high impact acceptable and restoration activities may not be required.

- Low: Minimisation and restoration mitigation – Development activities of medium to high impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
- Medium: Minimisation and restoration mitigation – Development activities of medium impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
- High: Avoidance mitigation wherever possible.
    - Minimisation mitigation – changes made to project infrastructure design to limit the amount of habitat impacted;
    - Limited development activities of low impact acceptable. Offset mitigation may be required for high impact activities.

The Water Resource habitat is assigned a 'High' sensitivity rating largely because it is associated with several river systems which are listed as 'Critically Endangered' systems according to the NBA (2018) dataset. Additionally, in seasonally arid regions wetland and river systems such as these serve as important movement and foraging corridors for regional fauna, which includes any local SCC mammals and carnivores that are likely to occur.

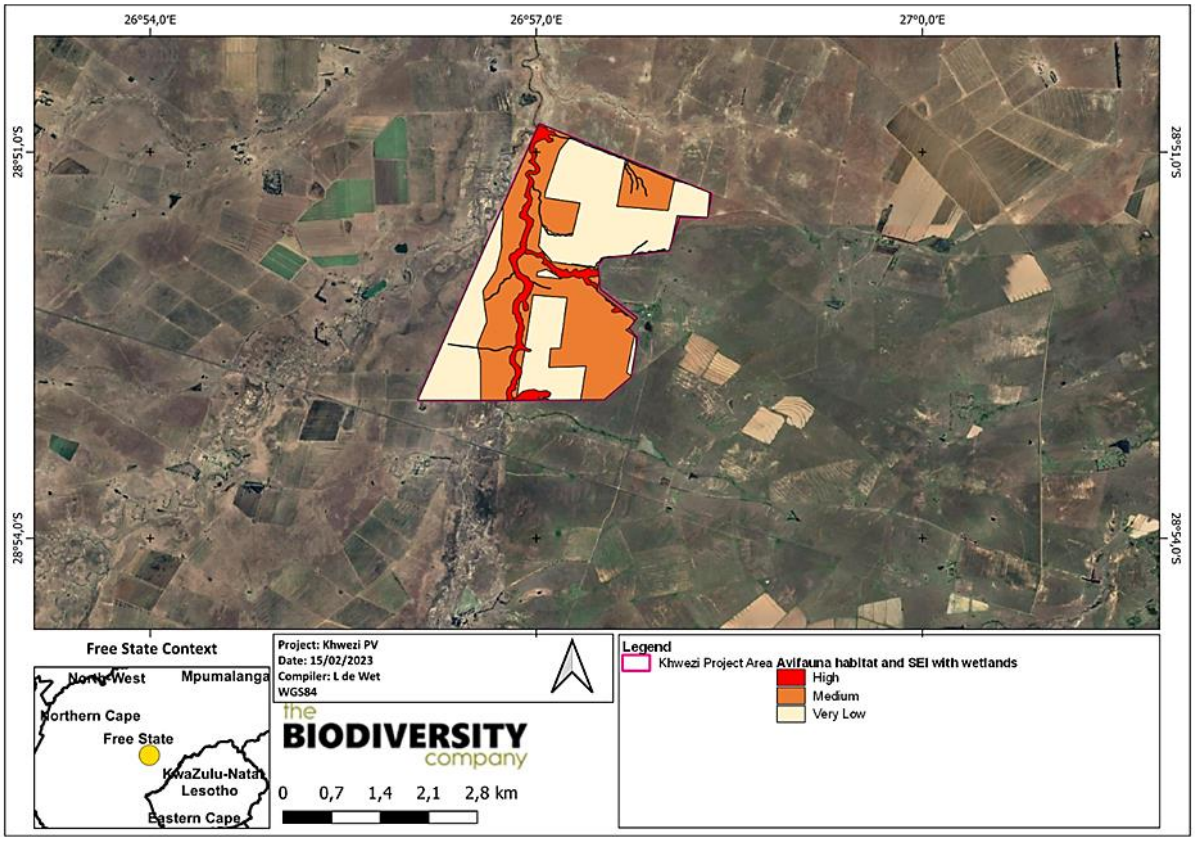


Figure 5.20: Map illustrating the sensitivities of the habitats delineated within the overall Project Area of Influence

Based on the desktop and field assessment it can be said that the project area is a low sensitivity with a low to moderate likelihood of species of conservation concern occurring. A second avifauna survey

is required as the area is classified as Regime 2 and requires 2 field investigations over two seasons to ensure migratory species are considered to satisfy the Birds and Solar Energy Guidelines.

Fauna

According to the Terrestrial Ecology Baseline and Impact Assessment (attached as Appendix E1), fauna species include mammals, reptiles, and amphibians, where the likelihood of a particular species occurring within the project area. The IUCN Red List Spatial Data lists, the ReptileMap database and the AmphibianMap lists the following:

- 112 mammal species that could be expected to occur within the area. This excludes large mammal species that are typically limited to reserves. Nineteen (19) (small - medium non protected area restricted species) of these expected species are regarded as threatened, twelve (12) of these have a low likelihood of occurrence based on the lack of suitable habitat and food sources in the project area.
- 50 reptile species may be expected to occur within and nearby to the project area. Three (3) are regarded as SCC. Of the three species one has a low likelihood of occurrence based on the lack of suitable habitat and food sources in the project area.
- 20 amphibian species are expected to occur within the area. One (1) is regarded as threatened. Due to several rivers and wetlands present within the vicinity of the project area the likelihood of occurrence is rated as moderate.

During the fauna survey, mammal activity was moderate, where nine (9) mammal species were recorded, either through direct observations or evidence of species. Two (2) reptile species were recorded and no amphibian species were observed during the survey.

Table 5.8: The fauna species recorded during the field survey

Species	Common Name	Conservation Status	
		SANBI (2022)	IUCN (2021)
	Mammals		
Canis mesomelas	Black-backed Jackal	LC	LC
Cynictis penicillata	Yellow Mongoose	LC	LC
Hystrix africaeaustralis	Cape Porcupine	LC	LC
Lepus saxatilis	Scrub Hare	LC	LC
Raphicerus campestris	Steenbok	LC	LC
Sylvicapra grimmia	Common Duiker	LC	LC
Atilax paludinosus	Water Mongoose	LC	LC
Orycteropus afer	Aardvark	LC	LC
Xerus inauris	Cape Ground Squirrel	LC	LC
Phacochoerus africanus	Common Warthog	LC	LC
Suricata suricatta	Suricate	LC	LC
	Reptiles		
Stigmochelys pardalis	Leopard Tortoise	LC	LC

Bitis arietans arietans	Puff Adder	LC	Unlisted

The screening report classified the animal species them as "Medium" sensitivity. Following the findings of the field survey, the animal species theme (from a mammal and herpetofauna perspective) should retain its "Medium" sensitivity.

5.3.1.6 Visual Landscape

Visual impacts occur when changes in the landscape are noticeable to viewers looking at the landscape from their homes or from parks and conservation areas, highways and travel routes, and important cultural features and historic sites.

Visual Receptors

According to the Visual Impact Assessment (attached as Appendix E3), visual receptors can be defined as: "Individuals, groups or communities who are subject to the visual influence of a particular project". Possible visual receptors identified within the 10km radius landscape, which due to its land use could be sensitive to landscape change. They include:

- **Area Receptors** which include:
  - Mahlatswetsa.
  - Rooibult.
- **Linear Receptors** which include:
  - R703 regional road.
- **Point Receptors** which include:
  - Homesteads on farms.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) Model

A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) is a Geographic Information System (GIS)-generated tool to identify the likely (or theoretical) extent of visibility of a development. The tool used in this model does not take existing screening into account but only the above mean sea level of the landscape.

Table 5.9: ZTV Assumptions

Radius	Impact Magnitude
0-1km	Very High
1-3km	High
3-5km	Medium
5-10km	Low

Table 5.10 below reflects the visibility rating in terms of proximity on sensitive receptors of the SPP.

Table 5.10: ZTV rating in terms of proximity to the SPP

Radius	Visual Receptors	Visibility rating in terms of proximity
0-1km	- Two homesteads on farms. - R703 regional road. **Coverage: 84%**	Very High
1-3km	- Three homesteads on farms. - R703 regional road. **Coverage: 48%**	High
3-5km	- Two homesteads on farms. - R703 regional road. **Coverage: 26%**	Medium
5-10km	- Eight homesteads on farms. - R703 regional road. **Coverage: 12%**	Low

Figures 5.21 and 5.22 illustrates the theoretical visibility as listed in Table 5.10.

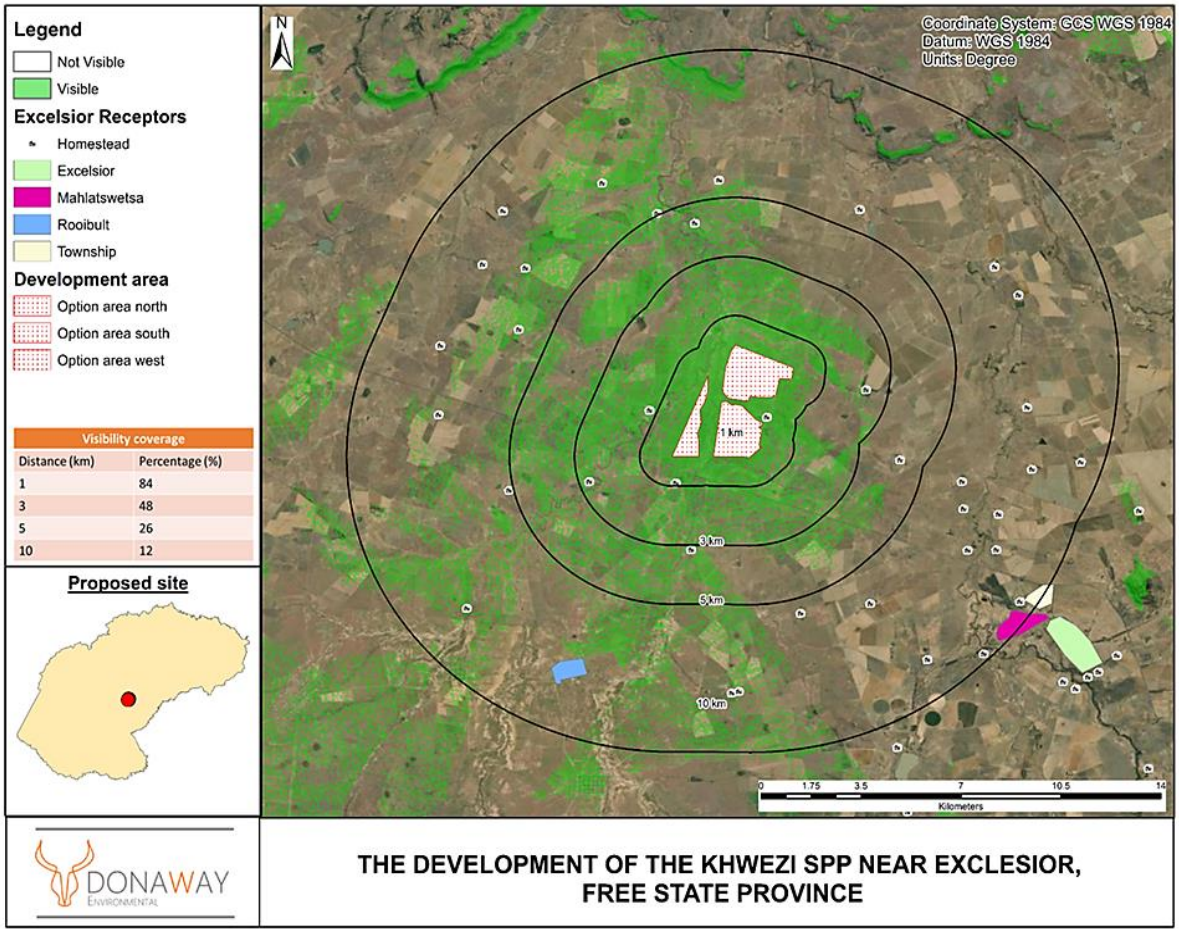


Figure 5.21: Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) for the SPP, satellite view

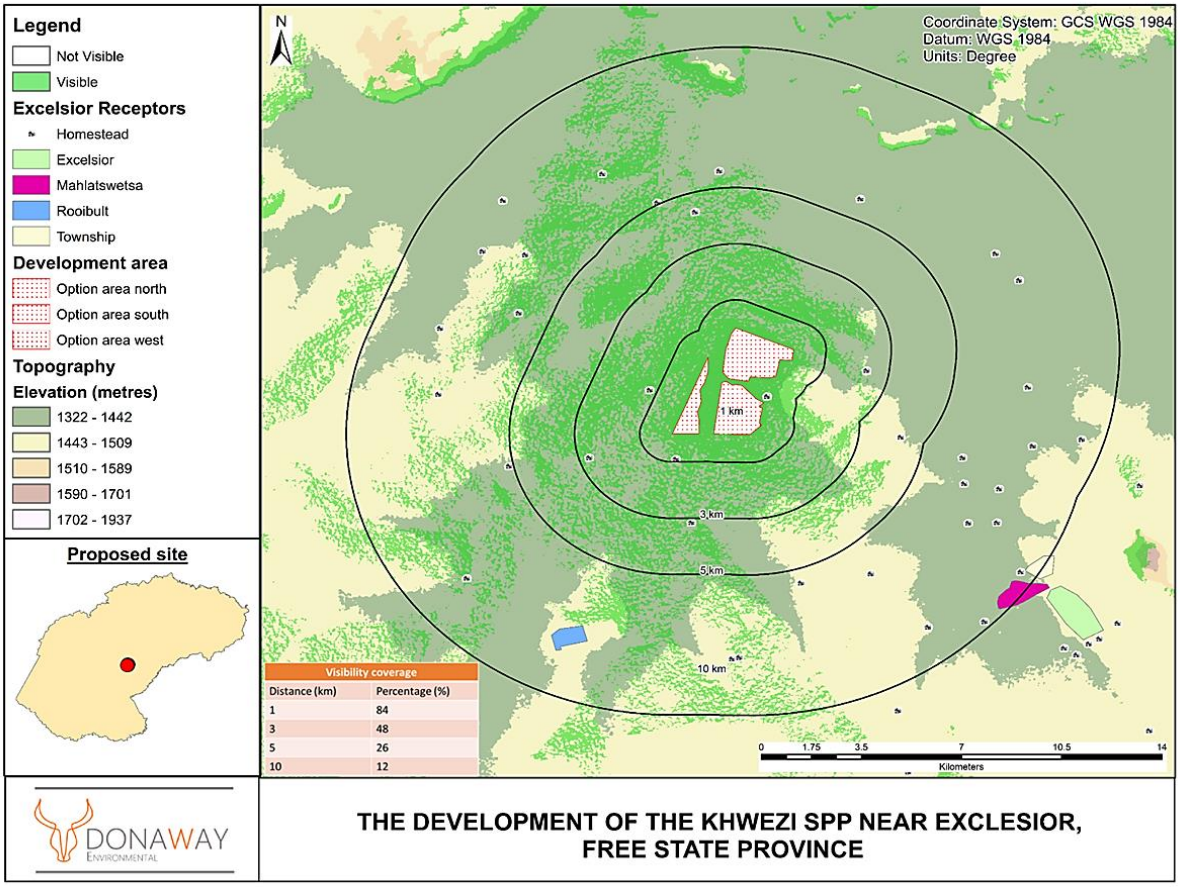


Figure 5.22: Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) for the SPP, topography view

The significance of the visual impact will be a "Negative Low Impact". The only receptors likely to be impacted by the proposed development are the nearby property owners and people travelling on the R703 regional road. A large part of the visual landscape is reflecting a farming landscape with a better visual appearance.

5.3.1.7 Traffic Consideration

According to the Traffic Impact Assessment (Appendix E8), the existing external road network includes the R703 which is a surfaced two lane, two-way roadway and is classified as a Class 3 Rural Minor Arterial in the vicinity of the proposed development site. The road extends between Dealesville (in the west) and Clocolan (in the east) and is approximately 200 km to 250 km in length. The S476 is a two lane, two-way (undivided) unsurfaced roadway and in classified as a Class 4 Rural Local Road. This road section forms a loop (with the R703) and is located to the north of the R703. The Unnamed Access Road is an existing two lane, two-way roadway that can accommodate two vehicles passing one another simultaneously (no lane markings) and is classified as a Class 5 Rural Local Road. The road serves to provide direct access to the existing surrounding farms. It should be noted that approximately 100 m of this road section, to the north of R703, is surfaced and the remainder of the roadway is unsurfaced. Refer to Figure 5.23.

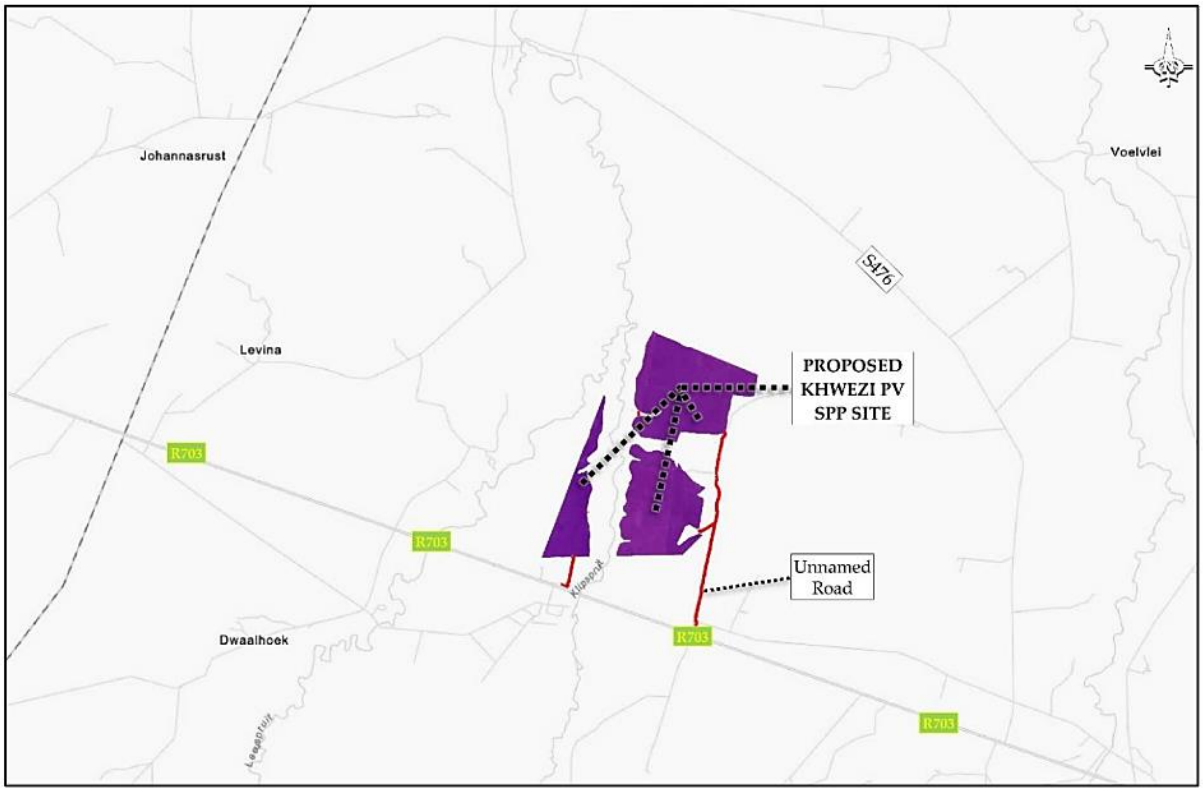


Figure 5.23: Existing external road network surrounding the Khwezi PV SPP

Proposed Site Access

Access to the proposed Khwezi PV SPP site will be via two existing unsurfaced roadways that connect to the external road network at the R703 as shown in Figure 5.24 below.

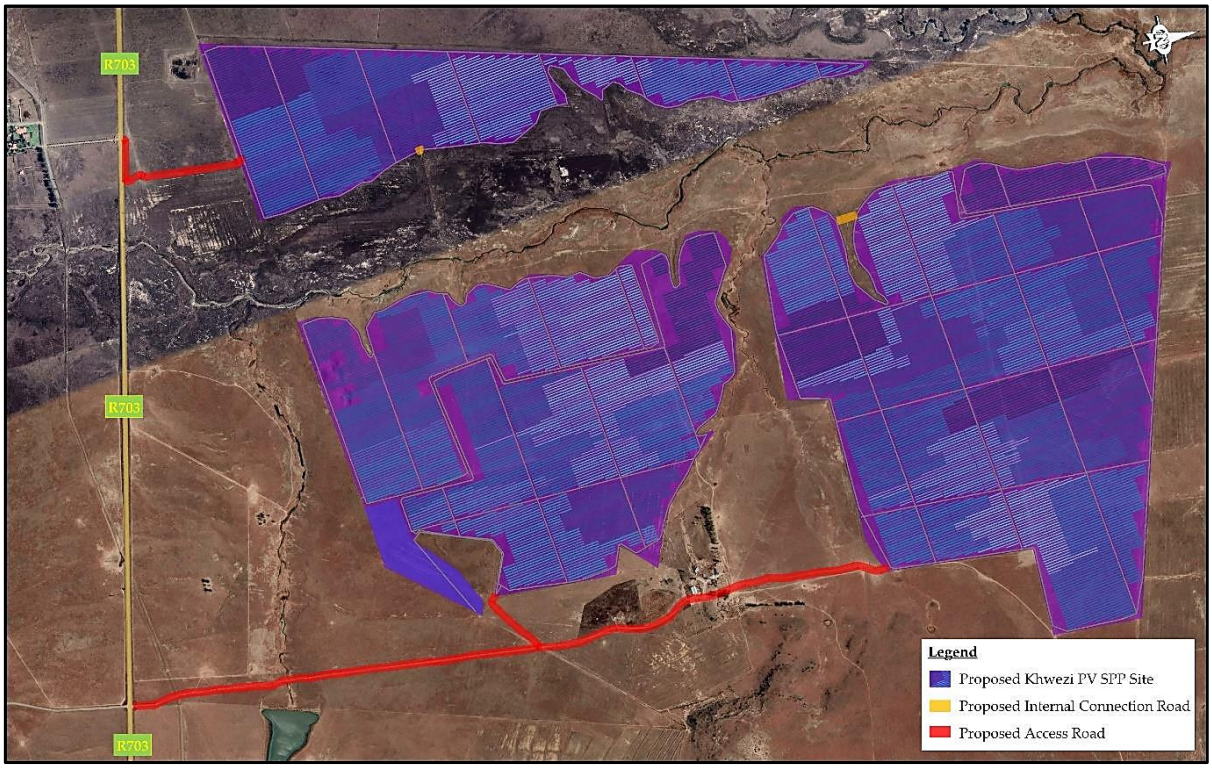


Figure 5.24: Proposed site accesses

The proposed eastern-most site access currently connects to the R703 via a formalised intersection, while the western-most access is a lower-order farm access road. An accurate assessment of the condition of the eastern-most intersection could not be confirmed and the intersection therefore may require resurfacing/upgrading. The western-most access will need to be formalised and upgraded to the minimum standards as detailed in Annexure A of the Traffic Impact Assessment. This may likely be a requirement as part of the wayleave application approval of the Mantsopa Local Municipality, Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality and Free State: Department of Police, Road and Transport.

Internal Road Network

The initial technical information received indicates that the site will have an internal road network with proposed roadway widths of between 6 m and 12 m. This is considered acceptable and a gravel road structure would be suitable for this development. The total length of the internal road network is estimated at 40 km.

The regional construction trips generated by the proposed development are not considered significant in comparison to the Average Daily Traffic (ADT) and will not affect the existing Level of Service.

The development of the Khwezi PV SPP, located on the Farm Koppiesdam No. 511 (PV facility) in the Free State Province is supported from a traffic and transportation perspective.

5.3.2 Description of the Socio-Economic Environment

The socio-economic environment is described with specific reference to social, economic, heritage and cultural aspects.

5.3.2.1 Socio-Economic Conditions

The Social Impact Assessment (attached as Appendix E7) explains that the Free State Province is the landlocked core of the country. It is centrally placed, with good transport corridors to the north and the coast. It is the third biggest of South Africa's nine provinces in terms of size, and primary agriculture is a key economic sector. Mining is also important but has been declining steadily since 2008. The Free State is situated in the heart of the country, between the Vaal River in the north and the Orange River in the south, bordered by the Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, North West, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provinces, as well as Lesotho. The Free State is a rural province of farmland, mountains, goldfields, and widely dispersed towns. This province is an open, flat grassland with plenty of agriculture that is central to the country's economy. Mining is its largest employer. Bloemfontein is the capital and is home to the Supreme Court of Appeal, as well as the University of Free State and the Central University of Technology. The province also has 12 gold mines, producing 30 percent of South Africa's output.

The project is proposed within the Free State Province, although is the third-largest province in South Africa, it has the second-smallest population and the second-lowest population density. It covers an area of 129 825km² and has a population of 2 834 714 – 5.1% of the national population. Languages spoken include Sesotho (64.4%), Afrikaans (11.9%) and Zulu (9.1%). The Free State Province contributes 5.4% to South Africa's total gross domestic product (2006).

Agriculture is a key economic sector – 8% of the country's produce comes from Free State. In 2010, agriculture provided 19.2% of all formal employment opportunities in the region. The economy is dominated by agriculture, mining and manufacturing. Known as the 'bread-basket' of South Africa, about 90% of the province is under cultivation for crop production. It produces approximately 34% of the total maize production of South Africa, 37% of wheat, 53% of sorghum, 33% of potatoes, 18% of red meat, 30% of groundnuts and 15% of wool. The province is the world's fifth-largest gold producer, with mining the major employer. Other mineral resources – gold, diamonds, and low-grade coal – are also important to the province; mining contributed 9% to the local economy and employed some 33 000 people in 2010. Other commodities include clay, gypsum, salt, and uranium. Manufacturing also features in the provincial economic profile. This sector makes up 14% of the provincial output, with petro-chemicals (via Sasol) taking account of more than 85% of the output.

The Free State is strategically placed to take advantage of the national transport infrastructure. Two corridors are of particular importance: the Harrismith node on the N3 corridor between Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal and the N8. The N1 joins Gauteng to the Western Cape. Bloemfontein International Airport handles about 250 000 passengers and about 221 000 tons of cargo a year. Important towns include Welkom, the heart of the goldfields; Odendaalsrus, another gold-mining town; Sasolburg; Kroonstad; Parys; and Phuthaditjhaba. The Free State is also home to the Vredefort Dome, the largest visible meteor-impact site in the world, which was formed two billion years ago when a meteorite 10 kilometres wide slammed into Earth. The Vredefort Dome is one of South Africa's seven UNESCO World Heritage sites. In the north-eastern Free State is the Golden Gate Highlands National Park, which is the province's prime tourist attraction.

Thabo Mofutsanyana DM

The Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality is a Category C municipality located in the eastern Free State Province, and borders on Lesotho and the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga. The district makes up almost a third of the geographical area of the province. It comprises six local municipalities: Setsoto, Dihlabeng, Nketoana, Maluti-A-Phofung, Phumelela and Mantsopa. It is named after Edwin Thabo Mofutsanyana, a stalwart of the communist party.

Despite all the socio-economic challenges facing this district, the area has huge potential for tourism development because of its scenic beauty and its rich cultural heritage. The N3 and N5 National Roads pass through the district, and the famous Golden Gate is found in the area on the slopes of the Drakensberg Mountains. The DM consists of an area of 32 730km² and includes the following towns: Arlington, Bethlehem, Clarens, Clocolan, Excelsior, Ficksburg, Fouriesburg, Golden Gate Highlands National Park, Harrismith, Hobhouse, Kestell, Ladybrand, Lindley, Marquard, Memel, Paul Roux, Petrus Steyn, Phuthaditjhaba, Reitz, Rosendal, Senekal, Thaba Patchoa, Tweespruit, Vrede, Warden.

The main economic sectors include Agriculture and tourism and in 2011 the Municipality had a population of 735 679.

Mantsopa Local Municipality

The Mantsopa Local Municipality is a Category B municipality situated within the Thabo Mofutsanyana District in the eastern Free State Province. It borders Masilonyana and Setsoto to the north, the Kingdom of Lesotho to the east, and Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality to the west. It is the smallest of six municipalities in the district, making up 13% of its geographical area. The area is

accessible via the N8 and R26 roads, which transverse the area. A railway line that runs along these routes' services the area. The municipality incorporates five small towns, which accommodate a large proportion of the total population of Mantsopa. These small towns serve the surrounding rural community. The main economic sectors in the municipality are Commercial farming, private sector, public sector, tourism.

The Mantsopa LM has a youth population (0-14 years) of 30%, working age population (15-64 years) of 65.1% and an elderly population (65+ years) of 4.9%. The economically active population represents the largest proportion of the population, which means that focus needs to be placed on employment creation. The Mantsopa LM had a dependency ratio of 53.6 in 2016, implying that for every 100 people within the Mantsopa LM, 53.6 (i.e., over a half) of them are considered dependent. Of the total number of people in the Mantsopa LM, those aged 20 years and older, 6.4% have completed primary school, 32.6% have some secondary education, 31.3% have completed matric and 1.2% have some form of higher education. 4.6% of those aged 20 years and older have no form of schooling. In the Mantsopa LM there are 65.1% economically active (employed or unemployed but looking for work) people, and of these 4888 are unemployed. The Mantsopa LM has a very large portion of households live within the poverty level (72.6%) which has an annual income of less than R38 200. Only 3.3% of the households have an annual income of more than R307 201.

5.3.3 Cultural and Heritage Environment

The cultural landscape qualities of the region essentially consist of two components. The first is a rural area in which the human occupation is made up of a very limited pre-colonial Stone Age and Iron Age occupation. The second and much later component is a colonial farmer one, with a very limited urban component consisting of a number of smaller towns, most of which developed during the last 120 to 150 years.

From a review of the available old maps and aerial photographs it can be seen that the project area has always been open space, with the main activity being grazing or the making of agricultural fields. The only built features is the current farmstead, which is excluded from the project area (Figures 5.25 and 5.26).

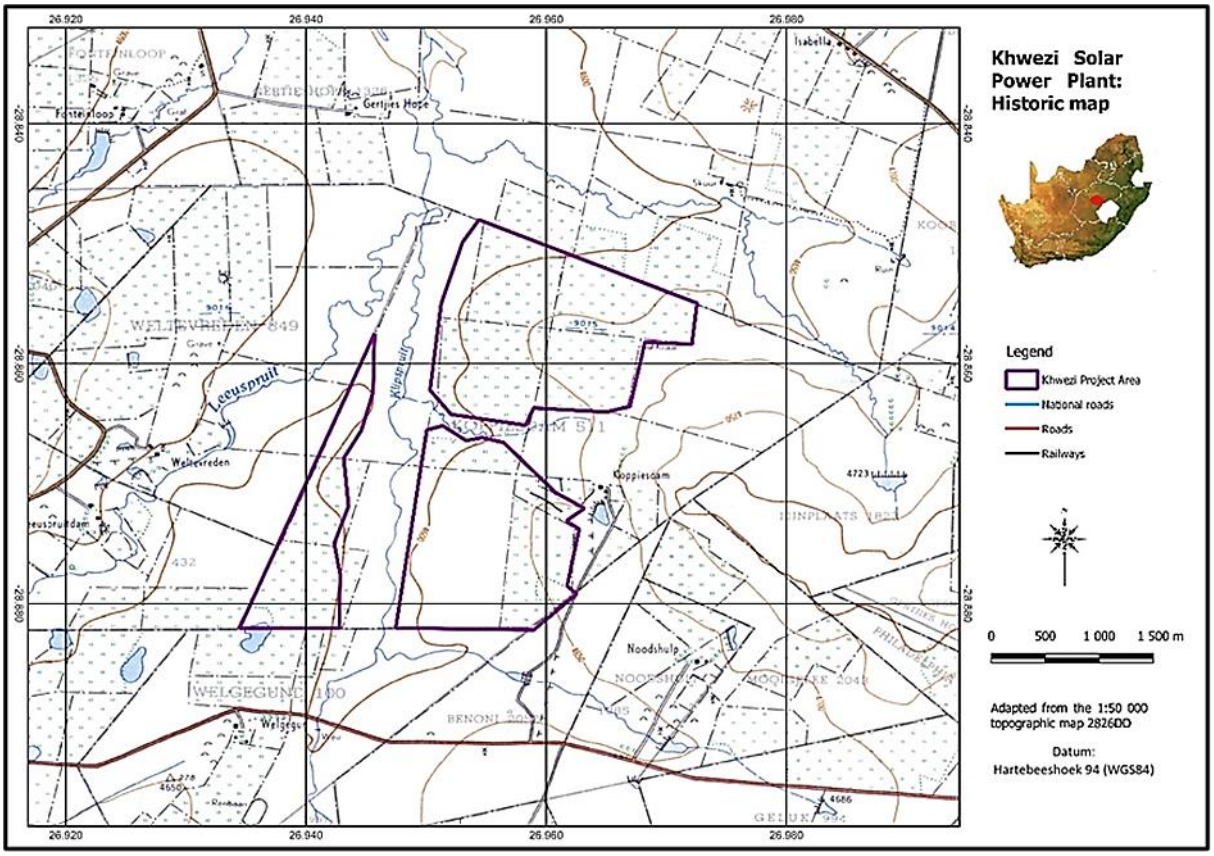


Figure 5.25: The project area on the 1965 version of the 1: 50 000 topographic map

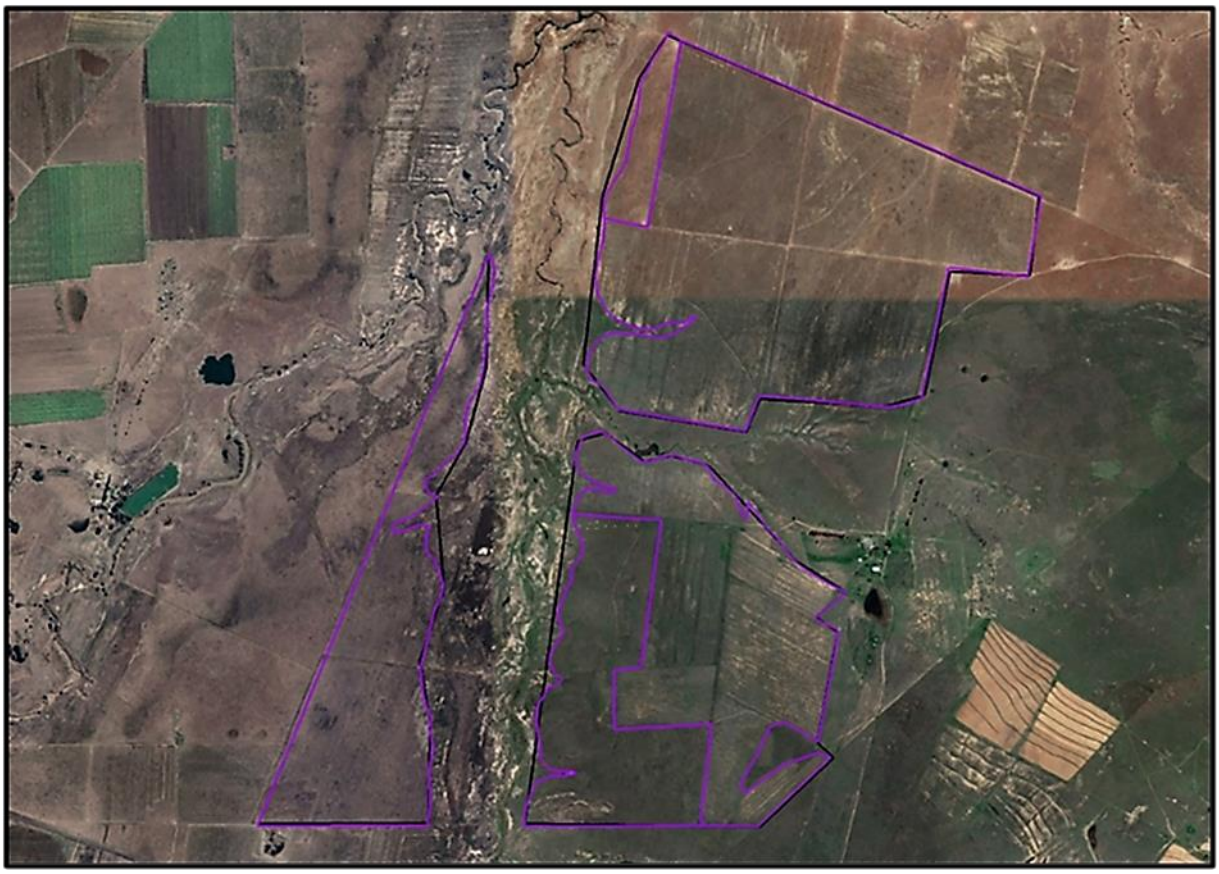


Figure 5.26: Aerial view of the project area dating to 2022

During the survey, the following sites, features and objects of cultural significance were identified in the project area.

Stone Age

Very little information regarding the Stone Age settlement in the region is available, probably as no intensive survey has been done in the region. Sealed, stratified sites, many containing rock art abound within Lesotho and the Free State and occur on both sides of the border between the two regions (Herbert 1998). Most, if not all, painted and archaeological shelter sites are located in the sandstones of the Clarens Formation of the Karoo System.

There are no known sealed, stratified sites dating to any phase of the Stone Age known in the immediate region of the project area. However, Mauermanshoek Shelter, approximately 20km northeast of Excelsior, was successively occupied from 3500 to 200 BP by San, Kora stock raiders and Sotho (Wadley 2001).

No sites, features or objects of cultural significance dating to the Stone Age were identified in the project area.

Iron Age

According to various sources, e.g., Ellenberger (1912), Legassick (2011) the Sotho stem from four parent groups: Hurutshe, Kgatla, Fokeng and Rolong. By 1500 they had already settled in the areas what was to become North-West Province and it was from this area that large numbers of groups hived off forming new clans and family lines, some of which eventually came to settle in what was to become the Free State and Lesotho. In addition to the Sotho-speakers, groups speaking Nguni-languages and originated on the banks of the Tugela River, also entered the region, settling first in the Witsies Hoek region and later in the Caledon valley. Others moved further east settling in the central region of Lesotho.

Due to their specific settlement requirements, Late Iron Age people preferred to settle on the steep slope of a mountain, possibly for protection, or for cultural considerations such as grazing for their enormous cattle herds. Because of the lack of trees, they built their settlements in stone.

The occupation of the larger geographical area (including the study area) did not start much before the 1500s. This resulted from the fact that 16th century the climate become warmer and wetter, creating condition that allowed Late Iron Age (LIA) farmers to occupy areas previously unsuitable, for example the Witwatersrand and the treeless, windswept plains of the Free State and the Mpumalanga highveld. This wet period came to a sudden end sometime between 1800 and 1820 by a major drought lasting 3 to 5 years. The drought must have caused an agricultural collapse on a large, subcontinent scale. This was also a period of great military tension. Armed Qriqua and Korana raiders on horseback were active in the northern Cape and Orange Free State by about 1790. The Xhosa were raiding across the Orange River about 1805. Military pressure from Zululand spilled onto the highveld by at least 1821. Various marauding groups of displaced Sotho Tswana moved across the plateau in the 1820s. Mzilikazi raided the plateau extensively between 1825 and 1837. The Boers trekked into this area in the 1830s.

No sites, features or objects of cultural significance dating to the Iron Age were identified in the project area.

Historic Period

It was only after the annexation of Natal in 1843 that many Trekkers returned to the Transgariep as well as to the northern parts of the Eastern Free State's Borderbelt. Notable amongst these settlers were J.I.J.Fick, after whom Ficksburg was named, W. van de Venter - founder of Fouriesburg and P.R. Botha who settled in Rietvlei. French missionaries were the last to settle in the area, and in 1833 E. Casalis and T. Arbusset opened the Missionary Station at Morija after a request from Moshoeshoe. North of Smithfield hon. S. Rolland, accepting the jurisdiction of Moshoeshoe without any reservation, founded the Beersheba Mission Station in 1835. This meant that a part of the southeast Transgariep immediately became declared as a Basotho region, and ensured that Moshoeshoe received ownership over a region where no Basotho lived. French missionaries also founded mission stations Carmel (near Smithfield), Hebron (near Zastron) and Mequatling (in the Ladybrand district) and their influence would play a crucial role in the relationship between European settlers and the Basotho in the Transgariep future.

The settling of the Eastern Free State and Transgariep areas did not occur without conflict however, as the permanent settling of Europeans and the start of the Groot Trek out of the Cape colony meant that Moshoeshoe, although originally amicable towards the settlers, was suddenly faced with a much larger number of European farmers than originally anticipated. Towards the end of 1865 in the Caledon River district the Smithfield commando annexed the land of the Baphuti headman Moorosi. This area of land, widely known as the “Verowerde Gebied” (Conquered Territory) was the homeland of numerous Sotho / Tswana chiefs, and due to this military action the eastern border between the Free State and Lesotho was pushed further east than originally delineated by either Grey (1858) or Wodehouse (1864), and for the first time since the start of the prolonged unrest all the current towns and districts in the Eastern Free State Border became part of the Boere Republic. By the 23rd of October 1865 the Verowerde Gebied formally became part of the OVS and during the sitting of the Volksraad in February 1866 this annexation was ratified (Eloff 1980).

The architecture of the farmsteads can be described as an eclectic mix of styles modified to adapt to local circumstances. Farm buildings were generally single storied. Walls were thick and built-in stone. The roof was either flat or ridged and thatched or tiled and was terminated at either end by simple linear parapet gables.

In some cases, outbuildings would be in the same style as the main house, if they date to the same period. However, they tend to vary considerably in style and materials used as they were erected later as and when they were required.

During the site visit, an informal burial site containing the graves of former farm labourers were identified. At least five graves could be identified. The site is very neglected, making it difficult to determine the names and the death dates. One grave date to 1998.

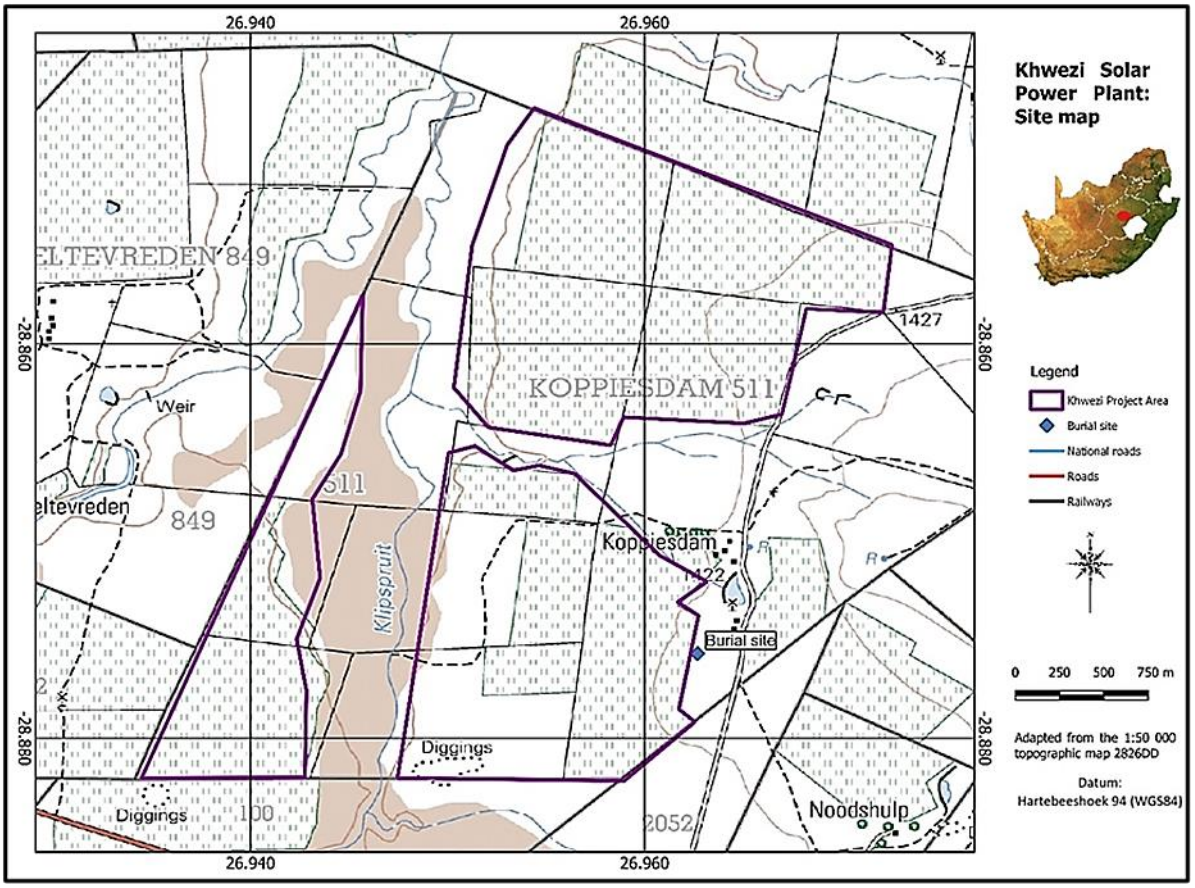


Figure 5.27: Location of heritage sites in the project area

NHRA Category	Graves, Cemeteries and Burial Grounds - Section 36

Type: Burial site. **Farm**: Koppiesdam No 511. **Coordinates**: S 28,87571; E 26,96269	
Description: Informal burial site containing the graves of former farm labourers. At least five graves could be identified. The site is very neglected, making it difficult to determine the names and the death dates. One grave date to 1998.	
Significance of site/feature	Generally protected 4A: High/medium significance - Should be mitigated before destruction.
Reasoned opinion: Burial sites are viewed as having high emotional and sentimental value. However, mitigation is possible if proper procedures have been followed.	
References: -	

Figure 5.28: Views over the burial site and one of the graves

From a heritage point of view, it is recommended that the proposed project be allowed to continue on condition that construction works must immediately stop should archaeological sites or graves be exposed during construction. Siting of archaeological sites must be immediately reported to a heritage practitioner so that an investigation and evaluation of the finds can be made.

Palaeontology

According to the Palaeontological Impact Assessment (refer to Appendix E6), the proposed Khwezi SPP is barely underlain by Quaternary alluvium on the riverbanks of the Klipspruit while the rest of the development is underlain by Permian aged sandstone and shale of the Adelaide Subgroup (Beaufort Group, Karoo Supergroup). According to the PalaeoMap of the South African Heritage Resources Information System (SAHRIS) the Palaeontological Sensitivity of Quaternary alluvium is Moderate, while that of the Adelaide Subgroup (Beaufort Group) is Very High (Almond and Pether, 2009; Almond et al., 2013, Groenewald et al 2014). Updated Geology (Council of Geosciences) refined the geology and indicates that the proposed development is mainly underlain by the Balfour Formation of the Adelaide Subgroup. The Very High Palaeontological Sensitivity of the Balfour Formation triggered a site investigation.

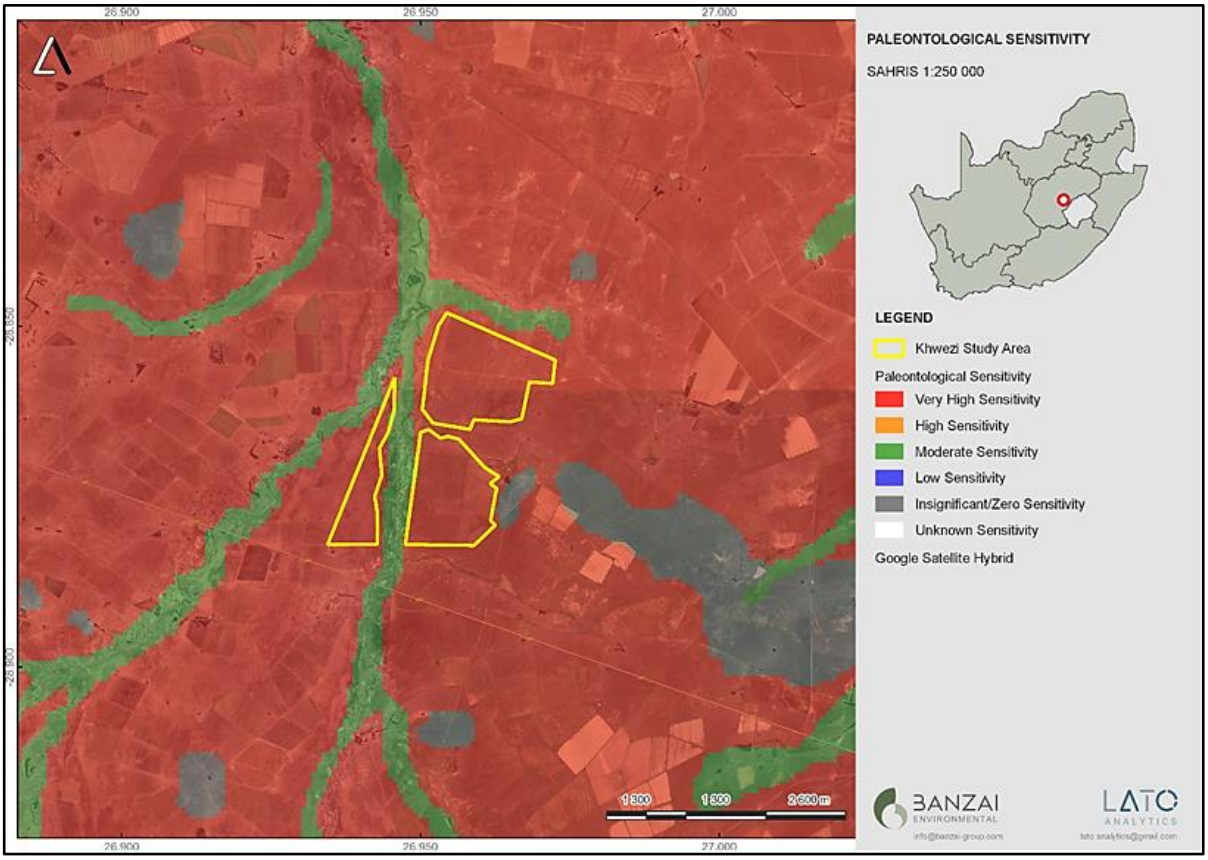


Figure 5.29: Extract of the 1 in 250 000 SAHRIS PalaeoMap (Council of Geosciences, Pretoria) indicating the proposed Khwezi SPP development near Excelsior in the Free State

A site-specific field survey of the development footprint was conducted on foot and by motor vehicle on 3 December 2022. No fossiliferous outcrops were identified during the site visit. The development has a low topography mantled by thick grass, and outcrops were not detected. Several pebble-sized fragments of petrified wood reworked from the bedrocks into the overlying soils and surface gravels

were identified. However, these derived fossils are commonly found in the Karoo Basin and are of Low conservational value. These fragments do thus not require mitigation. As no other fossils were recorded in the proposed development a Low palaeontological Significance has been allocated to the development. It is therefore considered that the proposed development will not lead to damaging impacts on the palaeontological resources of the area. The construction of the development may thus be permitted in its whole extent, as the development footprint is not considered sensitive in terms of palaeontological resources.

5.4 SITE SELECTION MATRIX

Due to the nature of the proposed development, the location of the solar power plant is largely dependent on technical and environmental factors such as solar irradiation, climatic conditions, topography of the site, access to the grid and capacity of the grid. Studies of solar irradiation worldwide indicate that the Free State Province has a high potential for the generation of power from solar.

The receptiveness of the site to PV Development includes the presence of optimal conditions for the sitting of a solar energy facility due to high irradiation values and optimum grid connection opportunities (i.e., the grid connection points are located within the affected property which minimises the length of power line development and consolidates the overall impacts and disturbance of the project within the affected property). The Farm Koppiesdam No. 511 (PV facility); Farm Welgegund No. 100 and Farm Noodshulp No. 2052 (access road) where the project is proposed to be located is considered favorable and suitable from a technical perspective due to the following characteristics:

- Climatic conditions: Climatic conditions determine if the project will be viable from an economic perspective as the SPP is directly dependent on the annual direct solar irradiation values of a particular area. The Free State receives high averages of direct normal and global horizontal irradiation daily. This is an indication that the regional location of the project includes a low number of rainy days and a high number of daylight hours experienced in the region. The Global Horizontal Radiation value is around 2025 kWh/m^2 per annum is relevant in the area.

- Topographic conditions: The surface area on which the proposed facility will be located has a favourable level topography, which facilitates work involved with construction and maintenance of the facility and ensures that shadowing on the panels do not occur. The topographic conditions, which are favourable, minimises the significance of the impact that will occur during the clearing and leveling of the site for the construction activities.

- Extent of the site: A significant portion of land is required to evacuate up to 300 MW and space is a constraining factor in PV facility installations. Provision was made to assess a larger area than is required for the facility to make provision for any other environmental or technical constraints that may arise and avoiding those areas. Larger farms are sought after to make provision for any constraints imposed by the Department of Agriculture on the extent of land that may be used for such facilities per farm, as well as the opportunities presented for the avoidance of sensitive environmental features present. The Farm Koppiesdam No. 511 (PV

facility); Farm Welgegund No. 100 and Farm Noodshulp No. 2052 (access road), and the development footprint assessed therein is considered to provide an opportunity for the successful construction and operation of a SPP with a capacity of up to 300 MW, as well as opportunities for the avoidance and mitigation of impacts on the affected environment and sensitive environmental features.

- Site availability and access: The land is available for lease by the developer. Reluctant farm owners or farmers over capitalising hamper efforts to find suitable farms. Access to the site is readily available via the R703.

- Grid connection: In order for the PV facility to connect to the national grid the facility will have to construct an on-site substation, Eskom switching station and a power line from the project site to connect to the Eskom grid. Available grid connections are becoming scarce and play a huge role when selecting a viable site. The proposed Khwezi overhead power line route will follow an existing powerline route and will connect directly into the existing Merapi Substation. The grid connection will be assessed by means of a separate application. A single preferred alternative for the power line has been identified based on the location of the connection point into the national grid in relation to the proposed SPP. The proposed 132kV overhead power line will be approximately 16 km long and will be constructed within the identified grid connection corridor (to be assessed in a separate Basic Assessment process).

- Environmental sensitivities: From an environmental perspective the proposed site is considered highly desirable in terms of geology, agricultural potential, vegetation and landscape features, climate, biodiversity and the visual landscape despite some of the environmental sensitivities identified (refer to Section 5.3.1 of this report). The area proposed for development exclusively consists of land used for agriculture, but wetland features are located on the development footprint, as well as old fields previously ploughed for crop cultivation, burial sites either on or in close proximity to the site and a historic homestead. These environmental sensitive features will need to be considered by the developer for the placement of the facility infrastructure within the development footprint.

It is evident from the discussion above that Farm Koppiesdam No. 511 (PV facility); Farm Welgegund No. 100 and Farm Noodshulp No. 2052 (access road), may be considered favourable and suitable in terms of the site and environmental characteristics. As mentioned previously, no alternative areas on the property have been considered for the placement of the development footprint as the assessed development footprint avoids areas that are under cultivation within the affected property. The development footprint of this project will cover a significant portion of the farm; however, provision will be made to exclude any sensitive areas from the facility layout to be developed within the development footprint.

5.5 CONCLUDING STATEMENT ON ALTERNATIVES

When considering the information provided by the specialists with regards to the site selection criteria, the site is identified as preferred due to fact that the opportunities presented on the site to develop the project in such a way which avoids the areas and features (including the associated buffers) of high environmental sensitivity. Therefore, development of the up to 300 MW Khwezi SPP

on the Farm Koppiesdam No. 511 (PV facility); Farm Welgegund No. 100 and Farm Noodshulp No. 2052 (access road) is the preferred option.

Considering the environmental sensitive features present within the development footprint, the Applicant has proposed a draft facility layout which considers these features, and thereby aim to avoid any direct impact on these features. The draft layout will be further assessed as part of the EIA Phase of the project. Refer to Figure I for the draft layout proposed for development.

6 DESCRIPTION OF THE IMPACTS AND RISKS

This section aims to address the following requirements of the regulations:

Appendix 2. (2) A scoping report (...) must include-

(v) the impacts and risks identified for each alternative, including the nature, significance,

consequence, extent, duration and probability of the impacts, including the degree to which these impacts-

(aa) can be reversed;

(bb) may cause irreplaceable loss of resources; and

(cc) can be avoided, managed or mitigated;

(vi) the methodology used in determining and ranking the nature, significance, consequences, extent, duration and probability of potential environmental impacts and risks associated with the alternatives;

(vii) positive and negative impacts that the proposed activity and alternatives will have on

the environment and on the community that may be affected focusing on the geographical, physical, biological, social, economic, heritage and cultural aspects;

(viii) the possible mitigation measures that could be applied and level of residual risk;

6.1 SCOPING METHODOLOGY

The contents and methodology of the scoping report aims to provide, as far as possible, a user-friendly analysis of information to allow for easy interpretation.

- Checklist (see section 6.1.1): The checklist consists of a list of structured questions related to the environmental parameters and specific human actions. They assist in ordering thinking, data collection, presentation and alert against the omission of possible impacts.
- Matrix (see section 6.1.2): The matrix analysis provides a holistic indication of the relationship and interaction between the various activities, development phases and the impact thereof on the environment. The method aims at providing a first order cause and effect relationship between the environment and the proposed activity. The matrix is designed to indicate the relationship between the different stressors and receptors which leads to specific impacts. The matrix also indicates the specialist studies that have been conducted to address the potentially most significant impacts.

6.1.1 Checklist Analysis

The independent consultant conducted a site visit on 7 October 2022. The site visit was conducted to ensure a proper analysis of the site-specific characteristics of the study area. Table 6.1 provides a checklist, which is designed to stimulate thought regarding possible consequences of specific actions

and to assist scoping of key issues. It consists of a list of structured questions related to the environmental parameters and specific human actions. They assist in ordering thinking, data collection, presentation and alert against the omission of possible impacts. The table highlights certain issues, which are further analysed in matrix format in section 6.2.

Table 6.1: Environmental checklist

QUESTION	YES	NO	Un-sure	Description
1. Are any of the following located on the site earmarked for the development?				
I. A river, stream, dam or wetland	×			The Wetland Baseline and Risk Assessment has identified one (01) Channelled Valley Bottom wetland and two (02) Unchanneled Valley Bottom wetlands. An artificial dam was identified within the Unchanneled Valley Bottom wetland.
II. A conservation or open space area		×		The project area overlaps with an ESA 1 (sites with minimal degradation) and ESA 2 (sites are more degraded).
III. An area that is of cultural importance	X			An informal burial site containing the graves of former farm labourers were identified. At least five graves could be identified.
IV. Site of geological significance		×		None.
V. Areas of outstanding natural beauty		×		None.
VI. Highly productive agricultural land	×			The land capabilities associated with the assessment area are suitable for rainfed cropping, irrigated cropping and livestock grazing, which corresponds with the current land use.
VII. Floodplain		×		None.
VIII. Indigenous Forest		×		None.
IX. Grass land	×			According to the Terrestrial Ecology Baseline and Impact Assessment, the project area is situated within the Grassland Biome.
X. Bird nesting sites		×		The Avifaunal assessment noticed that no bird nests were observed.
XI. Red data species		×		The Avifauna Assessment did not record any Red Data Species on site.
XII. Tourist resort		×		None.
2. Will the project potentially result in potential?				

I. Removal of people		×		None.
II. Visual Impacts	×			The significance of the visual impact will be a "Negative Low Impact". The only receptors likely to be impacted by the proposed development are the nearby property owners and people travelling on the R703 regional road.
III. Noise pollution	×			Construction activities will result in the generation of noise over a period of 12-18 months. The noise impact is unlikely to be significant.
IV. Construction of an access road	×			Access will be obtained via a gravel road off the R703 regional road.
V. Risk to human or valuable ecosystems due to explosion/fire/ discharge of waste into water or air.		×		None.
VI. Accumulation of large workforce (>50 manual workers) into the site.	×			Approximately 200 employment opportunities will be created during the construction phase and 50 employment opportunities during the operation phase of the SPP project.
VII. Utilisation of significant volumes of local raw materials such as water, wood etc.	×			The estimated maximum amount of water required during the facility's 20 years of production is approximately 9547kl per annum.
VIII. Job creation	×			Approximately 200 employment opportunities will be created during the construction and 50 employment opportunities during the operational phases for the SPP project.
IX. Traffic generation	×			The estimated trip generation during the construction phase averages at 186 daily trips which includes normal heavy load (solar panels); normal heavy load (construction materials); and Private vehicles (staff).
X. Soil erosion	×			The site will need to be cleared or graded to a limited extent, which may potentially result in a degree of dust being created, increased runoff and potentially soil erosion. The time that these areas are left bare will be limited to the construction phase, since vegetation will be allowed to grow back after construction.

XI. Installation of additional bulk telecommunication transmission lines or facilities		×		None.
3. Is the proposed project located near the following?				
I. A river, stream, dam or wetland	×			The Wetland Baseline and Risk Assessment has identified one (01) Channelled Valley Bottom wetland and two (02) Unchanneled Valley Bottom wetlands. An artificial dam was identified within the Unchanneled Valley Bottom wetland.
II. A conservation or open space area		×		The project area overlaps with an ESA 1 (sites with minimal degradation) and ESA 2 (sites are more degraded).
III. An area that is of cultural importance	×			An informal burial site containing the graves of former farm labourers were identified. At least five graves could be identified.
IV. A site of geological significance		×		None.
V. An area of outstanding natural beauty		×		None.
VI. Highly productive agricultural land	×			The land capabilities associated with the assessment area are suitable for rainfed cropping, irrigated cropping and livestock grazing, which corresponds with the current land use.
VII. A tourist resort		×		None.
VIII. A formal or informal settlement	×			The closest town to the project is Excelsior, located approximately 10 km southeast of the proposed site.

6.1.2 Matrix Analysis

The matrix describes the relevant listed activities, the aspects of the development that will apply to the specific listed activity, a description of the environmental issues and potential impacts, the significance and magnitude of the potential impacts and possible mitigation measures. The matrix also highlights areas of particular concern (see Table 6.2) for more in-depth assessment during the EIA process. An indication is provided of the specialist studies being conducted and which informed the initial assessment. Each cell is evaluated individually in terms of the nature of the impact, duration and its significance – should no mitigation measures be applied. This is important since many impacts would not be considered insignificant if proper mitigation measures were implemented.

In order to conceptualise the different impacts, the matrix specify the following:

- **Stressor**: Indicates the aspect of the proposed activity, which initiates and cause impacts on elements of the environment.
- **Receptor**: Highlights the recipient and most important components of the environment affected by the stressor.
- **Impacts**: Indicates the net result of the cause-effect between the stressor and receptor.
- **Mitigation**: Impacts need to be mitigated to minimise the effect on the environment.

Please refer to **Appendix E** (specialist studies) a more in-depth assessment of the potential environmental impacts.

Table 6.2: Matrix analysis

For ease of reference the significance of the impacts is colour-coded as follow:

Low significance	Medium significance	High significance	Positive impact

LISTED ACTIVITY (The Stressor)	ASPECTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT /ACTIVITY		POTENTIAL IMPACTS		SIGNIFICANCE AND MAGNITUDE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS							MITIGATION OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS			SPECIALIST STUDIES / INFORMATION
			Receptors	Impact description / consequence	Minor	Major	Extent	Duration	Probability	Reversibility	Irreplaceable loss of resources	Possible Mitigation	Possible mitigation measures	Level of residual risk	
CONSTRUCTION PHASE															
Activity 11 (i) (GN.R. 327): *"The development of facilities or infrastructure for the transmission and distribution of electricity outside urban areas or industrial complexes with a capacity of more than 33 but less than 275 kilovolts."* Activity 12(ii)(a)(c) (GN.R. 327): *"The development of (ii) infrastructure or structures with a physical footprint of 100 square metres or more; (a) within a watercourse or (c) within 32 meters of a watercourse measured from the edge of a watercourse."* Activity 19 (GN.R. 327): *"The infilling or depositing of any material of more than 10 cubic metres into, or the dredging, excavation, removal or moving of soil, sand, shells, shell grit,*	Site clearing and preparation Certain areas of the site will need to be cleared of vegetation and some areas may need to be levelled. Civil works The main civil works are: • Terrain levelling if necessary– Levelling will be minimal as the potential site chosen is relatively flat. • Laying foundation- The structures will be connected to the ground through cement pillars, cement slabs or metal screws. The exact method will depend on the detailed geotechnical analysis. • Construction of access and inside roads/paths – existing paths will be used were reasonably possible.	BIOPHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	Terrestrial Ecology	• Destruction, loss and fragmentation of habitats, ecosystems and the vegetation community.		-	L	L	D	BR	SL	Yes	- See Table 6.3	M	Terrestrial Ecology Baseline and Impact Assessment (Appendix E1)
			Terrestrial Ecology	• Introduction of IAP species and invasive fauna.	-		L	L	D	PR	SL	Yes	- See Table 6.3	L	Terrestrial Ecology Baseline and Impact Assessment (Appendix E1)
			Terrestrial Ecology	• Destruction of protected plant species	-		L	L	D	BR	SL	Yes	- See Table 6.3	L	Terrestrial Ecology Baseline and Impact Assessment (Appendix E1)
			Terrestrial Ecology	• Displacement of the indigenous faunal community (including possible SCC) due to habitat loss, direct mortalities, and disturbance (road collisions,		-	P	Pr	P	BR	SL	Yes	- See Table 6.3	M	Terrestrial Ecology Baseline and Impact Assessment (Appendix E1)

pebbles or rock of more than 10 cubic metres from a watercourse." Activity 24 (ii) (GN.R 327): *"The development of a road (ii) with reserve wider than 13,5 meters, or where no reserve exists where the road is wider than 8 meters."* Activity 27 (GN.R 327): *"The clearance of an area of 1 hectares or more, but less than 20 hectares of indigenous vegetation…"* Activity 28 (ii) (GN.R. 327): *"Residential, mixed, retail, commercial, industrial or institutional developments where such land was used for agriculture or afforestation on or after 1998 and where such development (ii) will occur outside an urban area, where the total land to be developed is bigger than 1 hectare."* Activity 56 (ii) (GN.R 327): "*The widening of a road by more than 6 metres, or the lengthening of a road by more than 1 kilometre (ii) where no reserve exists, where the existing road is wider than 8 metres…"* Activity 1 (GN.R. 325): *"The development of facilities or infrastructure for the*	Additionally, the turning circle for trucks will also be taken into consideration. Transportation and installation of PV panels into an Array The panels are assembled at the supplier's premises and will be transported from the factory to the site on trucks. The panels will be mounted on metal structures which are fixed into the ground either through a concrete foundation or a deep-seated screw. Wiring to the Central Inverters Sections of the PV array will be wired to inverters. The inverter is a pulse width mode inverter that converts direct current (DC) electricity to alternating current (AC) electricity at grid frequency.			noise, dust, light, vibration, and poaching).										
			Air	• Air pollution due to the increase of traffic of construction vehicles and the undertaking of construction activities.	-		S	S	D	CR	NL	Yes	- Dust suppression measures must be implemented for heavy vehicles such as wetting of gravel roads on a regular basis and ensuring that vehicles used to transport sand and building materials are fitted with tarpaulins or covers.	L	-
			Soil and Agriculture	• Loss of Land Capability	-		L	M	D	PR	SL	Yes	- See Table 6.3	L	Soil and Agricultural Assessment (Appendix E4)
			Geology	• Collapsible soil. • Seepage. • Active soil (high soil heave). • Erodible soil. • Hard/compact geology. If the bedrock occurs close to surface it may present problems when driving solar panel columns. • The presence of undermined ground. • Instability due to soluble rock. • Steep slopes or areas of unstable natural slopes. • Areas subject to seismic activity.	-		S	S	Pr	CR	NL	Yes	- The most effective mitigation will be the minimisation of the project footprint by using the existing roads in the area and not create new roads to prevent other areas also getting compacted. - Retention of vegetation where possible to avoid soil erosion.	L	-
			Existing services infrastructure	• Generation of waste that need to be accommodated at a licensed landfill site.	-		L	S	D	PR	ML	Yes	-	L	Confirmation from the Local Municipality

generation of electricity from a renewable resource where the electricity output is 20 megawatts or more...” Activity 15 (GN.R. 325): *“The clearance of an area of 20 hectares or more of indigenous vegetation...”* Activity 10 (b)(i)(hh) (GN.R 324): *“The development and related operation of facilities or infrastructure for the storage, or storage and handling of a dangerous good, where such storage occurs in containers with a combined capacity of 30 but not exceeding 80 cubic metres (b) in the Free State, (i) outside urban areas, (hh) areas within a watercourse or wetland; or within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland.”* Activity 12 (b)(vi) (GN.R 324): “*The clearance of an area of 300 square metres or more of indigenous vegetation except where such clearance of indigenous vegetation in (b) Free State (iv) Areas within a watercourse or wetland; or within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland”.* Activity 14 (ii)(a)(c)(b)(i)(ff) (GN.R 324): *“The development*				• Generation of sewage that need to be accommodated by the local sewage plant. • Increase in construction vehicles on existing roads.										
			Groundwater	• Pollution due to construction vehicles and the storage and handling of dangerous goods.	-		S	S	Pr	CR	ML	Yes	- A groundwater monitoring programme (quality and groundwater levels) should be designed and installed for the site. - Monitoring boreholes should be securely capped, and must be fitted with a suitable sanitary seal to prevent surface water flowing down the outside of the casing. - Full construction details of monitoring boreholes must be recorded when they are drilled. - Sampling of monitoring boreholes should be done according to recognised standards.	L	-
			General Environment (risks associated with BESS)	• Mechanical breakdown / Exposure to high temperatures • Fires, electrocutions and spillage of toxic substances into the surrounding environment. • Spillage of hazardous substances into the surrounding environment.		-	S	M	Pr	PR	ML	Yes	- See Table 6.6	L	-

of (ii) infrastructure or structures with a physical footprint of 10 square metres or more, where such development occurs (a) within a watercourse or (c) within 32 metres of a watercourse, measured from the edge of a watercourse, (b) within the Free State, (i) outside urban areas within (ff) critical biodiversity areas or ecosystem service areas as identified in systematic biodiversity plans adopted by the competent authority or in bioregional plans." <u>Activity 18 (b)(i)(hh) (GN.R 324):</u> *"The widening of a road by more than 4 metres, or the lengthening of a road by more than 1 kilometre (b) in the Free State (i) outside urban areas, within (hh) areas within a watercourse or wetland; or within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland."*				• Soil contamination – leachate from spillages which could lead to an impact of the productivity of soil forms in affected areas. • Water Pollution – spillages into surrounding watercourses as well as groundwater. • Health impacts – on the surrounding communities, particularly those relying on watercourses (i.e. rivers, streams, etc) as a primary source of water. • Generation of hazardous waste											
	SOCIAL/ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT	Local unemployment rate	• Creation of direct and indirect employment opportunities		+	L	S	D	CR	NL	Yes	- See Table 6.3	M	Social Impact Assessment (Appendix E7)
		Economic multiplier effects	• Significance of the impact from the economic multiplier effects from the use of local goods and services.		+	P	S	Pr	CR	NL	Yes	- See Table 6.3	M	Social Impact Assessment (Appendix E7)
		Improvements on shared infrastructure	• Investment into upgrading and maintain shared infrastructure such as roads and stormwater infrastructure on farms may benefit farming operations	+		P	S	Pr	CR	NL	Yes	- See Table 6.3	L	Social Impact Assessment (Appendix E7)
		Potential loss of productive farmland	• The potential loss in productive farmland during the construction phase, due to factors such as the construction of roads, the preparation of foundations, power lines, offices etc.	-		S	S	Pr	BR	NL	Yes	- See Table 6.3	L	Social Impact Assessment (Appendix E7)

			Influx of jobseekers and change in population	• In-migration of labourers in search of employment opportunities, and a resultant change in population, and increase in pressure on local resources and social networks, or existing services and infrastructure	-		L	P	Pr	IR	ML	Yes	- See Table 6.3	L	Social Impact Assessment (Appendix E7)
			Safety and security impacts	• Temporary increase in safety and security concerns associated with the influx of people during the construction phase	-		L	S	Pr	CR	NL	Yes	- See Table 6.3	L	Social Impact Assessment (Appendix E7)
			Impacts on daily living and movement patterns	• Temporary increase in traffic disruptions and movement patterns during the construction phase.	-		P	S	Pr	PR	ML	Yes	- See Table 6.3	L	Social Impact Assessment (Appendix E7)
			Nuisance impacts (noise and dust)	• Nuisance impacts in terms of temporary increase in noise and dust, and wear and tear on access roads to the site	-		L	S	D	CR	NL	Yes	- See Table 6.3	L	Social Impact Assessment (Appendix E7)
			Increased risk of potential veld fires	• The potential loss of livestock, crops, and farmsteads in the area. This also includes the damage and loss of farm infrastructure and the threatening of human lives that are associated with the increased risk of veld fires	-		L	S	Pr	PR	SL	Yes	- See Table 6.3	L	Social Impact Assessment (Appendix E7)
			Visual and sense of place impacts	• Intrusion impacts from construction activities will have an impact on the area's "sense of place".	-		L	S	D	PR	NL	Yes	- See Table 6.3	L	Social Impact Assessment (Appendix E7)
			Visual landscape	• Visual impact of construction activities on	-		L	S	D	PR	ML	Yes	- See Table 6.3	L	Visual Impact Assessment (Appendix E3)

				sensitive visual receptors in close proximity to the SPP											
			Access requirements and internal road infrastructure	• Construction and maintenance of gravel roads in vicinity of the site • The construction traffic accessing the site would be traveling along roads that are proposed to be unsurfaced for the development. • The movement of heavy vehicles along the gravel roads, especially close to the boundaries of the site, may cause excessive dust in the area. • Deterioration of gravel-roads may also occur after wet seasons, leading to poor road conditions for transportation on site	-		L	S	Pr	CR	NL	Yes	- See Table 6.3	L	Traffic Impact Assessment (Appendix E8)
			Haulage traffic	• Increased traffic on haulage routes • During the construction phase (18 months), the road network leading to the Khwezi PV SPP will include national and regional roads from the Port of Durban (recommended) and Johannesburg. • There will be an increase in traffic volumes, for both light and heavy vehicles, influencing traffic congestion and road safety.	-		P	S	Pr	CR	NL	Yes	- See Table 6.3	L	Traffic Impact Assessment (Appendix E8)
			Localised traffic (construction workers)	• Increased traffic on local routes • The road network, surrounding the proposed	-		L	S	Pr	CR	NL	Yes	- See Table 6.3	L	Traffic Impact Assessment (Appendix E8)

				Khwezi PV SPP site, will be affected. • There will be an increase in traffic, influencing traffic congestion and road safety. • However, vehicles used during the operations-and maintenance phases will be light vehicles. • The extent of the road network that will be affected is small, as staff will be living in neighbouring towns, i.e., Excelsior, Verkeerdevlei, Thaba Nchu, Bothshabelo and possibly Bloemfontein. • The new vehicle trips generated during the operations-and maintenance phases will only be temporary and no major traffic impact is anticipated on the road network											
				Tourism industry	• Since there are no sensitive tourism facilities in close proximity to the site, the proposed activities will not have an impact on tourism in the area.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
				Heritage resources	• Burial site • This site is located approximately 50m outside the boundary of the proposed development area. Due to its location, it probably would not directly be impacted on by the proposed development	-		S	P	Po	CR	ML	Yes	- See Table 6.3	L	Heritage Impact Assessment (Appendix E5)

OPERATIONAL PHASE																
Activity 11(i) (GN.R. 327): *"The development of facilities or infrastructure for the transmission and distribution of electricity outside urban areas or industrial complexes with a capacity of more than 33 but less than 275 kilovolts."* Activity 1 (GN.R 325): *"The development of facilities or infrastructure for the generation of electricity from a renewable resource where the electricity output is 20 megawatts or more."* Activity 10 (b)(i)(hh) (GN.R 324): "*The development and related operation of facilities or infrastructure for the storage, or storage and handling of a dangerous good, where such storage occurs in containers with a combined capacity of 30 but not exceeding 80 cubic metres (b) in the Free State, (i) outside urban areas, (hh) areas within a watercourse or wetland; or within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland."*	The key components of the proposed project are described below: • PV Panel Array - To produce 300 MW, the proposed facility will require numerous linked cells placed behind a protective glass sheet to form a panel. Multiple panels will be required to form the solar PV arrays which will comprise the PV facility. The PV panels will be tilted at a northern angle in order to capture the most sun. • Wiring to Central Inverters Sections of the PV array will be wired to central inverters. The inverter is a pulse width mode inverter that converts direct current (DC) electricity to alternating current (AC) electricity at grid frequency. • Connection to the grid - Connecting the array to the electrical grid requires transformation of the voltage from 480V to 33kV to 132kV. The normal components and dimensions of a distribution rated electrical substation will be required. Output voltage from the inverter is 480V and this is	BIOPHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	Terrestrial Ecology	• Continued fragmentation and degradation of natural habitats and ecosystems.	-		L	L	Pr	PR	SL	Yes	- See Table 6.4	L	Terrestrial Ecology Baseline and Impact Assessment (Appendix E1)
			Terrestrial Ecology	• Continuing spread of IAP and weed species.	-		L	L	Pr	PR	SL	Yes	- See Table 6.4	L	Terrestrial Ecology Baseline and Impact Assessment (Appendix E1)
			Terrestrial Ecology	• Ongoing displacement and direct mortalities of the faunal community (including possible SCC) due to continued disturbance (road collisions, noise, light, dust, vibration, poaching, erosion, etc.).	-		P	P	Pr	BR	SL	Yes	- See Table 6.4	L	Terrestrial Ecology Baseline and Impact Assessment (Appendix E1)
			Air quality	• The proposed development will not result in any air pollution during the operational phase.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
			Soil and Agriculture	• Loss of Land Capability, Soil erosion and compaction effects	-		S	L	Pr	PR	SL	Yes	- See Table 6.4	L	Soil and Agricultural Assessment (Appendix E4)
			Geology	• Collapsible soil. • Active soil (high soil heave). • Erodible soil. • Hard/compact geology. If the bedrock occurs close to surface it may present problems when driving power line columns. • The presence of undermined ground.	-		S	S	Po	PR	ML	Yes	- Surface drainage should be provided to prevent water ponding. - Mitigation measures proposed by the detailed engineering geological investigation should be implemented.	L	-

	fed into step up transformers to 132kV. An onsite substation will be required on the site to step the voltage up to 132kV, after which the power will be evacuated into the national grid. • <u>Supporting Infrastructure</u> – The following auxiliary buildings including a gate house, ablutions, workshops, storage and warehousing areas, site offices and a control centre. The project requires the need for both temporary and permanent laydown areas • <u>Roads</u> – Access will be obtained via the existing R703 Regional Road. An internal site road network will also be required to provide access to the solar field and associated infrastructure. All site roads will require a width of approximately 6 m – 12 m. • <u>Fencing</u> - For health, safety and security reasons, the facility will be required to be fenced off from the surrounding farm.	SOCIAL/ECONOMIC		• Instability due to soluble rock. • Steep slopes or areas of unstable natural slopes. • Areas subject to seismic activity. • Areas subject to flooding.											
			Groundwater	• Leakage of hazardous materials. The development will comprise of a distribution substation and will include transformer bays which will contain transformer oils. Leakage of these oils can contaminate water supplies.	-		L	L	Po	PR	ML	Yes	- All areas in which substances potentially hazardous to groundwater are stored, loaded, worked with or disposed of should be securely bunded (impermeable floor and sides) to prevent accidental discharge to groundwater.	L	-
			Direct and Indirect employment opportunities and skills development	• The creation of employment opportunities and skills development opportunities during the operation phase for the country and local economy		+	P	L	Pr	BR	NL	Yes	- See Table 6.4	M	Social Impact Assessment (Appendix E7)
			Development of non-polluting, renewable energy infrastructure	• Development of non-polluting, renewable energy infrastructure		+	I	L	D	CR	ML	Yes	- See Table 6.4	M	Social Impact Assessment (Appendix E7)
			Potential loss of agricultural land	• Loss of agricultural land and overall productivity as a result of the operation of the proposed project on an agricultural property	-		S	L	Pr	PR	ML	Yes	- See Table 6.4	L	Social Impact Assessment (Appendix E7)
			Contribution to Local Economic Development (LED) and social upliftment	• Contribution to LED and social upliftment during the operation of the project		+	I	L	D	PR	NL	Yes	- See Table 6.4	H	Social Impact Assessment (Appendix E7)

			Impact on tourism	• The potential impact on tourism due to the establishment of the Khwezi SPP	+ -		L	L	Pr	CR	NL	Yes	- See Table 6.4	L	Social Impact Assessment (Appendix E7)
			Visual and sense of place impacts	• Visual impacts and sense of place impacts associated with the operation phase of Khwezi SPP.	-		L	L	Pr	CR	SL	Yes	- See Table 6.4	L	Social Impact Assessment (Appendix E7)
			Increasement in household earnings	• The creation of employment opportunities and skills development opportunities during the operation phase for the households involved in the project would create an opportunity for an increasement in household earnings		+	P	L	Pr	BR	NL	Yes	- See Table 6.4	M	Social Impact Assessment (Appendix E7)
			Visual landscape	• Visual impact on sensitive visual receptors within a 1km radius from the SPP.	-		L	L	D	PR	ML	Yes	- See Table 6.4	L	Visual Impact Assessment (Appendix E3)
			Visual landscape	• Visual impact on sensitive visual receptors between a 1km and 3km radius from the SPP.	-		L	L	Pr	PR	ML	Yes	- See Table 6.4	L	Visual Impact Assessment (Appendix E3)
			Visual landscape	• Visual impact on sensitive visual receptors within a 3-5km radius from the SPP.	-		L	L	Po	PR	ML	Yes	- See Table 6.4	L	Visual Impact Assessment (Appendix E3)
			Visual landscape	• Visual impact on sensitive visual receptors within a 5-10km radius from the SPP.	-		L	L	Po	PR	ML	Yes	- See Table 6.4	L	Visual Impact Assessment (Appendix E3)
			Visual landscape	• Visual impacts of lighting at night on sensitive visual receptors in close proximity to the proposed facility.	-		L	L	Po	IR	ML	Yes	- See Table 6.4	L	Visual Impact Assessment (Appendix E3)
			Visual landscape	• Visual impacts of glint and glare as a visual distraction and possible air travel hazard.	-		L	L	U	CR	NL	Yes	- See Table 6.4	L	Visual Impact Assessment (Appendix E3)

			Visual landscape	• Visual impacts on sense of place associated with the operational phase of the SPP.	-		L	L	Po	PR	ML	Yes	- See Table 6.4	L	Visual Impact Assessment (Appendix E3)
			Traffic generated due to operations	• Increased traffic on local routes • The current traffic will increase slightly due to the employees on site during the operational phase. • The traffic generated during this phase will be minimal and will have not have any impact on the surrounding road network.	-		L	L	Pr	CR	NL	No	-	L	Traffic Impact Assessment (Appendix E8)
			Health & Safety	• The proposed development will not result in any health and safety impacts during the operational phase.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	-	N/A	N/A
			Noise levels	• The proposed development will not result in any noise pollution during the operational phase.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
			Electricity supply	• Generation of additional electricity. The power line will transport generated electricity into the grid.	+		I	L	D	I	N/A	Yes	-	N/A	-
			Electrical infrastructure	• Additional electrical infrastructure. The proposed solar facility will add to the existing electrical infrastructure and aid to lessen the reliance of electricity generation from coal-fired power stations.	+		I	L	D	I	N/A	Yes	-	N/A	-

DECOMMISSIONING PHASE																
-	Dismantlement of infrastructure During the decommissioning phase the Solar PV Energy facility and its associated infrastructure will be dismantled. Rehabilitation of biophysical environment The biophysical environment will be rehabilitated.		Air quality	• Air pollution due to the increase of traffic of construction vehicles.	-		S	S	D	CR	NL	Yes	- Regular maintenance of equipment to ensure reduced exhaust emissions.	L	-
			Geology	• It is not foreseen that the decommissioning phase will impact on the geology of the site or vice versa.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
			Existing services infrastructure	• Generation of waste that needs to be accommodated at a licensed landfill site. • Generation of sewage that needs to be accommodated by the municipal sewerage system and the local sewage plant. • Increase in construction vehicles.	-		L	S	D	I	NL	Yes	-	L	-
			Groundwater	• Pollution due to construction vehicles.	-		S	S	Pr	CR	ML	Yes	-	L	-
			Surface water	• Increase in stormwater run-off. • Pollution of water sources due to soil erosion.		-	L	S	Pr	PR	ML	Yes	- Removal of any historically contaminated soil as hazardous waste. - Removal of hydrocarbons and other hazardous substances by a suitable contractor to reduce contamination risks. - Removal of all substances which can result in groundwater (or surface water) contamination.	M	-

			Traffic generated due to decommissioning of site	• Increased traffic during decommissioning phase • The road network, surrounding the proposed Khwezi PV SPP site, will be affected. • There will be an increase in traffic influencing traffic congestion and road safety. • However, the extent of the impact will be very small and local of nature. • The traffic during the decommissioning phase will only be temporary and have an insignificant impact on the road network	-		L	S	Pr	CR	NL	No	- N/A	L	Traffic Impact Assessment (Appendix E8)
			Tourism industry	• Since there are no tourism facilities in close proximity to the site, the decommissioning activities will not have an impact on tourism in the area.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Nature of the impact:	(N/A) No impact	(+) Positive Impact (-)	Negative Impact	
Geographical extent:	(S) Site;	(L) Local/District;	(P) Province/Region;	(I) International and National
Probability:	(U) Unlikely;	(Po) Possible;	(Pr) Probable;	(D) Definite
Duration:	(S) Short Term;	(M) Medium Term;	(L) Long Term;	(P) Permanent
Intensity / Magnitude:	(L) Low;	(M) Medium;	(H) High;	(VH) Very High
Reversibility:	(CR) Completely Reversible;	(PR) Partly Reversible;	(BR) Barely Reversible;	(IR) Irreversible
Irreplaceable loss of resources:	(IR) Irreversible	(NL) No Loss;	(ML) Marginal Loss;	(SL) Significant Loss;	(CL) Complete Loss
Level of residual risk:	(L) Low;	(M) Medium;	(H) High;	(VH) Very High	-

6.2 KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

From the above it is evident that mitigation measures should be available for potential impacts associated with the proposed activity and development phases. The scoping methodology identified the following key issues which should be addressed in more detail in the EIA report.

6.2.1 Impacts During the Construction Phase

During the construction phase the following activities will have various potential impacts on the biophysical and socio-economic environment:

- Activity 11 (i) (GN.R. 327): *"The development of facilities or infrastructure for the transmission and distribution of electricity outside urban areas or industrial complexes with a capacity of more than 33 but less than 275 kilovolts."*
- Activity 12(ii)(a)(c) (GN.R. 327): "*The development of (ii) infrastructure or structures with a physical footprint of 100 square metres or more; (a) within a watercourse or (c) within 32 meters of a watercourse measured from the edge of a watercourse."*
- Activity 19 (GN.R. 327): *"The infilling or depositing of any material of more than 10 cubic metres into, or the dredging, excavation, removal or moving of soil, sand, shells, shell grit, pebbles or rock of more than 10 cubic metres from a watercourse."*
- Activity 24 (ii) (GN.R 327): *"The development of a road (ii) with reserve wider than 13,5 meters, or where no reserve exists where the road is wider than 8 meters."*
- Activity 27 (GN.R. 327): *"The clearance of an area of 1 hectares or more, but less than 20 hectares of indigenous vegetation…"*
- Activity 28 (ii) (GN.R. 327): *"Residential, mixed, retail, commercial, industrial or institutional developments where such land was used for agriculture or afforestation on or after 1998 and where such development (ii) will occur outside an urban area, where the total land to be developed is bigger than 1 hectare."*
- Activity 56 (ii) (GN.R 327): "*The widening of a road by more than 6 metres, or the lengthening of a road by more than 1 kilometre (ii) where no reserve exists, where the existing road is wider than 8 metres…"*
- Activity 1 (GN.R. 325): *"The development of facilities or infrastructure for the generation of electricity from a renewable resource where the electricity output is 20 megawatts or more..."*
- Activity 15 (GN.R. 325): *"The clearance of an area of 20 hectares or more of indigenous vegetation..."*
- Activity 10 (b)(i)(hh) (GN.R 324): *"The development and related operation of facilities or infrastructure for the storage, or storage and handling of a dangerous good, where such storage occurs in containers with a combined capacity of 30 but not exceeding 80 cubic metres (b) in the Free State, (i) outside urban areas, (hh) areas within a watercourse or wetland; or within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland."*

- Activity 12 (b)(vi) (GN.R 324): "*The clearance of an area of 300 square metres or more of indigenous vegetation except where such clearance of indigenous vegetation in (b) Free State (iv) Areas within a watercourse or wetland; or within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland".*

- Activity 14(ii)(a)(c)(b)(i)(ff) (GN.R 324): *"The development of (ii) infrastructure or structures with a physical footprint of 10 square metres or more, where such development occurs (a) within a watercourse or (c) within 32 metres of a watercourse, measured from the edge of a watercourse, (b) within the Free State, (i) outside urban areas within (ff) critical biodiversity areas or ecosystem service areas as identified in systematic biodiversity plans adopted by the competent authority or in bioregional."*

- Activity 18 (b)(i)(hh) (GN.R 324): *"The widening of a road by more than 4 metres, or the lengthening of a road by more than 1 kilometre (b) in the Free State (i) outside urban areas, within (hh) areas within a watercourse or wetland; or within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland."*

During the construction phase temporary negative impacts are foreseen over the short term. Table 6.3 summarises the potentially most significant impacts and the mitigation measures that are proposed during the construction phase.

Table 6.3: Impacts and the mitigation measures during the construction phase

SPECIALIST STUDY	IMPACT	PRE-MITIGATION RATING	POST MITIGATION RATING	SUMMARY OF MITIGATION MEASURES
Wetland Baseline and Risk Assessment (Appendix E1)	Direct disturbance/ degradation to wetland soils or vegetation due to the construction of the solar facility.	Negative Low	Negative Low	• Clearly demarcate the construction footprint and restrict all construction activities to within the proposed infrastructure area. • When clearing vegetation, allow for some vegetation cover as opposed to bare areas. • Minimize the disturbance footprint and the unnecessary clearing of vegetation outside of this area. • Use the wetland shapefiles to signpost the edge of the wetlands closest to site. Place the sign 25 m from the edge (this is the buffer zone). Label these areas as environmentally sensitive areas, keep out. • Educate staff and relevant contractors on the location and importance of the identified wetlands through toolbox talks and by including them in site inductions as well as the overall master plan. • All activities (including driving) must adhere to the 15 m buffer area. • Promptly remove/control all alien and invasive plant species that may emerge during construction (i.e., weedy annuals and other alien forbs) must be removed. • All alien vegetation along the transmission servitude should be managed in terms of the Regulation GNR.1048 of 25 May 1984

				(as amended) issued in terms of the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act, Act 43 of 1983. • Landscape and re-vegetate all denuded areas as soon as possible.
	Increased erosion and sedimentation.	Negative Low	Negative Low	• Limit construction activities near (< 50m) wetlands to winter (as much as possible) when rain is least likely to wash concrete and sand into the wetland. Activities in black turf soils can become messy during the height of the rainy season and construction activities should be minimised during these times to minimise unnecessary soil disturbances. • Ensure soil stockpiles and concrete/building sand are sufficiently safeguarded against rain wash. • No activities are permitted within the wetland and associated buffer areas. • Landscape and re-vegetate all unnecessarily denuded areas as soon as possible.
	Potential contamination of wetlands with machine oils and construction materials.	Negative Low	Negative Low	• Make sure all excess consumables and building materials/ rubble is removed from site and deposited at an appropriate waste facility. • Appropriately stockpile topsoil cleared from the project area. • Appropriately contain any generator diesel storage tanks, machinery spills (e.g., accidental spills of hydrocarbons oils, diesel etc.) or construction materials on site (e.g., concrete) in such a way as to prevent them leaking and entering the wetlands. • No activities are permitted within the wetland and associated buffer areas.

Terrestrial Ecology Baseline and Impact Assessment (Appendix E1)	Destruction, loss and fragmentation of habitats, ecosystems and the vegetation community.	Negative High	Negative Medium	• Ensure that the site footprint is as small as possible and responsibly positioned, the development area must be properly fenced off during construction. • Protected flora must be avoided or responsibly transplanted according to a search and rescue plan and a permit must be obtained prior to the relocation. • Land clearing must be done over at least three days and conducted linearly and successively from the north to south. • No trapping, killing, or poisoning of any wildlife is to be allowed and signs must be put up to enforce this. Monitoring must take place in this regard.
	Introduction of IAP species and invasive fauna.	Negative Medium	Negative Low	
	Destruction of protected plant species	Negative Medium	Negative Low	
	Displacement of the indigenous faunal community (including possible SCC) due to habitat loss, direct mortalities, and disturbance (road collisions, noise, dust, light, vibration, and poaching).	Negative High	Negative Medium	
Visual Impact Assessment (Appendix E3)	Visual impact of construction activities on sensitive visual receptors in close proximity to the SPP.	Negative Medium	Negative Low	Planning • Retain and maintain natural vegetation immediately adjacent to the development footprint. Construction

				• Ensure that vegetation is not unnecessarily removed during the construction phase. • Plan the placement of laydown areas and temporary construction equipment camps in order to minimise vegetation clearing (i.e., in already disturbed areas) where possible. • Restrict the activities and movement of construction workers and vehicles to the immediate construction site and existing access roads. • Ensure that rubble, litter, etc. are appropriately stored (if it can't be removed daily) and then disposed of regularly at a licenced waste site. • Reduce and control dust during construction by utilising dust suppression measures. • Limit construction activities between 07:00 and 18:00, where possible, in order to reduce the impacts of construction lighting. • Rehabilitate all disturbed areas immediately after the completion of construction work and maintain good housekeeping.
Soil and Agricultural Assessment (Appendix E4)	Loss of Land Capability	Negative Medium	Negative Low	• Make use of existing roads or upgrades tracks before new roads are constructed. The number and width of internal access routes must be kept to a minimum. • A stormwater management plan must be implemented for the development. The plan must provide input into the road network and management measures. • Substation foundation and pylons placement must be (preferably) located in already disturbed areas that are not actively cultivated.

				• Rehabilitation of the area must be initiated from the onset of the project. Soil stripped from infrastructure placement can be used for rehabilitation efforts. • Vegetate or cover all stockpiles after stripping/removing soils • Storage of potential contaminants should be undertaken in bunded areas • All contractors must have spill kits available and be trained in the correct use thereof. • All contractors and employees should undergo induction which is to include a component of environmental awareness. The induction is to include aspects such as the need to avoid littering, the reporting and cleaning of spills and leaks and general good "housekeeping". • No cleaning or servicing of vehicles, machines and equipment may be undertaken in water resources. • Have action plans on site, and training for contractors and employees in the event of spills, leaks and other impacts to the aquatic systems.
Heritage Impact Assessment (Appendix E5)	Burial site	Negative Low	Negative Low	• Avoidance/Preserve: This is viewed to be the primary form of mitigation and applies where any type of development occurs within a formally protected or significant or sensitive heritage context and is likely to have a high negative impact. This measure often includes the change / alteration of development planning and therefore impact zones in order not to impact on resources. • If it is decided to retain the burial site, it should be fenced off permanently by means of a wire fence or brick wall, with a buffer zone of at least 20m.

Palaeontological Impact Assessment (Appendix E6)	Disturbance, damage or destruction of legally protected fossil heritage within the development footprint during the construction phase	Negative Medium	Negative Low	• The ECO for this project must be informed that the Adelaide Subgroup (Beaufort Group, Karoo Supergroup) has a Very High Palaeontological Sensitivity. • If Palaeontological Heritage is uncovered during surface clearing and excavations the Chance find Protocol attached should be implemented immediately. Fossil discoveries ought to be protected and the ECO/site manager must report to South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) (Contact details: SAHRA, 111 Harrington Street, Cape Town. PO Box 4637, Cape Town 8000, South Africa. Tel: 021 462 4502. Fax: +27 (0)21 462 4509. Web: www.sahra.org.za) so that mitigation (recording and collection) can be carried out. • Before any fossil material can be collected from the development site the specialist involved would need to apply for a collection permit from SAHRA. Fossil material must be housed in an official collection (museum or university), while all reports and fieldwork should meet the minimum standards for palaeontological impact studies proposed by SAHRA (2012). • These recommendations should be incorporated into the Environmental Management Plan for the Khwezi Solar Power Plant.
Social Impact Assessment (Appendix E7)	Direct and indirect employment opportunities and skills development	Positive Low	Positive Medium	Enhancement: • A local employment policy should be adopted to maximise opportunities made available to the local labour force. • Labour should be sourced from the local labour pool, and only if the necessary skills are unavailable should labour be sourced from (in order of preference) the greater Mantsopa LM, Thabo

				Mofutsanyana DM, Free State Province, South Africa, or elsewhere. • Where feasible, training and skills development programmes should be initiated prior to the commencement of the construction phase. • As with the labour force, suppliers should also as far as possible be sourced locally. • As far as possible local contractors that are compliant with Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) criteria should be used. • The recruitment selection process should seek to promote gender equality and the employment of women wherever possible.
	Economic multiplier effects from the use of local goods and services.	Positive Low	Positive Medium	Enhancement: • It is recommended that a local procurement policy is adopted to maximise the benefit to the local economy. • A database of local companies, specifically Historically Disadvantaged Individuals (HDIs) which qualify as potential service providers (e.g., construction companies, security companies, catering companies, waste collection companies, transportation companies etc.) should be created and companies listed thereon should be invited to bid for project-related work where applicable. • Local procurement is encouraged along with engagement with local authorities and business organisations to investigate the possibility of procurement of construction materials, goods and products from local suppliers where feasible.

	Improvements on shared infrastructure.	Positive Low	Positive Low	Enhancement: • The project would contribute to an upgrade in the shared infrastructure of the LM as well as in the maintenance of this infrastructure. • The LM would be encouraged to participate in this maintenance and upgrade where it would be feasible for them to be involved. • A database of local companies, specifically Historically Disadvantaged Individuals (HDIs) which qualify as potential service providers (e.g., construction companies, security companies, catering companies, waste collection companies, transportation companies etc.) should be created (or sourced from the local Municipality, where available) and companies listed thereon should be invited to bid for project-related work where applicable and this would include the maintenance of this shared infrastructure.
	Potential loss in productive farmland.	Negative Medium	Negative Low	• The proposed site for the Khwezi SPP needs to be fenced off prior to the construction phase and all construction related activities should be confined in this fenced off area. • Livestock grazing on the proposed site need to be relocated. • All affected areas, which are disturbed during the construction phase, need to be rehabilitated prior to the operational phase and should be continuously monitored by the Environmental Control Officer (ECO). • Implement, manage and monitor a grievance mechanism for the recording and management of social issues and complaints.

	Influx of jobseekers and change in population in the study area.	Negative Medium	Negative Low	• Develop and implement a local procurement policy which prioritises "locals first" to prevent the movement of people into the area in search of work. • Engage with local community representatives prior to construction to facilitate the adoption of the locals first procurement policy. • Provide transportation for workers (from Excelsior and surrounds) to ensure workers can easily access their place of employment and do not need to move closer to the project site. • Working hours should be kept between daylight hours during the construction phase, and / or as any deviation that is approved by the relevant authorities. • Compile and implement a grievance mechanism. • Appoint a Community Liaison Officer (CLO) to assist with the procurement of local labour. • Prevent the recruitment of workers at the project site. • Implement, manage and monitor a grievance mechanism for the recording and management of social issues and complaints. • Establish clear rules and regulations for access to the proposed site. • Appoint a security company and implement appropriate security procedures to ensure that workers do not remain onsite after working hours. • Inform local community organisations and policing forums of construction times and the duration of the construction phase. • Establish procedures for the control and removal of loiterers from the construction site.

	Temporary increase in safety and security concerns associated with the influx of people	Negative Medium	Negative Low	• Working hours should be kept within daylight hours during the construction phase, and / or as any deviation that is approved by the relevant authorities. • Provide transportation for workers to prevent loitering within or near the project site outside of working hours. • The perimeter of the construction site should be appropriately secured to prevent any unauthorised access to the site. The fencing of the site should be maintained throughout the construction period. • The appointed EPC Contractor must appoint a security company to ensure appropriate security procedures and measures are implemented. • Access in and out of the construction site should be strictly controlled by a security company appointed to the project. • A CLO should be appointed as a grievance mechanism. A method of communication should be implemented whereby procedures to lodge complaints are set out for the local community to express any complaints or grievances with the construction process. • The EPC Contractor should implement a stakeholder management plan to address neighbouring farmer concerns regarding safety and security. • The project proposed must prepare and implement a Fire Management Plan; this must be done in conjunction with surrounding landowners. • The EPC Contractor must prepare a Method Statement which deals with fire prevention and management.

	Temporary increase in traffic disruptions and movement patterns.	Negative Medium	Negative Low	• All vehicles must be road worthy, and drivers must be qualified, obey traffic rules, follow speed limits and be made aware of the potential road safety issues. • Heavy vehicles should be inspected regularly to ensure their road worthiness. • Provision of adequate and strategically placed traffic warning signs, that have to be maintained for the duration of the construction phase, and control measures along the R703 regional road onto the gravel road to warn road users of the construction activities taking place for the duration of the construction phase. Warning signs must be always visible, especially at night. • Implement penalties for reckless driving to enforce compliance to traffic rules. • Avoid heavy vehicle activity during "peak" hours (when children are taken to school, or people are driving to work). • The developer and EPC Contractor must ensure that all fencing along access roads is maintained in the present condition or repaired if disturbed due to construction activities. • The developer and EPC Contractor must ensure that the roads utilised for construction activities are either maintained in the present condition or upgraded if disturbed due to construction activities. • The EPC Contractor must ensure that damage / wear and tear caused by construction related traffic to the access roads is repaired before the completion of the construction phase. • A method of communication must be implemented whereby procedures to lodge complaints are set out for the local

				community to express any complaints or grievances with the construction process.
	Nuisance impact (noise and dust)	Negative Medium	Negative Low	• The movement of heavy vehicles associated with the construction phase should be timed to avoid weekends, public holidays, and holiday periods where feasible. • Dust suppression measures must be implemented for heavy vehicles such as wetting of gravel roads on a regular basis and ensuring that vehicles used to transport sand and building materials are fitted with tarpaulins or covers. • Ensure all vehicles are road worthy, drivers are qualified and are made aware of the potential noise and dust issues. • A CLO should be appointed, and a grievance mechanism implemented.
	Increased risk of potential veld fires.	Negative Medium	Negative Low	• A firebreak should be implemented before the construction phase. The firebreak should be controlled and implemented around the perimeters of the project site. • Adequate fire-fighting equipment should be provided and readily available on site and all staff should be trained in firefighting and how to use the fire-fighting equipment. • No staff (except security) should be accommodated overnight on site and the contractor should ensure that no open fires are allowed on site. The use of cooking or heating implements should only be used in designated areas. • Contractors need to ensure that any construction related activities that might pose potential fire risks, are done in the designated areas where it is also managed properly. • Precautionary measures need to be taken during high wind conditions or during the winter months when the fields are dry.

				• The project will adhere to National Veld and Forest Fire Act as well as management plans to reduce risk. It is, however, advisable for the project proponent to join the local fire association of the area.
	Impacts on the sense of place	Negative Low	Negative Low	• Implement mitigation measures identified in the Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) prepared for the project. • Limit noise generating activities to normal daylight working hours and avoid weekends and public holidays. • The movement of heavy vehicles associated with the construction phase should be timed to avoid weekends, public holidays, and holiday periods where feasible. • Dust suppression measures must be implemented for heavy vehicles such as wetting of gravel roads on a regular basis and ensuring that vehicles used to transport sand and building materials are fitted with tarpaulins or covers. • All vehicles must be road-worthy, and drivers must be qualified and made aware of the potential road safety issues and need for strict speed limits. • Communication, complaints, and grievance channels must be implemented and contact details of the CLO must be provided to the local community in the study area.
Traffic Impact Assessment (Appendix E8)	Construction and maintenance of gravel roads in vicinity of the site	Negative Low	Negative Low	• Maintenance to lower order roads can be incorporated into the schedule, especially the maintenance of the road accessing the site. • The site access road would require construction at the start of the construction project to safely transport the sensitive cargo through the site.

				• A gravel roads maintenance programme for the gravel roads on site is recommended.
	Increased traffic on haulage routes	Negative Low	Negative Low	• The impact of the increased traffic on regional routes can be mitigated by staggering trips and scheduling so that peak hour traffic in local towns is not impacted by construction traffic.
	Increased traffic on local routes	Negative Low	Negative Low	• The impact of the increased traffic on local routes can be mitigated by staggering trips and scheduling so that peak hour traffic in local towns is not impacted by construction traffic.

6.2.2 Impacts During the Operational Phase

During the operational phase the site will serve as a solar plant. The potential impacts will take place over a period of 20 – 25 years. During the operational phase the following activities will have various potential impacts on the biophysical and socio-economic environment:

- Activity 11(i) (GN.R. 327): *"The development of facilities or infrastructure for the transmission and distribution of electricity outside urban areas or industrial complexes with a capacity of more than 33 but less than 275 kilovolts."*
- Activity 1 (GN.R 325): *"The development of facilities or infrastructure for the generation of electricity from a renewable resource where the electricity output is 20 megawatts or more."*
- Activity 10 (b)(i)(hh) (GN.R 324): *"The development and related operation of facilities or infrastructure for the storage, or storage and handling of a dangerous good, where such storage occurs in containers with a combined capacity of 30 but not exceeding 80 cubic metres (b) in the Free State, (i) outside urban areas, (hh) areas within a watercourse or wetland; or within 100 metres from the edge of a watercourse or wetland."*

During the operational phase minor negative impacts are foreseen over the long term. The latter refers to at least a 20-year period. Table 6.4 summarizes the potentially most significant impacts and the mitigation measures that are proposed during the operational phase.

Table 6.4: Impacts and the mitigation measures during the operational phase

SPECIALIST STUDY	IMPACT	PRE-MITIGATION RATING	POST MITIGATION RATING	SUMMARY OF MITIGATION MEASURES
Wetland Baseline and Risk Assessment (Appendix E1)	Potential for increased stormwater runoff leading to Increased erosion and sedimentation.	Negative Low	Negative Low	• Design and implement an effective stormwater management plan. • Promote water infiltration into the ground beneath the solar panels. • Release only clean water into the environment. • Stormwater leaving the site should not be concentrated in a single exit drain but spread across multiple drains around the site each fitted with energy dissipaters (e.g., slabs of concrete with rocks cemented in). • Re-vegetate denuded areas as soon as possible. • Regularly clear drains. • Minimise the extent of concreted / paved / gravel areas. • A covering of soil and grass (regularly cut and maintained) below the solar panels is ideal for infiltration. If not feasible then gravel is preferable over concrete or paving. • Avoid excessively compacting the ground beneath the solar panels.
	Potential for increased contaminants entering the wetland systems.	Negative Low	Negative Low	• Where possible, minimise the use surfactants to clean solar panels and herbicides to control vegetation beneath the panels. If surfactants and herbicides must be used do so well prior to any significant predicted rainfall events.
	Continued fragmentation and	Negative Medium	Negative Low	

Terrestrial Ecology Baseline and Impact Assessment (Appendix E1)	degradation of natural habitats and ecosystems.			• The continual usage of the same roadways, parking areas and walkways, and the following of speed limits. • The monitoring of, and enforcement against, any illegal hunting, poaching, and/or trapping activities. • The responsible management of all waste. • An IAP management and habitat rehabilitation plan must be implemented and updated annually.
	Continuing spread of IAP and weed species.	Negative Medium	Negative Low	
	Ongoing displacement and direct mortalities of the faunal community (including possible SCC) due to continued disturbance (road collisions, noise, light, dust, vibration, poaching, erosion, etc.).	Negative High	Negative Low	
Visual Impact Assessment (Appendix E3)	Visual impact on sensitive visual receptors within a 1km radius from the SPP.	Negative Low	Negative Low	Planning • Retain/re-establish and maintain natural vegetation immediately adjacent to the development footprint. • Where insufficient natural vegetation exists next to the property, a 'screen' can be planted if the landowner requests additional mitigation. This can be done using endemic, fast growers that are water efficient. Operations • Maintain general appearance of the facility as a whole.
	Visual impact on sensitive visual receptors between a	Negative Low	Negative Low	Planning • Retain/re-establish and maintain natural vegetation immediately adjacent to the development footprint.

	1km and 3km radius from the SPP.			• Where insufficient natural vegetation exists next to the property, a 'screen' can be planted if the landowner requests additional mitigation. This can be done using endemic, fast growers that are water efficient. Operations • Maintain general appearance of the facility as a whole.
	Visual impact on sensitive visual receptors within a 3-5km radius from the SPP.	Negative Low	Negative Low	Planning • Retain/re-establish and maintain natural vegetation immediately adjacent to the development footprint. • Where insufficient natural vegetation exists next to the property, a 'screen' can be planted if the landowner requests additional mitigation. This can be done using endemic, fast growers that are water efficient. Operations • Maintain general appearance of the facility as a whole.
	Visual impact on sensitive visual receptors within a 5-10km radius from the SPP.	Negative Low	Negative Low	Planning • Retain/re-establish and maintain natural vegetation immediately adjacent to the development footprint. • Where insufficient natural vegetation exists next to the property, a 'screen' can be planted if the landowner requests additional mitigation. This can be done using endemic, fast growers that are water efficient. Operations • Maintain general appearance of the facility as a whole.
	Visual impacts of lighting at night on sensitive	Negative Low	Negative Low	Planning & Operation As far as practically possible:

	visual receptors in close proximity to the proposed facility.			• Shield the source of light by physical barriers (walls, vegetation etc.) • Limit mounting heights of lighting fixtures, or alternatively use footlights or bollard level lights. • Make use of minimum lumen or wattage in fixtures. • Make use of down-lighters, or shield fixtures. • Make use of low-pressure sodium lighting or other types of low impact lighting. • Make use of motion detectors on security lighting. This will allow the site to remain in relative darkness, until lighting is required for security or maintenance purposes. • The use of night vision or thermal security cameras are very effective and can replace security lighting entirely.
	Visual impacts of glint and glare as a visual distraction and possible air travel hazard.	Negative Low	Negative Low	• No mitigation measures are required.
	Visual impacts on sense of place associated with the operational phase of the SPP.	Negative Low	Negative Low	• It is believed that renewable energy resources are essential to the environmental well- being of the country and planet (WESSA, 2012). Aesthetic issues are subjective, and some people find solar farms and their associated infrastructure pleasant and optimistic while others may find it visually invasive; it is mostly perceived as symbols of energy independence; and local prosperity. • The subjectivity towards the project in its entirety can be influenced by creating a “Green Energy” awareness campaign, educating the local community and potentially

				tourists on the benefits of renewable energy. This can be achieved by also hosting an 'open day' where the local community can have the opportunity to view the completed project which may enlist a sense of pride in the renewable energy project in their area. • Implement good housekeeping measures.
Soil and Agricultural Assessment (Appendix E4)	Loss of Land Capability	Negative Medium	Negative Low	• Continuously monitor erosion on site • Monitor compaction on site
Social Impact Assessment (Appendix E7)	Direct and indirect employment opportunities and skills development	Positive Low	Positive Medium	Enhancement: • It is recommended that local employment policy is adopted to maximise the opportunities made available to the local community. • The recruitment selection process should seek to promote gender equality and the employment of women wherever possible. • Vocational training programs should be established to promote the development of skills.
	Development of non-polluting, renewable energy infrastructure	Positive Medium	Positive Medium	Enhancement: • None identified
	Loss of agricultural land and overall productivity as a result of the operation of the proposed project on an agricultural property	Negative Medium	Negative Low	• The proposed mitigation measures for the construction phase should have been implemented at this stage. • Mitigation measures from the Agricultural and Soil Report, should also be implemented.

	Contribution to LED and social upliftment during the operation of the project	Positive Medium	Positive High	Enhancement: • A CNA must be conducted to ensure that the LED and social upliftment programmes proposed by the project are meaningful. • Ongoing communication and reporting are required to ensure that maximum benefit is obtained from the programmes identified, and to prevent the possibility for such programmes to be misused. • The programmes should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that they are best suited to the needs of the community at the time (bearing in mind that these are likely to change over time).
	The potential impact on tourism due to the establishment of the Khwezi SPP	Positive/Negative Low	Positive/Negative Low	• Mitigation measures regarding the visual impacts will set out in the standalone Visual Impact Assessment report, but the subjectivity towards the PV panels can be influenced by creating a "Green Energy" awareness campaign, educating the local community and tourists on the benefits of renewable energy. Tourists visiting the area should be made aware of South Africa's movement towards renewable energy. This might create a positive feeling of a country moving forward in terms of environmental sustainability. This could be implemented by constructing a visitor's centre on the property allocated to the proposed solar farm which should be opened to school fieldtrips, the local community, and tourists
		Positive/Negative Low	Positive/Negative Low	
	Visual impacts and sense of place impacts associated with the	Negative Low	Negative Low	• To effectively mitigate the visual impact and the impact on sense of place during the operational phase of the development of the Khwezi SPP, it is suggested that the

	operation phase of Khwezi SPP.			recommendations made in the Visual Impact Assessment (specialist study) should be followed in this regard.
	The creation of employment opportunities and skills development opportunities during the operation phase for the households involved in the project would create an opportunity for an increasement in household earnings	Positive Low	Positive Medium	Enhancement: • It is recommended that local employment policy is adopted to maximise the opportunities made available to the local community. • With the recruitment of the local community for job creation and increasement in household earnings will automatically be seen in the area surrounding the development.
Traffic Impact Assessment (Appendix E8)	Increased traffic on local routes	Negative Low	Negative Low	• The impact of the increased traffic during the operational phase is negligible due to the expected number of employees. The shift work provides a mitigation and reduces the expected number of employees, especially during peak hours.

6.2.3 Impacts During the Decommissioning Phase

The physical environment will benefit from the closure of the solar facility since the site will be restored to its natural state. Table 6.5 provides a summary of the impacts during the decommissioning phase. The decommissioning phase will however potentially result in impact on soils, pressure on existing service infrastructure, surface water and the loss of permanent employment. Skilled staff will be eminently employable, and a number of temporary jobs will also be created in the process. Decommissioning of a PV facility will leave a positive impact on the habitat and biodiversity in the area as the area will be rehabilitated to its natural state.

Table 6.5: Impacts and the mitigation measures during the decommissioning phase

SPECIALIST STUDY	IMPACT	PRE-MITIGATION RATING	POST MITIGATION RATING	SUMMARY OF MITIGATION MEASURES
Wetland Baseline and Risk Assessment (Appendix E1)	Potential loss or degradation of nearby wetlands through inappropriate closure.	Negative Low	Negative Low	• Develop and implement a rehabilitation and closure plan. • Appropriately rehabilitate the project area by ripping, landscaping and re-vegetating with locally indigenous species.
Traffic Impact Assessment (Appendix E8)	Increased traffic during decommissioning phase	Negative Low	Negative Low	• The impact of the increased traffic during the decommissioning phase is negligible due to the expected number of employees

6.2.4 Impacts Associated with the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)

Table 6.6: Impacts associated with the BESS

SPECIALIST STUDY	IMPACT	PRE-MITIGATION RATING	POST MITIGATION RATING	SUMMARY OF MITIGATION MEASURES
General Environment (risks associated with BESS)	Mechanical breakdown / Exposure to high temperatures Fires, electrocutions and spillage of toxic substances into the	Negative Medium	Negative Low	Operators are trained and competent to operate the BESS. Training should include the discussion of the following: • Potential impact of electrolyte spills on groundwater; • Suitable disposal of waste and effluent; • Key measures in the EMPr relevant to worker's activities; • How incidents and suggestions for improvement can be reported.

	surrounding environment. Spillage of hazardous substances into the surrounding environment. Soil contamination – leachate from spillages which could lead to an impact of the productivity of soil forms in affected areas. Water Pollution – spillages into surrounding watercourses as well as groundwater. Health impacts – on the surrounding communities, particularly those relying on watercourses (i.e. rivers, streams, etc) as a primary source of water.			• Training records should be kept on file and be made available during audits. • Battery supplier user manuals safety specifications and Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) are filed on site at all times. • Compile method statements for approval by the Technical/SHEQ Manager for the operation and management and replacement of the battery units / electrolyte for the duration of the project life cycle. Method statements should be kept on site at all times. • Provide signage on site specifying the types of batteries in use and the risk of exposure to hazardous material and electric shock. Signage should also specify how electrical and chemical fires should be dealt with by first responders, and the potential risks to first responders (e.g. the inhalation of toxic fumes, etc.). • Firefighting equipment should readily be available at the BESS area and within the site. • Maintain strict access control to the BESS area. • Ensure all maintenance contractors / staff are familiar with the supplier's specifications. • Undertake daily risk assessment prior to the commencement of daily tasks at the BESS. This should consider any aspects which could result in fire or spillage, and appropriate actions should be taken to prevent these. • Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) should be made available by the Supplier to ensure that the batteries are handled in accordance with required best practices. • Spill kits must be made available to address any incidents associated with the flow of chemicals from the batteries into the surrounding environment.

	Generation of hazardous waste			• The assembly of the batteries on-site should be avoided as far as possible. Activities on-site for the BESS should only be limited to the placement of the container wherein the batteries are placed. • Undertake periodic inspections on the BESS to ensure issues are identified timeously and addressed with the supplier where relevant. • The applicant in consultation with the supplier must compile and implement a Leak and Detection Monitoring Programme during the project life cycle of the BESS. • Batteries must be strictly maintained by the supplier or suitably qualified persons for the duration of the project life cycle. No unauthorised personnel should be allowed to maintain the BESS. • Damaged and used batteries must be removed from site by the supplier or any other suitably qualified professional for recycling or appropriate disposal. • The applicant should obtain a cradle to grave battery management plan from the supplier during the planning and design phase of the system. The plan must be kept on site and adhered to.

7 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS ASSESSMENT

This section aims to address the requirements of Section 2 of the NEMA to consider cumulative impacts as part of any environmental assessment process.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The EIA Regulations (2017) determine that cumulative impacts, "*in relation to an activity, means the past, current and reasonably foreseeable future impact of an activity, considered together with the impact of activities associated with that activity, that in itself may not be significant, but may become significant when added to the existing and reasonably foreseeable impacts eventuating from similar or diverse activities*." Cumulative impacts can be incremental, interactive, sequential or synergistic. EIAs have traditionally failed to come to terms with such impacts, largely as a result of the following considerations:

- Cumulative effects may be local, regional or global in scale and dealing with such impacts requires coordinated institutional arrangements;
- Complexity - dependent on numerous fluctuating influencing factors which may be completely independent of the controllable actions of the proponent or communities; and
- Project level investigations are ill-equipped to deal with broader biophysical, social and economic considerations.

Despite these challenges, cumulative impacts have been afforded increased attention in this Scoping Report and for each impact a separate section has been added which discusses any cumulative issues, and where applicable, draws attention to other issues that may contextualise or add value to the interpretation of the impact (refer to Appendix E). This chapter analyses the proposed project's potential cumulative impacts in more detail by: (1) defining the geographic area considered for the cumulative effects analysis; (2) providing an overview of relevant past and present actions in the project vicinity that may affect cumulative impacts; (3) presenting the reasonably foreseeable actions in the geographic area of consideration; and (4) determining whether there are adverse cumulative effects associated with the resource areas analysed.

The term "Cumulative Effect" has for the purpose of this report been defined as: the summation of effects over time which can be attributed to the operation of the project itself, and the overall effects on the ecosystem of the project area that can be attributed to the project and other existing and planned future projects.

7.2 GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF EVALUATION

The geographic area of evaluation is the spatial boundary in which the cumulative effects analysis was undertaken. The spatial boundary evaluated in this cumulative effects analysis generally includes an area of a 30 km radius surrounding the proposed development (refer to Figure 7.1 below).

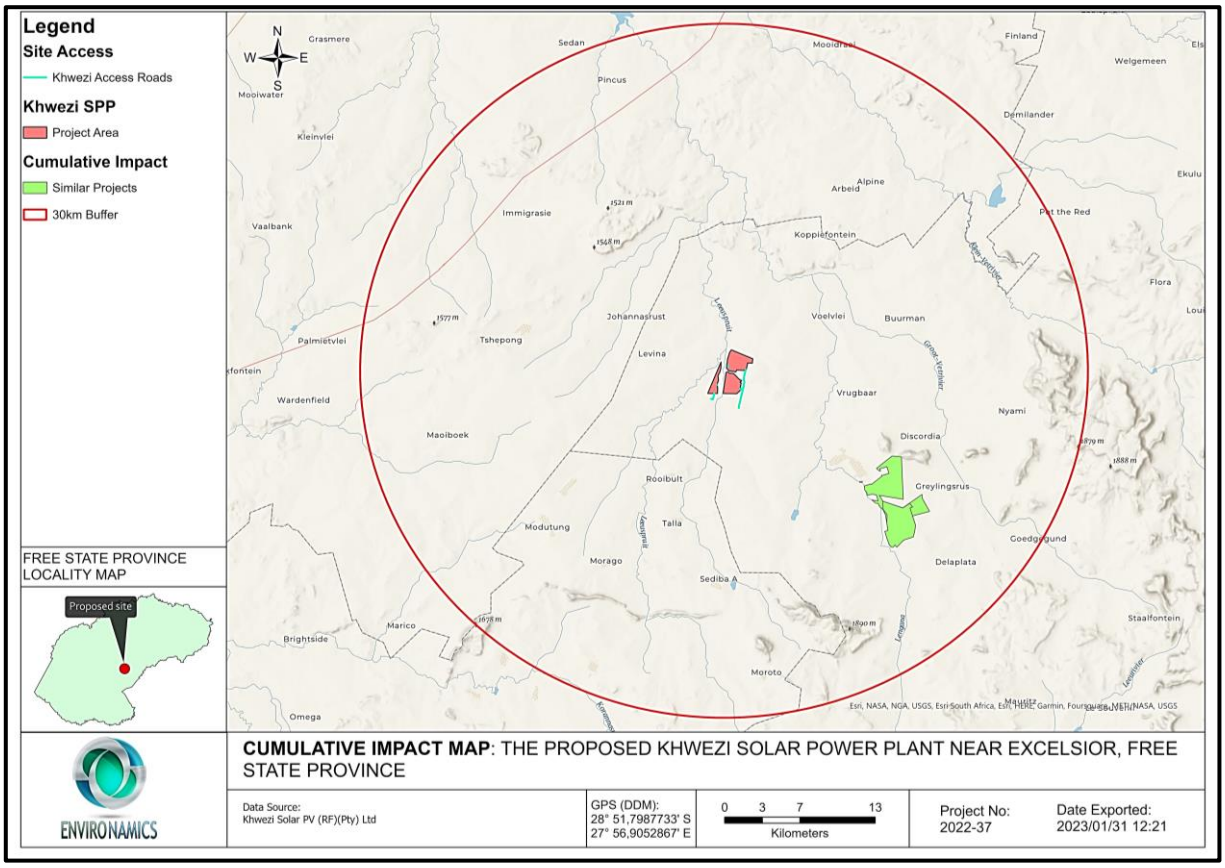


Figure 7.1: Geographic area of evaluation with utility-scale renewable energy generation sites and power lines

The geographic spread of PV solar projects, administrative boundaries and any environmental features (the nature of the landscape) were considered when determining the geographic area of investigation. It was argued that a radius of 30 km would generally confine the potential for cumulative effects within this particular environmental landscape. The geographic area includes projects located within the Free State Provinces. A larger geographic area may be used to analyse cumulative impacts based on the specific temporal or spatial impacts of a resource. For example, the socio-economic cumulative analysis may include a larger area, as the construction workforce may draw from a much wider area. The geographic area of analysis is specified in the discussion of the cumulative impacts for that resource where it differs from the general area of evaluation described above.

7.3 TEMPORAL BOUNDARY OF EVALUATION

A temporal boundary is the timeframe during which the cumulative effects are reasonably expected to occur. The temporal parameters for this cumulative effects analysis are the anticipated lifespan of the proposed project, beginning in 2024 and extending out at least 20 years, which is the minimum expected project life of the proposed project. Where appropriate, particular focus is on near-term cumulative impacts of overlapping construction schedules for proposed projects in the area of evaluation.

7.4 OTHER PROJECTS IN THE AREA

7.4.1 Existing projects in the area

According to the DFFE's database, 2 solar PV plant applications have been submitted to the Department within the geographic area of investigation (refer to Table 7.1).

Table 7.1: A summary of related projects that may have a cumulative impact, in a 30 km radius of the study area

Site name	Distance from study area	Proposed generating capacity	DFFE reference	EIA process	Project status
Lengana Solar PV (RF) (Pty) Ltd	15km	300 MW	TBC	Scoping and EIA	In Process
Solaire Direct Southern Africa (Pty) Ltd	0km	46MW	14/12/16/3/3/2/364	Scoping and EIA	Withdrawn/Lapsed

It is unclear whether other projects not related to renewable energy is or has been or will be constructed in this area. In general, development activity in the area is focused on industrial development, mining and agriculture. Agriculture in the area is primarily associated with cattle grazing. The next section of this report will aim to evaluate the potential for solar projects for this area in the foreseeable future.

7.5 SPECIALIST INFORMATION ON CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

In line with the Terms of Reference (ToR) provided as part of the scoping report, specialists were asked to, where possible, take into consideration the cumulative effects associated with the proposed development and other projects which are either developed or in the process of being developed in the local area (refer to Figure 7.2 for process flow). The following sections present their findings.

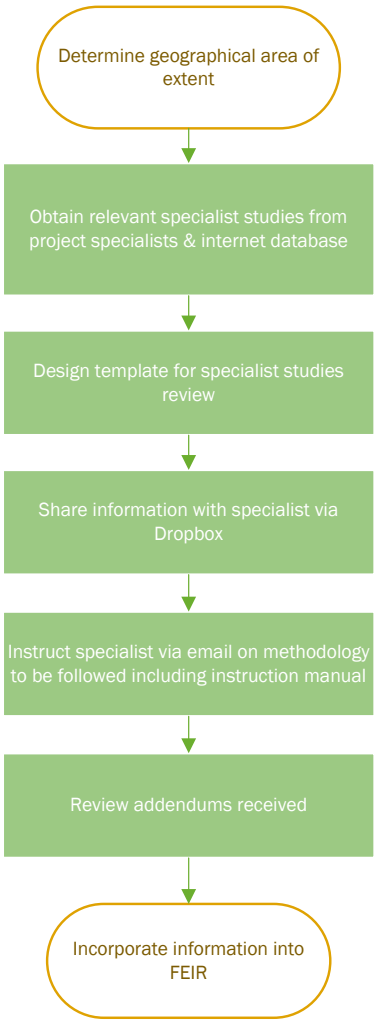


Figure 7.2: Process flow diagram for determining cumulative effects

7.5.1 Terrestrial Ecology

The Terrestrial Ecology Baseline and Impact Assessment (refer to Appendix E1), states that the impacts of projects are often assessed by comparing the post-project situation to a pre-existing baseline. Where projects can be considered in isolation this provides a good method of assessing a project's impact. However, in areas where baselines have already been affected, or where future development will continue to add to the impacts pre-existing in an area or region, it is appropriate to consider the cumulative effects of development or disturbance activities. This is similar to the concept of shifting baselines, which describes how the environmental baseline at a specific point in time may actually represent a significant change from the original state of the system. This section describes the potential cumulative impacts of the project on local fauna and flora specifically.

Cumulative impacts are assessed within the context of the extent of the proposed project area, other similar developments and activities in the area (existing and in-process), and general habitat loss and transformation resulting from any other activities in the area. Localised cumulative impacts include those from operations that are close enough (within 30 km) to potentially cause additive effects on

the local environment or any sensitive receptors (relevant operations include nearby large road networks, other solar PV facilities, and power infrastructure). Relevant impacts include the overall reduction of foraging and nesting/burrowing habitat, dust deposition, noise and vibration, disruption of functional corridors of habitat important for movement and migration, disruption of waterways, groundwater drawdown, and groundwater and surface water quality depletion.

Long-term cumulative impacts associated with the site development activities can lead to the loss of endemic and threatened species, including natural habitat and vegetation types, and these impacts can even lead to the degradation of conserved areas such as the adjacent game parks and reserves.

In order to spatially quantify the cumulative effects of the proposed development, the project in isolation is compared with the overall effects of surrounding development (including total transformation and transformation as a result of new and proposed developments of a similar type, i.e., solar).

According to the 2018 National Biodiversity Assessment, the total amount of Central Free State Grassland habitat within 30 km of the project amounts to 207 383,4 ha, but when considering the transformation that has taken place within this radius – only 141 202,7 ha remains. Therefore, the area within 30 km of the project has experienced approximately 68,08% loss in natural habitat. Considering this context, the project footprint is 576,8 ha (assuming the total extent of the project area is developed), and one (1) additional similar project exists in the 30 km region measuring a maximum of 1207,5 ha (as per the latest South African Renewable Energy EIA Application Database). This means that the total amount of remaining habitat lost as a result of solar projects in the region amounts to 1,26 % (the sum of all related developments as a percentage of the total remaining habitat). Table 7.2 outlines the calculation procedure for the spatial assessment of cumulative impacts.

Table 7.2: Loss of Central Free State Grassland habitat within a 30 km radius of the project

	Total Habitat (ha)	Tot. Remaining Habitat (ha)	Total Historical Loss	Project Footprint (ha)	Similar Projects (ha)	Cumulative Habitat Lost
Solar development cumulative effects (Spatial)	207 383,4	141 202,7	**68,08%**	576,8	1207,5	**1,26%**

The overall cumulative impact assessment is presented in Table 7.3 below. Note that this also accounts for the relative importance of the habitats within and adjacent to the project area, in the context of the value of the regional habitat.

Approximately 68,08% of the Central Free State Grassland vegetation type has been lost, and as discussed above the proposed development will result in a further loss of approximately 1,26 % from only similar developments (Solar) in the area, as such the cumulative impact from the proposed development is rated as “high” since a large area of natural habitat has already been lost. As such it is, imperative that careful spatial management and planning of the entire region be a priority, and existing large infrastructure projects must be carefully monitored over the long term.

7.5.2 Visual

The Visual Impact Assessment (refer to Appendix E3) states that according to the DFFE's database, two solar PV plant applications, of which one has lapsed, have been submitted to the Department within the geographic area of investigation. The cumulative impact might be a negative medium impact due to the fact that the landscape is visually pleasant reflecting a farming landscape.

Due to the extent of the project, no viable mitigation measures can be implemented to eliminate the visual impact of the PV facility entirely, but the possible visual impacts can be reduced. Several mitigation measures have however been proposed regardless of whether mitigation measures will reduce the significance of the anticipated impacts, they are considered good practice and should be implemented and maintained throughout the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the project, if possible.

In terms of possible landscape degradation, the landscape does not appear to have any specific protection and is characterised by farming development. No buffer areas or areas to be avoided are applicable for this development.

7.5.3 Soil and Agricultural Potential

According to the Soil and Agricultural Assessment (Appendix E4), the cumulative impacts have been scored "Medium," indicating that the potential incremental, interactive, sequential, and synergistic cumulative impacts. It is probable that the impact will result in spatial and temporal cumulative change.

7.5.4 Heritage

According to the Heritage Impact Assessment (Refer to Appendix E5), heritage resources are sparsely distributed on the wider landscape with highly significant (Grade 1) sites being rare. Because of the low likelihood of finding further significant heritage resources in the area of the proposed development and the generally low density of sites in the wider landscape the overall impacts to heritage are expected to be of generally low significance before mitigation.

For the project area, the impacts to heritage sites are expected to be of low significance. This can further be lowered by implementing mitigation measures, include isolating sites, relocating sites (e.g., burials) and excavating or sampling any significant archaeological material found to occur within the project area. The chances of further such material being found, however, are considered to be negligible. After mitigation, the overall impact significance would therefore be low.

7.5.5 Palaeontology

According to the Palaeontological Impact Assessment (refer to Appendix E6), solar facilities to the south east of the Khwezi SPP will have a Zero to Very High Palaeontological Sensitivity. However, it is important to note that the quality of preservation of these different sites will most probably vary and it is thus difficult to allocate a Cumulative Sensitivity to the projects. If all the mitigation measures are

carried out, a conservative estimate of the Cumulative impacts on fossil Heritage will vary between Low and Medium.

7.5.6 Social Impact Assessment

The Social Impact Assessment (refer to Appendix E7) states that the potential for cumulative impacts to occur as a result of the identified projects is likely. Potential cumulative impacts identified for the project include positive impacts on the economy, business development, and employment, as well as negative impacts such as an influx of jobseekers and change in the area's sense of place.

7.5.7 Traffic

According to the Traffic Impact Assessment (refer to Appendix E8), the concurrent construction of one other solar farm (Lengana PV SPP) in a 30 km radius of the site has also been considered and is deemed to have a low impact as. Mitigation measures that may be considered, should concurrent construction occur, include the staggering of trips at the site and the implementation of a road's maintenance programme.

7.6 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Following the definitions of the term, the "residual effects on the environment", i.e., effects after mitigation measures have been put in place, combined with the environmental effects of past, present and future projects and activities will be considered in this assessment. Also, a "combination of different individual environmental effects of the project acting on the same environmental component" can result in cumulative effects.

7.6.1 Potential Cumulative Effects

The receptors (hereafter referred to as Valued Ecosystem Components (VECs) presented in Section 6 (refer to the matrix analysis) have been examined alongside other past, present and future projects for potential adverse cumulative effects. A summary of the cumulative effects discussed are summarized in Table 7.3. There have been specific VECs identified with reference to the Solar Project (Table 6.2), which relates to the biophysical and socio-economic environments. Table 7.3 indicates the potential cumulative effects VECs and the rationale for inclusion/exclusion.

Table 7.3: Potential Cumulative Effects for the proposed project

	Valued Ecosystem Components (VECs)	Rationale for Inclusion / Exclusion	Level of Cumulative Effect
Construction Phase			
Terrestrial Ecology and Baseline	Loss of habitat, and disruption of surrounding ecological corridors. As well as the influences of	The construction phase of the development and associated infrastructure will result in loss of and damage to natural habitats if the vegetation is cleared for the development of the solar plant. Rehabilitation of some areas would be possible but	- High

	pollution (water, noise, air, etc.).	there is likely to be long-term damage in large areas. Most habitat destruction will be caused during the construction phase.	
Agricultural and Soils	Loss of land capability, soil erosion and compaction effects	The cumulative impact of loss of agricultural land use will not have an unacceptable negative impact on the agricultural production capability of the area.	- Medium
Social Impact Assessment	Cumulative impacts of employment opportunities, business opportunities and skills development	Khwezi SPP and the establishment of one other solar power project within the area has the potential to result in significant positive cumulative impacts, specifically with regards to the creation of a number of socio-economic opportunities for the region, which in turn, can result in positive social benefits. The positive cumulative impacts include creation of employment, skills development and training opportunities, and downstream business opportunities. The cumulative benefits to the local, regional, and national economy through employment and procurement of services are more considerable than that of Khwezi SPP alone.	+ Medium
	Negative impacts and change to the local economy with an in-migration of labourers, businesses and jobseekers to the area	While the development of a single solar power project may not result in a major influx of people into an area, the development of one other project may have a cumulative impact on the in-migration and movement of people. In addition, the fact that the project is proposed within an area characterised by good levels of solar irradiation suitable for the development of commercial solar energy facilities implies that the surrounding area is likely to be subject to considerable future applications for PV energy facilities. Levels of unemployment, and the low level of earning potential may attract individuals to the area in search of better employment opportunities and higher standards of living. It is exceedingly difficult to control an influx of people into an area, especially in a country where unemployment rates are high. It is therefore important that the project proponent implement and maintain strict adherence with a local employment policy in order to reduce the potential of such an impact occurring.	- Medium

Traffic Impact Study	Increased traffic on regional haulage routes	The haulage routes for heavy vehicles for the shipment of solar panels and major components include regional routes that would be impacted by the simultaneous construction of similar projects within 30 km of the development. This cumulative scenario is expected to slightly increase the average daily traffic of the routes used over the construction period.	- Low
	Increased traffic on regional haulage routes	The immediate road network, surrounding the proposed Khwezi PV SPP site, will be influenced by the proposed neighbouring Lengana PV SPP development. There will be a slight increase in traffic, influencing traffic congestion and road safety. However, the extent of the impact will be very small and local of nature. This cumulative scenario is expected to nominally increase the average daily traffic of the routes used over the construction period.	- Low
Operational Phase			
Visual Impact Assessment	Cumulative visual impacts related to the SPP	The anticipated cumulative visual impact for the SPP is expected to include the change in sense of place, as well as the precedent being set for SPP's in the area where currently there is only a precedent for agricultural related activities. Further construction and operation of the SPP in the area is likely to have a negative impact	- Medium
Decommissioning Phase			
General	Generation of waste	During the decommissioning of the facility waste will be generated that will need to be disposed of where recycling and re-use is not available. This may lead to pressure on waste disposal facilities in the area.	- Medium

7.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter of the Scoping Report addressed the cumulative environmental effects of the construction, operation and decommissioning project phases to be further assessed as part of the EIA Phase. The information to date has shown that no significant adverse residual impacts are likely. However, cumulative impacts could arise as other similar projects are constructed in the area.

The potential most significant cumulative impacts relate to:

- <u>Cumulative effects during construction phase:</u>

- Loss of habitat, and disruption of surrounding ecological corridors. As well as the influences of pollution (water, noise, air, etc.). (- Medium)
- Impacts of employment opportunities, business opportunities and skills development (+ Medium)
- Impact with large-scale in-migration of people (- Medium)

➢ Cumulative effects during the operational phase:

- Visual intrusion (- Medium)

➢ Cumulative effects during the decommissioning phase:

- Generation of waste (- Medium)

The cumulative impact for the proposed development is high to low, unacceptable impacts related to the project are expected. Considering the extent of the project and information presented in section 7 of this report, it can be concluded that the cumulative impacts will not result in large scale changes and impacts on the environment.

Photovoltaic solar energy technology is a clean technology which contributes toward a better-quality environment. The proposed project will contribute to local economic growth by supporting industry development in line with provincial and regional goals and ensuring advanced skills are drawn to the Free State Province. No cumulative impacts with a high residual risk have been identified.

In terms of the desirability of the development of sources of renewable energy therefore, it may be preferable to incur a higher cumulative loss in such a region as this one (where the landscape has already experienced degradation), than to lose land with a higher environmental value elsewhere in the country.

8 PLAN OF STUDY FOR EIA

This section aims to address the following requirements of the regulations:

Appendix 2. (2) A scoping report (...) must include -

(i) a plan of study for undertaking the EIA process to be undertaken, including-

(i) a description of the alternatives to be considered and assessed within the preferred site, including the option of not proceeding with the activity;

(ii) a description of the aspects to be assessed as part of the EIA process;

(iii) aspects to be assessed by specialists;

(iv) a description of the proposed method of assessing the environmental aspects, including a description of the proposed method of assessing the environmental aspects including aspects to be assessed by specialists;

(v) a description of the proposed method of assessing duration and significance;

(vi) an indication of the stages at which the competent authority will be consulted;

(vii) particulars of the public participation process that will be conducted during the EIA process; and

(viii) a description of the tasks that will be undertaken as part of the EIA process;

(ix) identify suitable measures to avoid, reverse, mitigate or manage identified impacts and to determine the extent of the residual risks that need to be managed and monitored.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This section gives a brief outline of the Plan of Study for EIA (PoSEIA) and the tasks that will be undertaken and the anticipated process to meet the objectives for the EIA phase. The approach to the EIA is to focus on those key issues identified for the preferred alternative. This will ensure that the EIA focuses on the most significant impacts and in the process save time and resources.

8.2 ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT PHASE

The purpose of the EIA phase is to assess issues identified in the scoping phase and will include an environmental management program (EMPr). The EMPr will provide information on the proposed activity and the manner in which potential impacts will be minimized or mitigated. The EIA report will comply with Appendix 3 and will:

- Determine the policy and legislative context within which the activity is located and document how the proposed activity complies with and responds to the policy and legislative context;
- Describe the need and desirability of the proposed activity, including the need and desirability of the activity in the context of the preferred location;

- Identify the location of the development footprint within the preferred site based on an impact and risk assessment process inclusive of cumulative impacts and a ranking process of all the identified development footprint alternatives focusing on the geographical, physical, biological, social, economic, heritage and cultural aspects of the environment;
- Determine the—
  - (i) nature, significance, consequence, extent, duration and probability of the impacts occurring to inform identified preferred alternatives; and
  - (ii) degree to which these impacts-
    - (aa) can be reversed;
    - (bb) may cause irreplaceable loss of resources, and
    - (cc) can be avoided, managed or mitigated;
- Identify the most ideal location for the activity within the preferred site based on the lowest level of environmental sensitivity identified during the assessment;
- Identify, assess, and rank the impacts the activity will impose on the preferred location through the life of the activity;
- Identify suitable measures to avoid, manage or mitigate identified impacts; and
- Identify residual risks that need to be managed and monitored.

8.3 TASKS TO BE UNDERTAKEN

The following sections describe the tasks that will be undertaken as part of the EIA Phase of the process.

8.3.1 Project Description

Further technical and supporting information will be gathered to provide a more detailed project description. This will include a detailed and finalised site layout plan that will be compiled once the areas of sensitivity identified in this Scoping Report have been confirmed by the specialists.

8.3.2 Consideration of Alternatives

The following project alternatives will be investigated in the EIR:

- Design/Layout alternatives: In terms of the actual layout of the proposed PV plant which will only be assessed for the preferred site alternative. A draft facility layout is included in Figure I.

8.3.3 Compilation of Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

A Draft EIR will be compiled to meet the content requirements as per Appendix 3 of GNR. 326 of the EIA Regulations (as amended) and will also include a draft Environmental Management Programme containing the aspects contemplated in Appendix 4 of GNR326. The Generic EMPr for overhead

electricity transmission and distribution infrastructure and the Generic EMPr for the development of the associated substation infrastructure for transmission and distribution of electricity as per Government Notice 435, which were published in Government Gazette 42323 on 22 March 2019, will also be included in the Draft EIR.

8.3.4 Public Participation

All registered I&APs and relevant State Departments will be given the opportunity to review the Draft Environmental Impact Report in accordance with Regulation R326. A minimum of 30 days commenting period will be allowed and all stakeholders and I&APs will be given an opportunity to forward their written comments within that period. All issues identified during this 30-day review and comment period will be documented and compiled into a Comments and Response Report to be included as part of the Final EIR to be submitted to the DFFE for decision-making on the Application for Environmental Authorisation.

8.4 ASPECTS ASSESSED

Table 8.1 below provides a summary of the aspects that have been assessed. The aspects are also linked to specialist information obtained.

Table 8.1: Aspects assessed

Aspects	Potential impacts	Specialist studies / technical information
Construction of the PV Solar facility	• Impacts on the fauna and flora	Terrestrial Ecological Assessment and Avifauna Impact Assessment
	• Wetlands and riparian areas	Wetland Baseline and Risk Assessment
	• Impacts on agricultural potential (soils)	Soil and Agricultural Assessment
	• Impacts on existing services infrastructure	Confirmation from the Local Municipality
	• Temporary employment, impacts on health and safety	Social Impact Assessment
	• Impacts on heritage resources	Heritage Impact Assessment and Paleontological Impact Assessment
Operation of the PV Solar facility	• Impacts on the fauna and flora	Terrestrial Biodiversity Survey and Avifauna Impact Assessment
	• Wetlands and riparian areas	Wetland Baseline and Risk Assessment

	• Impacts on agricultural potential (soils)	Soil and Agricultural Assessment
	• Increased consumption of water	Confirmed volumes to be provided by the Applicant
	• Visual Impact	Visual Impact Assessment
	• Provision of employment and generation of income for the local community	Social Impact Assessment
Decommissioning of the PV Solar facility	• Wetlands and riparian areas	Wetland Baseline and Risk Assessment
	• Socio-economic impacts (loss of employment)	Social Impact Assessment
Cumulative Impacts	• Cumulative biophysical impacts resulting from similar developments in close proximity to the proposed activity.	All independent specialist studies results to be considered and analyzed by the EAP

8.4.1 Specialist Studies

Based on the initial descriptions of potential environmental impacts or aspects (refer to Table 6.2), specialists have been subcontracted to assess the potential impacts that may be significant. The specialist studies assess impacts on both the social and the biophysical environment and also help in identifying ways that can help to mitigate the envisaged impacts. The following specialist studies have been included to address the potentially most significant impact as identified during the scoping phase – refer to Table 6.2:

- Heritage Impact Assessment: To determine whether the proposed activity will impact on any heritage or archeological artifacts.
- Terrestrial Biodiversity, Plant and Animal Species Impact Assessment: To determine what the impact of the proposed activity will be on the ecology (fauna and flora) in the area.
- Wetland Baseline and Risk Assessment: To determine the impact of the proposed activity on the wetlands present on the Farm Koppiesdam No. 511 (PV facility); Farm Welgegund No. 100 and Farm Noodshulp No. 2052 (access road).
- Avifauna Impact Assessment: To determine what the impacts of the proposed activity will have on the birds (avifauna) in the area.
- Visual Impact Assessment: To determine to what extent the proposed activity will be visually intrusive to the surrounding communities or other receptors.

- Soil and Agricultural Potential Study: To determine how the proposed activity will impact on soil and agricultural resources.
- Social Impact Assessment: To determine how the proposed activity will impact on the socio-economic environment.
- Palaeontological Impact Assessment: To determine the impacts on palaeontological resources.
- Traffic Impact Assessment: To determine the impacts on road users on long haul routes and roads around the project area.

8.4.2 Terms of Reference for Specialist Studies

Specialists in their field of expertise will consider baseline data and identify and assess impacts according to predefined rating scales (section 8.5). Specialists will also suggest optional or essential ways in which to mitigate negative impacts and enhance positive impacts. Further, specialists will, where possible, take into consideration the cumulative effects associated with this and other projects which are either developed or in the process of being developed in the local area. The specialist is reminded to follow the latest DFFE protocols.

The results of these specialist studies have been integrated into the draft Scoping Report. The general requirements proposed for the inputs are presented below and specialists are encouraged to comment and provide input on these. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for each specialist study are included as Appendix E9 to the report.

8.4.3 General Requirements

Specialists' reports must comply with Appendix 6 of GNR. 326 published under sections 24(5), and 44 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998), as amended and whereby the following are to be included:

- The details of-
    - the specialist who prepared the report; and
    - the expertise of that specialist to compile a specialist report including a curriculum vitae;
- A declaration that the specialist is independent in a form as may be specified by the competent authority;
- An indication of the scope of, and the purpose for which, the report was prepared;
    - An indication of the quality and age of base data used for the specialist report;
    - A description of existing impacts on the site, cumulative impacts of the proposed development and levels of acceptable change;
- The duration, date and season of the site investigation and the relevance of the season to the outcome of the assessment;

- A description of the methodology adopted in preparing the report or carrying out the specialised process inclusive of equipment and modelling used;
- Details of an assessment of the specific identified sensitivity of the site related to the proposed activity or activities and its associated structures and infrastructure, inclusive of a site plan identifying site alternatives;
- An identification of any areas to be avoided, including buffers;
- A map superimposing the activity including the associated structures and infrastructure on the environmental sensitivities of the site including areas to be avoided, including buffers;
- A description of any assumptions made and any uncertainties or gaps in knowledge;
- A description of the findings and potential implications of such findings on the impact of the proposed activity, or activities;
- Any mitigation measures for inclusion in the EMPr;
- Any conditions for inclusion in the environmental authorisation;
- Any monitoring requirements for inclusion in the EMPr or environmental authorisation;
- A reasoned opinion-
    - whether the proposed activity, activities or portions thereof should be authorised;
        - regarding the acceptability of the proposed activity or activities; and
    - if the opinion is that the proposed activity, activities or portions thereof should be authorised, any avoidance, management and mitigation measures that should be included in the EMPr, and where applicable, the closure plan;
- A description of any consultation process that was undertaken during the course of preparing the specialist report;
- A summary and copies of any comments received during any consultation process and where applicable all responses thereto; and
- Any other information requested by the competent authority.

In addition to the above, specialists are expected to:

- Review the Scoping Report, with specific reference to the Comments and Response Report to familiarize with all relevant issues or concerns relevant to their field of expertise;
- In addition to the impacts listed in the Scoping Report, identify any issue or aspect that needs to be assessed and provide expert opinion on any issue in their field of expertise that they deem necessary in order to avoid potential detrimental impacts;

- Assess the degree and extent of all identified impacts (including cumulative impacts) that the preferred project activity and its proposed alternatives, including that of the no-go alternative, may have;
- Identify and list all legislation and permit requirements that are relevant to the development proposal in context of the study;
- Reference all sources of information and literature consulted; and
- Include an executive summary to the report.

8.5 METHOD OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The environmental assessment aims to identify the various possible environmental impacts that could results from the proposed activity. Different impacts need to be evaluated in terms of its significance and in doing so highlight the most critical issues to be addressed.

Significance is determined through a synthesis of impact characteristics which include context and intensity of an impact. Context refers to the geographical scale i.e. site, local, national or global whereas intensity is defined by the severity of the impact e.g. the magnitude of deviation from background conditions, the size of the area affected, the duration of the impact and the overall probability of occurrence. Significance is calculated as shown in Table 8.2.

Significance is an indication of the importance of the impact in terms of both physical extent and time scale, and therefore indicates the level of mitigation required. The total number of points scored for each impact indicates the level of significance of the impact.

8.5.1 Impact Rating System

Impact assessment must take account of the nature, scale and duration of impacts on the environment whether such impacts are positive or negative. Each impact is also assessed according to the project phases:

- planning
- construction
- operation
- decommissioning

Where necessary, the proposal for mitigation or optimisation of an impact should be detailed. A brief discussion of the impact and the rationale behind the assessment of its significance should also be included. The rating system is applied to the potential impacts on the receiving environment and includes an objective evaluation of the mitigation of the impact. In assessing the significance of each impact the following criteria is used:

Table 8.2: The rating system

NATURE		
Include a brief description of the impact of environmental parameter being assessed in the context of the project. This criterion includes a brief written statement of the environmental aspect being impacted upon by a particular action or activity.		
GEOGRAPHICAL EXTENT		
This is defined as the area over which the impact will be experienced.		
1	Site	The impact will only affect the site.
2	Local/district	Will affect the local area or district.
3	Province/region	Will affect the entire province or region.
4	International and National	Will affect the entire country.
PROBABILITY		
This describes the chance of occurrence of an impact.		
1	Unlikely	The chance of the impact occurring is extremely low (Less than a 25% chance of occurrence).
2	Possible	The impact may occur (Between a 25% to 50% chance of occurrence).
3	Probable	The impact will likely occur (Between a 50% to 75% chance of occurrence).
4	Definite	Impact will certainly occur (Greater than a 75% chance of occurrence).
DURATION		
This describes the duration of the impacts. Duration indicates the lifetime of the impact as a result of the proposed activity.		
1	Short term	The impact will either disappear with mitigation or will be mitigated through natural processes in a span shorter than the construction phase (0 – 1 years), or the impact will last for the period of a relatively short construction period and a limited recovery time after construction, thereafter it will be entirely negated (0 – 2 years).
2	Medium term	The impact will continue or last for some time after the construction phase but will be mitigated by direct

		human action or by natural processes thereafter (2 – 10 years).
3	Long term	The impact and its effects will continue or last for the entire operational life of the development, but will be mitigated by direct human action or by natural processes thereafter (10 – 30 years).
4	Permanent	The only class of impact that will be non-transitory. Mitigation either by man or natural process will not occur in such a way or such a time span that the impact can be considered indefinite.
INTENSITY/ MAGNITUDE		
Describes the severity of an impact.		
1	Low	Impact affects the quality, use and integrity of the system/component in a way that is barely perceptible.
2	Medium	Impact alters the quality, use and integrity of the system/component but system/component still continues to function in a moderately modified way and maintains general integrity (some impact on integrity).
3	High	Impact affects the continued viability of the system/ component and the quality, use, integrity and functionality of the system or component is severely impaired and may temporarily cease. High costs of rehabilitation and remediation.
4	Very high	Impact affects the continued viability of the system/component and the quality, use, integrity and functionality of the system or component permanently ceases and is irreversibly impaired. Rehabilitation and remediation often impossible. If possible rehabilitation and remediation often unfeasible due to extremely high costs of rehabilitation and remediation.
REVERSIBILITY		
This describes the degree to which an impact can be successfully reversed upon completion of the proposed activity.		
1	Completely reversible	The impact is reversible with implementation of minor mitigation measures.
2	Partly reversible	The impact is partly reversible but more intense mitigation measures are required.

3	Barely reversible	The impact is unlikely to be reversed even with intense mitigation measures.
4	Irreversible	The impact is irreversible and no mitigation measures exist.
IRREPLACEABLE LOSS OF RESOURCES		
This describes the degree to which resources will be irreplaceably lost as a result of a proposed activity.		
1	No loss of resource	The impact will not result in the loss of any resources.
2	Marginal loss of resource	The impact will result in marginal loss of resources.
3	Significant loss of resources	The impact will result in significant loss of resources.
4	Complete loss of resources	The impact is result in a complete loss of all resources.
CUMULATIVE EFFECT		
This describes the cumulative effect of the impacts. A cumulative impact is an effect which in itself may not be significant but may become significant if added to other existing or potential impacts emanating from other similar or diverse activities as a result of the project activity in question.		
1	Negligible cumulative impact	The impact would result in negligible to no cumulative effects.
2	Low cumulative impact	The impact would result in insignificant cumulative effects.
3	Medium cumulative impact	The impact would result in minor cumulative effects.
4	High cumulative impact	The impact would result in significant cumulative effects
SIGNIFICANCE		
Significance is determined through a synthesis of impact characteristics. Significance is an indication of the importance of the impact in terms of both physical extent and time scale, and therefore indicates the level of mitigation required. The calculation of the significance of an impact uses the following formula: (Extent + probability + reversibility + irreplaceability + duration + cumulative effect) x magnitude/intensity. The summation of the different criteria will produce a non-weighted value. By multiplying this value with the magnitude/intensity, the resultant value acquires a weighted characteristic which can be measured and assigned a significance rating.		
Points	Impact significance rating	Description
6 to 28	Negative low impact	The anticipated impact will have negligible negative effects and will require little to no mitigation.

6 to 28	Positive low impact	The anticipated impact will have minor positive effects.
29 to 50	Negative medium impact	The anticipated impact will have moderate negative effects and will require moderate mitigation measures.
29 to 50	Positive medium impact	The anticipated impact will have moderate positive effects.
51 to 73	Negative high impact	The anticipated impact will have significant effects and will require significant mitigation measures to achieve an acceptable level of impact.
51 to 73	Positive high impact	The anticipated impact will have significant positive effects.
74 to 96	Negative very high impact	The anticipated impact will have highly significant effects and are unlikely to be able to be mitigated adequately. These impacts could be considered "fatal flaws".
74 to 96	Positive very high impact	The anticipated impact will have highly significant positive effects.

8.6 CONSULTATION WITH THE COMPETENT AUTHORITY

Consultation with the competent and commenting authorities will continue throughout the duration of impact assessment phase. The authorities will also comment on whether they deem it necessary to conduct additional specialist studies other than what is proposed already in this PoSEIA. On-going consultation will include:

- Submission of the Final EIR following a 30-day public review period (and consideration of comments received).
- Arrangements will be made to discuss the report with the Environmental Officer responsible for the project during the review period, where required.

9 CONCLUSION

This Draft Scoping Report is aimed at identifying the 'scope' of the EIA that will be conducted in respect of the activity for which authorization is being applied for. It can be concluded that:

- The scoping phase complied with the specifications set out in Regulations 21 and Appendix 2 of GNR326.
- All key consultees have been consulted as required by the Regulations 39 to 44.

Based on the contents of the report the following key environmental issues were identified which need to be addressed in the EIA report. Note that significance indicated is prior to mitigation.

- Impacts during construction phase:
    - Impacts on fauna and flora including 1) destruction, loss and fragmentation of habitats, ecosystems and the vegetation community (- High), 2) introduction of Invasive Alien Plant (IAP) species and invasive fauna (- Medium), 3) destruction of protected plant species (- Medium), and 4) displacement of the indigenous faunal community (- High)
    - Direct disturbance / degradation / loss to wetland soils or vegetation (- Medium) and increased erosion and sedimentation (- Medium)
    - Visual impact of construction activities on sensitive visual receptors in close proximity to the SPP (- Medium)
    - Loss of Land Capability (- Medium)
    - Loss or damage to sites, features or objects of cultural heritage significance (burial sites and homestead site located on site) (- High)
    - Destroy or permanently seal-in fossils at or below the surface that are then no longer available for scientific study (- Medium)
    - Social impacts including 1) creation of direct and indirect employment opportunities (+ Medium), 2) influx of jobseekers and change in population in the study area (- Medium), 3) temporary increase in safety and security concerns associated with the influx of people (- Medium), 4) temporary increase in traffic disruptions and movement patterns (- Medium), 5) nuisance impact (noise and dust) (- Medium) and 6) increased risk of potential veld fires.
- Impacts during the operational phase:
    - Impacts on fauna and flora including 1) continued fragmentation and degradation of natural habitats and ecosystems (- Medium), 2) continuing spread of IAP and weed species (- Medium) and 3) ongoing displacement and direct mortalities of the faunal community (- High)

- Potential for increased stormwater runoff leading to Increased erosion and sedimentation (- Medium) and potential for increased contaminants entering the wetland systems (- Medium)
- Loss of Land Capability, soil erosion and compaction effects (- Medium)
- Social impacts including 1) creation of employment opportunities and skills development (+ Medium), 2) development of non-polluting, renewable energy infrastructure (+ Medium), 3) contribution to Local Economic Development (LED) and social upliftment (+ High), and 4) increase in household earnings.

- Impacts during the decommissioning phase:
  - Potential loss or degradation of nearby wetlands through inappropriate closure (- Medium)
- Cumulative biophysical impacts resulting from similar development in close proximity to the proposed activity.

No fatal flaws or impacts of a high significance will remain after the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures. The issues identified will be addressed in more detail in the EIA report as part of the EIA Phase.

Considering the environmental sensitive features present within the development footprint, as identified in this Scoping Report, the Applicant has proposed a draft facility layout which considers these features, and thereby aim to avoid any direct impact on these features. As part of this optimisation process associated infrastructure has been shifted outside of these sensitive environmental features and areas. The draft layout will be further assessed and optimised as part of the EIA Phase of the project to ensure that the development footprint within the affected property is appropriate from an environmental perspective, and thereby avoids the present sensitive environmental features and areas as identified by the independent specialists. Refer to Figure I for the draft layout proposed for development.

The EAP therefore recommends that:

The scoping report be approved after which the EIA process, as required by Regulations 23 to 24 may commence.

We trust that the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment find the report in order and we eagerly await your comments in this regard.

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ENVIRONAMICS

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