

APPENDIX C9
COMMENTS AND RESPONSES REPORT

**MERINO WIND FARM, NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE
(DFFE Ref. No.: 14/12/16/3/3/2/2114)**

COMMENTS AND RESPONSES REPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. COMMENTS RECEIVED AFTER THE EIA 30-DAY REVIEW & COMMENT PERIOD OF THE EIA REPORT	1
1.1. Organs of State.....	1
2. COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING THE 30-DAY REVIEW & COMMENT PERIOD OF THE EIA REPORT	2
2.1. Organs of State.....	2
2.2. Key Stakeholders and I&APs	21
3. COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING THE SCOPING REPORT REVIEW & COMMENT PERIOD	27
3.1. Organs of State.....	27
3.2. Key Stakeholders and I&APs	38
4. COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE SCOPING PHASE OF THE EIA PROCESS	39
4.1. Organs of State.....	39
4.2. Key Stakeholders and Interested & Affected Parties.....	41

The Scoping Phase of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Process for the Merino Wind Farm, which is planned as part of a larger cluster of renewable energy projects, was announced on **Thursday, 21 October 2021**. The Background Information Document was distributed together with a notification letter which served to invite Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) to register their interest in the project and submit any comments / queries they may have on any of the proposed developments that make up the Great Karoo Cluster of Renewable Energy Facilities, including the Merino Wind Farm.

The Scoping Report was made available for a 30-day review and comment period from **Friday, 12 November 2021** until **Monday, 13 December 2021**. The EIA Report was made available for review and comment from Friday, **13 May 2022** until **Monday, 13 June 2022**. During the 30-day review period of the EIA Report, objections against the project were received from an adjacent landowner regarding visual impacts and associated impacts on tourism. Additional investigations and assessments were required to be undertaken by the visual specialist and social specialist in order to adequately consider these objections

within the assessment of the project and propose additional mitigation measures to minimise impacts. In terms of Regulation 45 of the 2014 EIA Regulations, as amended, the original application for this project (DFFE Ref No.: 14/12/16/3/3/2/2114) has lapsed as the applicant did not meet the timeframes prescribed in terms of these Regulations, and the file was closed by the DFFE. Since the application is to be submitted by the same applicant for the same development, the findings of the Scoping Report remain valid, and the environmental context has not changed, Great Karoo Renewable Energy (Pty) Ltd has resubmitted the application to continue at the initiation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Phase, in accordance with Regulation 21(2)(a) of the EIA Regulations 2014, as amended.

The Revised EIA Report is being made available for a 30-day review and comment period from **Monday, 14 November 2022** until **Wednesday, 14 December 2022**. All written comments received during the review and comment period of the Revised EIA Report will be included in **Appendix C7: Comments Received** of the final EIA Report.

The Comments and Responses Report (C&RR) is included as a separate document to the Revised EIA Report as **Appendix C9: Comments & Responses Report**.

NOTE:

All comments captured in the C&RR are verbatim and have not been summarised.

Notes for the record for all meetings held during the 30-day review and comment period of the Scoping Report and the EIA Report have been included as **Appendix C8: Meeting Notes** to the Revised EIA Report and do not form part of this C&RR. Should any meetings be held during the 30-day review and comment period of the Revised EIA Report, the meeting notes will be included in **Appendix 8: Meeting Notes** of the final EIA Report and do not form part of this C&RR.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS / ACRONYMS

APM	Archaeology, Palaeontology and Meteorites	NEMA	National Environmental Management Act
BID	Background Information Document	NHRA	National Heritage Resources Act
C&RR	Comments and Responses Report	OoS	Organs of State
CBA	Critical Biodiversity Area	PIA	Palaeontological Impact Assessment
DFFE	Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment	PP	Public Participation
DWS	Department of Water and Sanitation	REIPPPP	Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme
EA	Environmental Authorisation	RPGR	Ratelfontein Private Game Reserve
EAP	Environmental Assessment Practitioner	SABAA	South African Bat Assessment Association
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment	SAHRA	South African Heritage Resources Agency
EIAr	Environmental Impact Assessment Report	SAHRIS	South African Heritage Resources Information System
FGM	Focus Group Meeting	SR	Scoping Report
HIA	Heritage Impact Assessment	S&EIR	Scoping and Environmental Impact Report
KSW	Key Stakeholder Workshop		

1. COMMENTS RECEIVED AFTER THE EIA 30-DAY REVIEW & COMMENT PERIOD OF THE EIA REPORT

1.1. Organs of State

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
1.	<p>The proposed renewable energy facilities are situated within the Northern Cape. A portion of the grid connection corridor is situated in the Western Cape. Therefore, the department must provide comment on this development.</p> <p>The proposed grid infrastructure will facilitate the connection for the renewable energy facilities proposed in the Northern Province.</p> <p>The Western Cape Department of Agriculture: Sub-programme Land Use Management has no objection to the proposed development on condition that the Impact Management Actions proposed in the EMPr be effectively implemented and monitored for compliance.</p> <p>Please note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindly quote the above-mentioned reference number in any future correspondence in respect of the application. • The Department reserves the right to revise initial comments and request further information based on the information received. 	<p>Cor van der Walt LandUse Manager: LandUse Management WC Department of Agriculture</p> <p>Letter: Undated (received via e-mail on 31 August 2022)</p>	<p>The comments submitted are applicable to the Great Karoo Electrical Grid Infrastructure (DFFE Reference Number: 14/12/16/3/3/1/2554) of which the final Basic Assessment Report was submitted to the DFFE on 05 July 2022 for decision-making and an EA issued on 05 October 2022.</p> <p>No further action required.</p>

2. COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING THE 30-DAY REVIEW & COMMENT PERIOD OF THE EIA REPORT

2.1. Organs of State

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
1.	<p><u>This letter serves to inform you that the following information must be included in the final EIAr:</u></p> <p>a) Specific comments</p> <p>(i) The final EIAr must ensure it includes and complies with and fulfils the requirements which enlisted the provision of regulation 3(7) of the EIA Regulations 2014 as amended. The final EIAr must clearly indicate where in the report the fulfilment of the requirement to enlist Regulation 3(7) can be found.</p> <p>(ii) Recommendations provided by specialist reports must be considered and used to inform the preferred layout alternative.</p> <p>(iii) Please provide a concise, but complete, summary and bullet list of the project description and associated infrastructure (or project scope) to be included in the decision (or as it should appear in the decision), should a positive Environmental Authorisation be granted. This must include a list of all development components and associated infrastructure.</p> <p>(iv) A list of what the proposed project entails as well as the associated infrastructure must be included in the EIAr.</p> <p>(v) The final EIAr must comply with all conditions of the acceptance of the Scoping Report (SR) and must address all comments contained in the draft SR and this letter.</p>	<p>Ms Milicent Solomons Acting Chief Director: Integrated Environmental Authorisations Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment</p> <p>06 June 2022</p>	<p>Regulation 3(7) is not applicable to the Revised EIA Report. The report is submitted in accordance with the provisions of Regulation 21(2)(a).</p> <p>Recommendations provided by the specialists have been used to inform the preferred layout alternative. A combined Layout and Environmental Sensitivity Map indicating all environmentally sensitive features and proposed infrastructure is included as Figure 11.1 under Chapter 11, and Appendix O).</p> <p>Refer to Table 2.1 of the Revised EIA Report for a summary of project description and associated infrastructures to be included in the Environmental Authorisation.</p> <p>A list of, and clear description of the infrastructure associated with the development is included in Chapter 2 of the Revised EIA Report.</p> <p>The Revised EIA Report complies with all the conditions of the acceptance of the SR signed on 27 January 2022, as detailed in Table 7.4. All comments contained in the final SR and draft EIA Report have been addressed as a separate document to</p>

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
			the Revised EIA Report as Appendix C9: Comments & Responses Report , which includes all written comments received throughout the EIA process, including those submitted on the draft Scoping Report and draft EIA Report.
	(vi) The final EIAR must clearly provide a detailed section which addresses the site sensitivity verification requirements where a specialist assessment is required but no specific assessment protocol has been prescribed as well as the site sensitivity verification and minimum report content requirements for all specialist assessments undertaken which was included in the screening tool report.		Table 7.5 of the Revised EIA Report provides details of the site sensitivity verification requirements as per the screening tool report, including an indication of the specialist studies undertaken and where these are included in the report.
	(vii) The EMPr must include a provision to make the following reports available to the Department and applicable competent authority on request: alien/invasive plant management report; plant rescue and protection report; and re-vegetation and habitat rehabilitation report.		The EMPr includes an alien/invasive plant management report; plant rescue and protection report, and a re-vegetation and habitat rehabilitation report. The EMPr is required to be available on site and available to authorities on request.
	(viii) Please ensure that all mitigation recommendations are in line with applicable and most recent guidelines.		All mitigations that have been provided are in line with the applicable and most recent guidelines.
	(ix) The EAP must provide details of the specific locations in the final EIAR, and not provide vague locations of the proposed developments. All associated infrastructure must be clearly indicated in the final EIAR and its associated layout plans.		Details of the specific locations of the proposed development is included in the Revised EIA Report. All associated infrastructure is clearly indicated in the final EIA Report (Table 2.1) and its associated layout plans (Figure 11.2).
	(x) The EAP must clearly identify and provide a final list of all applicable listed activities. If any activities are to be removed, motivation for their removal must be included in the final EIAR.		All relevant listed activities are detailed in Table 7.1 of the Revised EIA Report.
	(xi) The recommendations provided by the specialist reports must be considered and used to inform the preferred layout.		Recommendations provided by the specialists have been used to inform the preferred layout.
	(xii) With regards to the generic Environmental Management Programmes (EMPr) for the substation, Part B Section 2 and		Part B Section 2 and Part C of the generic EMPr has been completed to include site-specific information and

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
	<p>Part C is incomplete in the draft EIAR. Please sign the generic EMPs. We request that you adequately complete all applicable sections in the generic EMPs.</p>		<p>management measures. The EMP has been signed by the applicant.</p>
	<p>b) Listed Activities (i) Please ensure that all relevant listed activities are applied for, are specific and can be linked to the development activity or infrastructure as described in the project description. Only activities applicable to the development must be applied for and assessed.</p>		<p>All relevant activities applied for in the original application for an Environmental Authorisation (EA) for the project and included in the Scoping Report are relevant to the Merino Wind Farm and its associated infrastructure as described in the project description. These have been included in the Revised EIA Report and current Application for Authorisation submitted in support of the new EIA process for this project.</p>
	<p>(ii) If the activities applied for in the application form differ from those mentioned in the final EIAR, an amended application form must be submitted. Please note that the Department's application form template has been amended and can be downloaded from the following link https://www.dffe.gov.za/documents/forms.</p>		<p>All relevant activities applied for in the original application for an Environmental Authorisation (EA) for the project and included in the Scoping Report are relevant to the Merino Wind Farm and its associated infrastructure as described in the project description. These have been included in the Revised EIA Report and current Application for Authorisation submitted in support of the new EIA process for this project.</p>
	<p>(iii) It is imperative that the relevant authorities are continuously involved throughout the basic assessment process as the development property possibly falls within geographically designated areas in terms of numerous GN R. 985 Activities. Written comments must be obtained from the relevant authorities and submitted to this Department. In addition, a graphical representation of the proposed development within the respective geographical areas must be provided.</p>		<p>All relevant authorities are continuously involved throughout the EIA process. Proof of correspondence with Organs of State is included in Appendix C of the Revised EIA Report.</p>
	<p>(iv) The EIAR must provide an assessment of the impacts and mitigation measures for each of the listed activities applied for.</p>		<p>An assessment of impacts and recommended mitigation measures are included in Chapter 9 and Chapter 10 of the Revised EIA Report.</p>
	<p>c) Public Participation Process (i) The final EIAR must comply with all the conditions of the acceptance of the SR signed on 03 February 2022 and</p>		<p>The Revised EIA Report complies with all the conditions of the acceptance of the SR signed on 27 January 2022, as detailed</p>

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
	<p>must address all comments contained in the final SR, the draft EIAr and this letter.</p>		<p>in Table 7.4. All comments contained in the final SR and draft EIA Report have been addressed as a separate document to the Revised EIA Report as Appendix C9: Comments & Responses Report, which includes all written comments received throughout the EIA process, including those submitted on the draft Scoping Report and draft EIA Report.</p>
	<p>(ii) Comments must be obtained from this Department's Biodiversity Conservation Directorate at BCAdmin@dffe.gov.za.</p>		<p>The written comments received from the DFFE: Directorate Biodiversity Conservation on the SR and the EIA Report are included in Appendix C7: Comments Received and have been adequately addressed in this C&RR. Further comments received on the Revised EIA Report, if any, will be included in Appendix C7: Comments Received of the final EIA Report and captured in Appendix C9: Comments & Responses Report and appended to the final EIA Report as a separate document.</p>
	<p>(iii) The Public Participation Process must be conducted in terms of Regulation 39, 40, 41, 42, 43 and 44 of the EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended.</p>		<p>The Public Participation Process has been conducted in terms of Regulations 39, 40, 41, 42, 43 & 44 of the EIA Regulations 2014, as amended (GNR 326). The public participation process for the Scoping Phase was undertaken in accordance with the approved Public Participation Plan (Appendix C1: Public Participation Plan & Approval), the requirement for which was repealed in May 2022. The public participation process undertaken to date includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project database: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A register of I&APs has been compiled and will be updated throughout the EIA process (Appendix C2: I&AP Database). • EIA & Public Participation process announcements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The BID, accompanied by a cover letter inviting I&APs to register on the project database, was distributed via email to identified I&APs and relevant OoS on 21 October 2021 (refer to Appendices C4: Background

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
			<p>Information Document, C5: Organs of State Correspondence & C6: I&AP Correspondence of the Revised EIA Report).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o An advertisement was placed in Die Echo/Midland Nuus Newspaper on Thursday, 23 September 2021 (refer to Appendix C3: Site Notices & Newspaper Advertisements of the Revised EIA Report). o Site Notices announcing the EIA process were placed at visible points the along the boundary of the proposed development site in accordance with the requirements of the EIA Regulations on 28-30 September 2021 (refer to Appendix C3: Site Notices & Advertisements of the Revised EIA Report). o Process Notices were placed at various public places in Richmond on 28-30 September 2021 (refer to Appendix C3: Site Notices & Advertisements of the Revised EIA Report). <p><u>Scoping Report available for review and comment:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Registered I&APs were notified of the availability of the Scoping Report for a 30-day review and comment period via e-mail on 12 November 2021 (refer to Appendix C6: I&AP Correspondence of the Revised EIA Report). o Commenting authorities, municipal councillors and local and district municipalities which have jurisdiction in the area were requested to submit written comments on the Scoping Report via e-mail on 12 November 2021 (refer to Appendix C5: Organs of State Correspondence of the Revised EIA Report). o An advertisement was placed in The Echo Newspaper on Friday, 12 November 2021 (refer to Appendix C3: Site Notices & Advertisements of the Revised EIA Report).

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Live read (radio) on Radio Sonder Grense (RSG) 100-104 FM announcing the availability of the Scoping Report for a 30-day review and comment period was aired on Saturday, 13 November 2021. A further live read as a reminder of the availability of the Scoping Report for review and comment was aired on Saturday, 29 November 2021 (refer to Appendix C3: Site Notices & Advertisements of the Revised EIA Report). • Various Meetings were held during the 30-day review and comment period of the Scoping Report (refer to Appendix C8: Meeting Notes of the Revised EIA Report for the meeting notes): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o A virtual Key Stakeholder Workshop (KSW) was held on 23 November 2021. o A virtual Focus Group Meeting (FGM) with District & Local Municipal Officials was held on 06 December 2021. o An Information Session / Poster Display was held at the Richmond Showgrounds on 02 December 2021 from 14h00 to 17h00. o A FGM with landowners and land occupiers was held on 02 December 2021 at 18h00. o A FGM with the Ubuntu Local Municipality Officials was held on 03 December 2021. • Consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Proof of consultation with I&APs and OoS throughout the EIA process to date is included in Appendices C5: Organs of State Correspondence & C6: I&AP Correspondence of the Revised EIA Report). • Attempt to obtain comments on the Scoping Report: An e-mail to all registered I&APs and OoS as a reminder of the availability of the Scoping Report for review and

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
			<p>comment was sent on 06 December 2021 (refer to Appendices C5: Organs of State Correspondence & C6: I&AP Correspondence of the Revised EIA Report).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments & Responses Report: All comments received from the announcement of the Scoping and EIA process and those submitted during the 30-day review and comment period of the Scoping Report have been captured in this C&RR which is attached to the final Scoping Report as Appendix C9: Comments & Responses Report of the Revised EIA Report. <p><u>EIA Report available for review and comment:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Registered I&APs were notified of the availability of the EIA Report for a 30-day review and comment period via e-mail on 13 May 2022 (refer to Appendix C6: I&AP Correspondence of the Revised EIA Report). ○ Commenting authorities, municipal councillor and local and district municipalities which have jurisdiction in the area were requested to submit written comments on the EIA Report via email on 13 May 2022 (refer to Appendix C5: Organs of State Correspondence of the of the Revised EIA Report). ○ Advertisements were placed in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Echo/Midland News on Friday, 06 May 2022 announcing the EIA Report review and comment period as 10 May 2022 until 09 June 2022; and ○ The Echo/Midland News on 13 May 2022 announcing the updated EIA Report review and comment period as 13 May 2022 until 13 June 2022 (refer to Appendix C3: Site Notices & Newspaper Adverts of the Revised EIA Report for both the adverts).

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Live read (radio) on Radio Sonder Grense (RSG) 100-104 FM announcing the availability of the EIA Report for a 30-day review and comment period was aired on Saturday, 04 June 2022. Due to unavailability of airtime, earlier notifications could not have been broadcasted (refer to Appendix C3: Site Notices & Newspaper Adverts of the Revised EIA Report for proof of the live read). ● Attempt to obtain comments on the EIA Report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An e-mail to all registered I&APs and OoS as a reminder of the availability of the EIA Report was sent on 07 June 2022 (refer to Appendices C5: Organs of State Correspondence & C6: I&AP Correspondence of the Revised EIA Report). ● Various Meetings were held during the 30-day review and comment period of the EIA Report (refer to Appendix C7: Meeting Notes of the Revised EIA Report). During these meetings, the Electrical Grid Infrastructure (EGI, was also presented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A virtual FGM with District & Local Municipal Officials (Northern Cape Province and Western Cape Province) was held on 24 May 2022. ○ A virtual FGM was held with the commenting authority Northern Cape Dept of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform and the Western Cape Department of Environmental Affairs & Development Planning Officials, during which the Electrical Grid Infrastructure (EGI) was also presented. ○ A KSW was held on 24 May 2022 to which all OoS and Key Stakeholders from the Northern Cape and Western Cape Provinces were invited.

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
			<p>o A Poster Display and Public Meeting was held in Richmond Town Hall, Richmond, on 26 May 2022. Community members and residents from Richmond was also notified of the poster display and public meeting by utilising the RICHMOND UBUNTU MATTERS WhatsApp group which consists of 60 participants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation: Proof of consultation with I&APs and OoS throughout the EIA process to date is included in Appendices C5: Organs of State Correspondence & C6: I&AP Correspondence of the Revised EIA Report). • Comments & Responses Report: All comments received from the announcement of the Scoping & EIA process, those submitted during the 30-day review and comment period of the EIA Report have been captured in this C&RR which is attached as a separate document to the Revised EIA Report (refer Appendix C9: Comments & Responses Report). <p><u>Resubmission of EIA Report</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered I&APs, Organs of State and Key Stakeholders were notified of the intention of Great Karoo Renewable Energy (Pty) Ltd to resubmit the application at the initiation of the EIA Phase in terms of Regulation 21(2)(a) on 07 November 2022 (proof included in Appendices C5: Organs of State Correspondence & C6: I&AP Correspondence of the Revised EIA Report). <p><u>Revised EIA Report available for review and comment:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Registered I&APs were notified of the availability of the Revised EIA Report for a 30-day review and comment period via e-mail on 14 November 2022 (refer to

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
			<p>Appendix C6: I&AP Correspondence of the Revised EIA Report).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Commenting authorities, municipal councillor and local and district municipalities which have jurisdiction in the area were requested to submit written comments on the Revised EIA Report via email on 14 November 2022 (refer to Appendix C5: Organs of State Correspondence of the of the Revised EIA Report). o Advertisement placed in The Echo/Midland News on Friday, 11 November 2022 announcing the Revised EIA Report review and comment period as 14 November 2022 until 14 December 2022.
	(iv) Please ensure that all issues raised and comments received during the circulation of the draft EIAR from registered Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) and organs of state (including this Department's Biodiversity and Protected Area Sections), as listed in your I&APs Database, and others that have jurisdiction in respect of the proposed activity are adequately addressed and included in the final EIAR.		All issues raised and comments received during the 30-day review and comment period of the EIA Report, including those from registered I&APs, organs of state (including the Department's Biodiversity Conservation Directorate) and key stakeholders, as listed in Appendix C2: I&APs Database , have been adequately addressed in this C&RR and included as a separate document to the Revised EIA Report (refer to Appendix C9: Comments & Responses Report).
	(v) Copies of original comments received from I&APs and organs of state, which have jurisdiction in respect of the proposed activity are submitted to the Department with the final EIAR.		The written comments received from registered I&APs and Organs of State are included in Appendix C7: Comments Received of the Revised EIA Report.
	(vi) Proof of correspondence with the various stakeholders must be included in the final EIAR. Should you be unable to obtain comments, proof should be submitted to the Department of the attempts that were made to obtain comments. In terms of Regulation 41(2)(b) of the EIA		Commenting authorities, municipal councillor and local and district municipalities which have jurisdiction in the area were requested to submit written comments on the EIA Report via email on 13 May 2022 (refer to Appendix C5: Organs of State Correspondence of the of the Revised EIA Report).

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
	<p>Regulations, 2014, as amended, please provide proof of written notice for the availability of the EIAR for comment.</p>		<p>Registered I&APs were notified of the availability of the EIA Report for a 30-day review and comment period via e-mail on 13 May 2022 (refer to Appendix C6: I&AP Correspondence of the Revised EIA Report).</p> <p>An e-mail to all registered I&APs and OoS as a reminder of the availability of the EIA Report was sent on 07 June 2022 (refer to Appendices C5: Organs of State Correspondence & C6: I&AP Correspondence of the Revised EIA Report).</p> <p>All registered I&APs and Organs of State were notified of the availability of the Revised EIA Report and requested to provide comments on 14 November 2022 (refer to Appendices C5: Organs of State Correspondence & C6: I&AP Correspondence of the Revised EIA Report).</p>
	<p>(vii) All issues raised and comments received during the circulation of the draft EIAR from I&APs and organs of state which have jurisdiction in respect of the proposed activity are adequately addressed in the final EIAR, including comments from this Department, and must be incorporated into a Comments and Response Report (CRR).</p>		<p>All issues raised and comments received during 30-day review and comment period of the EIA Report from I&APs, organs of state and key stakeholders, including those received from the DFFE, have been captured in this C&RR and are adequately addressed, as applicable in the Revised EIA Report. All comments received on the Revised EIA Report will be included in the CRR to be submitted with the final EIA Report.</p>
	<p>(viii) The CRR report must be a separate document from the main report and the format must be in the table format as indicated in Annexure 1 of this comments letter.</p>		<p>The C&RR is included as a separate appendix to the Revised EIA Report as Appendix C9: Comments & Responses Report and is align with the table format as per the DFFE's Annexure 1 attached to their comments letter.</p>
	<p>(ix) Please refrain from summarising comments made by I&APs. All comments from I&APs must be copied verbatim and responded to clearly. Please note that a response such as "noted" is not regarded as an adequate response to I&AP's comments.</p>		<p>Comments received have not been summarised for inclusion in the C&RR and have been captured verbatim.</p> <p>All comments have been responded to adequately, as applicable, and no comments have been responded to as "noted".</p>

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
	(x) Minutes and attendance registers (where applicable) of any physical/virtual meetings held by the Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) with Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) and other role players must be included in the final EIAR.		All meeting notes (virtual and face-to-face meetings) are included in Appendix C8: Meeting Notes of the Revised EIA Report, including attendance records and registers, as applicable.
	d) Alternatives (i) Please provide a clear description of each of the preferred alternatives and provide a detailed assessment and motivation on why it is preferred. This must include the advantages and disadvantages that the proposed activity or alternatives will have on the environment and on the community.		An overview of the various alternatives (i.e., property/location alternatives, design and layout alternatives, activity alternatives, technology alternatives and the 'do-nothing' alternative) considered for the Merino Wind Farm facility is included in Chapter 3 of the Revised EIA Report.
	e) Layout and Sensitivity Maps (i) The final EIAR must provide coordinate points for the proposed development site (note that if the site has numerous bend points, at each bend point coordinates must be provided) as well as the start, middle and end point of all linear activities.		An appropriate facility layout map indicating the infrastructure listed in this comment is included as Figure 11.2, under Chapter 11, and Appendix O of the Revised EIA Report).
	(ii) A copy of the final layout map must be submitted with the final EIAR. All available biodiversity information must be used in the finalisation of the layout map. Existing infrastructure must be used as far as possible, e.g. roads. The layout map must indicate the following: a) The envisioned area for the infrastructure, i.e. placing of infrastructure and all associated infrastructure should be mapped at an appropriate scale. b) Location of turbines; c) All supporting onsite infrastructure required such as laydown areas, roads etc. (existing and proposed); d) Substation(s) and/or transformer(s) sites including their entire footprint;		

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e) Connection routes (including pylon positions) to the distribution/transmission network; and f) All necessary details regarding all possible locations and sizes of the infrastructure. g) All existing infrastructure on the site, especially internal road infrastructure. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (iii) Please provide an environmental sensitivity map which indicates the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The location of sensitive environmental features on site, e.g. CBAs, protected areas, heritage sites, wetlands, drainage lines etc. that will be affected by the facility and its associated infrastructure; b) Buffer areas; and c) All "no-go" areas. 		<p>An Environmental Sensitivity Map indicating all environmentally sensitive features is included as Figure 11.1 and Appendix O).</p> <p>A combined Layout and Environmental Sensitivity Map indicating all environmentally sensitive features and proposed infrastructure is included as Figure 11.1, and Appendix O of the Revised EIA Report).</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (iv) The above layout map must be overlain with the sensitivity map and a cumulative map which shows neighbouring energy developments and existing grid infrastructure. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (v) Google maps will not be accepted. 		
	<p>f) Specialist assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The final EIAR and all the attached specialist studies must indicate and adequately assess a consistent number of turbines. 		<p>The identified specialist studies include a detailed description of the methodology followed as well as an indication of the location and description of the development and all other associated infrastructure. Furthermore, the specialist studies provide a detailed description of the limitations to the studies.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (ii) The EAP must ensure that the terms of reference for all the identified specialist studies must include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A detailed description of the study's methodology; indication of the locations and descriptions of the development footprint, and all other associated infrastructures that they have assessed and are recommending for authorisations. b) Provide a detailed description of all limitations to the studies. All specialist studies must be conducted in the 		<p>The specialist's definition of 'no-go' area is the same as that of the Department and various 'no-go' areas, including their associated buffer areas, have been recommended by the specialists and have been by the developer when designing the facility layout.</p> <p>The attached specialist studies (refer to Appendix D -M of the Revised EIA Report) include an assessment of the identified</p>

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
	<p>right season and providing that as a limitation will not be allowed.</p> <p>c) Please note that the Department considers a 'no-go' area, as an area where no development of any infrastructure is allowed; therefore, no development of associated infrastructure including access roads is allowed in the 'no-go' areas.</p> <p>d) Should the specialist definition of 'no-go' area differ from the Department's definition; this must be clearly indicated. The specialist must also indicate the 'no-go' area's buffer if applicable.</p> <p>e) All specialist studies must be final, and provide detailed/practical mitigation measures for the preferred alternative and recommendations, and must not recommend further studies to be completed post EA.</p> <p>f) Bird and Bat specialist studies must have support from Birdlife South Africa and SABAA.</p> <p>g) Should a specialist recommend specific mitigation measures, these must be clearly indicated.</p>		<p>potential impacts, as well as practical mitigation measures, and where relevant, enhancement measures.</p> <p>The mitigation and enhancement measures proposed by the specialists are included in Chapters 9 and 10 of the EIA Report, as well as the project EMPr which is attached as Appendix N and O to the Revised EIA Report.</p> <p>The Bird and Bat specialist studies have been undertaken in accordance with the approved guidelines for bird and bat studies for renewable energy developments. These guidelines are supported by Birdlife South Africa and the South African Bat Assessment Association (SABAA).</p>
	<p>(iii) Should the appointed specialists specify contradicting recommendations, the EAP must clearly indicate the most reasonable recommendation and substantiate this with defensible reasons; and were necessary, include further expertise advice.</p>		<p>No contradicting recommendations were provided by the specialists as part of the Basic Assessment process.</p> <p>The specialist studies have been conducted in accordance with Government Notice No. 320 of 20 March 2020 (i.e., "the protocols"), and Government Notice No. 1150 of 30 October 2020 (i.e., protocols for terrestrial plant and animal species).</p> <p>Signed and commissioned specialist declarations, including the scientific organisation registration/member number, and status of registration/membership for each specialist are contained in Appendix Q of the Revised EIA Report.</p>

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
	<p>(iv) It is further brought to your attention that Procedures for the Assessment and Minimum Criteria for Reporting in identified Environmental Themes in terms of Sections 24(5)(a) and (h) and 44 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998, when applying for Environmental Authorisation, which were promulgated in Government Notice No. 320 of 20 March 2020 (i.e. "the Protocols") and in Government Notice No. 1150 of 30 October 2020 (i.e. protocols for terrestrial plant and animal species), have come into effect. Please note that specialist assessments must be conducted in accordance with these protocols.</p>		<p>The specialist studies have been conducted in accordance with Government Notice No. 320 of 20 March 2020 (i.e., "the protocols"), and Government Notice No. 1150 of 30 October 2020 (i.e., protocols for terrestrial plant and animal species).</p>
	<p>(v) <u>As such, the Specialist Declaration of Interest forms must also indicate the scientific organisation registration/member number and status of registration/membership for each specialist.</u></p>		<p>Signed and commissioned specialist declarations, including the scientific organisation registration/member number, and status of registration/membership for each specialist are contained in Appendix Q of the Revised EIA Report.</p>
	<p>g) Cumulative Assessment</p> <p>(i) Should there be any other similar projects within a 30km radius of the proposed development site, a cumulative impact assessment for all identified and assessed impacts must be undertaken to indicate the following:</p> <p>(a) Identified cumulative impacts must be clearly defined, and where possible the size of the identified impact must be quantified and indicated, i.e. hectares of cumulatively transformed land.</p> <p>(b) Detailed process flow and proof must be provided, to indicate how the specialist's recommendations, mitigation measures and conclusions from the various similar developments in the area were taken into consideration in the assessment of cumulative impacts and when the conclusion and mitigation measures were drafted for this project.</p>		<p>Authorised renewable energy facilities within a 30km radius of the proposed development have been identified and detailed in Chapter 10 of the Revised EIA Report. An assessment of potential cumulative impacts is included in Chapter 10 of the Revised EIA Report.</p>

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
	<p>(c) The cumulative impacts significance rating must also inform the need and desirability of the proposed development.</p> <p>(d) A cumulative impact environmental statement on whether the proposed development must proceed.</p>		
	<p>h) Environmental Management Programme (EMPr)</p> <p>(i) It is drawn to your attention that for substation and overhead electricity transmission and distribution infrastructure, when such facilities trigger activity 11 or 47 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations Listing Notice 1 of 2014, as amended, and any other listed and specified activities necessary for the realisation of such facilities, the generic Environmental Management Programme, contemplated in the Regulations must be used and submitted with the final report over and above the EMPr for the facility.</p>		<p>A facility EMPr for the facility including the requirements listed in this comment is included as an Appendix N of this Revised EIA Report.</p>
	<p>(ii) The EMPr must comply with Appendix 4 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014, as amended.</p>		
	<p>(iii) The EMPr must also include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) All recommendations and mitigation measures recorded in the EIAR and the specialist studies conducted. b) The final site layout map. c) Measures as dictated by the final site layout map and micro-siting. d) An environmental sensitivity map indicating environmental sensitive areas and features identified during the EIA process. e) A map combining the final layout map superimposed (overlain) on the environmental sensitivity map. 		

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
	<p>f) An alien invasive management plan to be implemented during construction and operation. The plan must include mitigation measures to reduce the invasion of alien species and ensure that the continuous monitoring and removal of alien species is undertaken.</p> <p>g) A plant rescue and protection plan which allows for the maximum transplant of conservation important species from areas to be transformed. This plan must be compiled by a vegetation specialist familiar with the site and be implemented prior to commencement of the construction phase.</p> <p>h) A re-vegetation and habitat rehabilitation plan to be implemented during construction and operation. Restoration must be undertaken as soon as possible after completion of construction activities to reduce the amount of habitat converted at any one time and to speed up the recovery to natural habitats.</p> <p>i) A traffic management plan to ensure that no hazards would results from the increased traffic and that traffic flow would not be adversely impacted. This plan must include measures to minimize impacts on local commuters.</p> <p>j) A storm water management plan to be implemented during construction and operation. The plan must ensure compliance with applicable regulations and prevent off-site migration of contaminated storm water or increased soil erosion. The plan must include the construction of appropriate design measures that allow surface and subsurface movement of water along drainage lines so as not to impede natural surface and subsurface flows.</p>		

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
	<p>k) A fire management plan to be implemented during the construction.</p> <p>l) An effective monitoring system to detect any leakage or spillage of all hazardous substances during their transportation, handling, use and storage. This must include precautionary measures to limit the possibility of oil and other toxic liquids from entering the soil or storm water systems.</p> <p>m) Measures to protect hydrological features such as streams, rivers, pans, wetlands, dams and their catchments, and other environmental sensitive areas from construction impacts including the direct or indirect spillage of pollutants.</p>		
	<p>i) Specialist Declaration of Interest</p> <p>(i) Specialist Declaration of Interest forms must be attached to the final EIAR. You are therefore requested to submit original signed Specialist Declaration of Interest forms for each specialist study conducted. The forms are available on Department's website (please use the Department's template).</p>		<p>Signed and commissioned specialist declarations, including the scientific organisation registration/member number, and status of registration/membership for each specialist are contained in Appendix R of the Revised EIA Report.</p>
	<p>j) Undertaking of an Oath</p> <p>(i) Please note that the final EIAR must have an undertaking under oath/affirmation by the EAP.</p> <p>(ii) Based on the above, you are therefore required to include an undertaking under oath or affirmation by the EAP (administered by a Commissioner of Oaths) as per Appendix 3 of the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended, which states that the EIAR must include: <i>"an undertaking under oath or affirmation by the EAP in relation to:</i> <i>(i) the correctness of the information provided in the reports;</i></p>		<p>An undertaking under oath or affirmation by the EAP (administered by a Commissioner of Oaths) as per Appendix 3 of the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014 is attached to this Revised EIA Report as Appendix S.</p>

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
	<p><i>(ii) the inclusion of comments and inputs from stakeholders and I&APs;</i> <i>(iii) the inclusion of inputs and recommendations from the specialist reports where relevant; and</i> <i>(iv) any information provided by the EAP to interested and affected parties and any responses by the EAP to comments or inputs made by interested and affected parties"</i></p> <p>General Please also ensure that the final EIAR includes the period for which the Environmental Authorisation is required and the date on which the activity will be concluded as per Appendix 3 of the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended.</p> <p>Should you fail to meet any of the timeframes stipulated in Regulation 23 of the NEMA EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended, your application will lapse.</p> <p>You are hereby reminded of Section 24F of the National Environmental Management Act, Act No. 107 of 1998, as amended, that no activity may commence prior to an Environmental Authorisation being granted by the Department.</p>		<p>The period for which the Environmental Authorisation is required would be included in Section 11.6 of the Revised EIA Report. The date on which the activity will be concluded will only be clarified once the details of the procurement programme for renewable energy projects are provided by government. As detailed in Section 2.2.3 of the Revised EIA Report, following selection of the project as Preferred Bidder, construction is expected to take 15-18 months depending on the choice of technology and the lead time for equipment at the time. Operation of the facility is expected to be 20 years.</p> <p>The requirements of Regulation 23 have been noted and it is confirmed that the final EIA Report will be submitted within these regulated timeframes.</p> <p>The applicant is cognisant of the fact that the activity may commence prior to an Environmental Authorisation being granted by the Department.</p>
2.	<p>The Directorate: Biodiversity Conservation has reviewed and evaluated the report and does not have any objections to the Draft Scoping Report & Plan of Study provided that all relevant National and Provincial biodiversity guidelines will be considered in the final report.</p>	<p>Portia Makitla DFFE: Biodiversity Conservation Directorate</p> <p>Letter: 13 June 2022</p>	<p>The comment is noted. All relevant National and Provincial biodiversity guidelines have been considered in the EIA and specialist studies.</p>

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
	Please also note that any development within very high sensitivity area; where residual impacts will result with very high significant impacts rating will not be supported. The final EIR must be submitted for review.		It is noted that any development within very high sensitivity area; where residual impacts will result with very high significant impacts rating will not be supported. The facility layout presented in the report has been developed to minimise impacts on these areas. The Revised EIA Report has been submitted to DFFE Biodiversity Directorate for comment.
	NB: The Public Participation Process documents related to Biodiversity EIA for review and queries should be submitted to the Directorate: Biodiversity Conservation at Email; BCAdmin@environment.gov.za for attention of Mr. Seoka Lekota		All public participation documents are submitted as per this requirement.

2.2. Key Stakeholders and I&APs

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
1.	SARAO has undertaken a high-level impact assessment and based on the information provided, it was determined that the project represents a low risk of interference to the SKA radio telescope with a compliance surplus of 35.20 dBm/Hz. As such, we do not have any objection to the proposed development.	Selaelo Matlhane Spectrum & Telecommunication Manager SARAO Letter: 02 February 2022	The comment is noted. No response is required.
2.	I support the project it will bring jobs for our people. We have been disposition by lack of opportunities, this is hope for us. Can you resend my password.	Fezile Olifant Asange and Azile General Trading (Pty) Ltd E-mail: 08 June 2022	The I&APs comment of appreciation is acknowledged and shared with the project team. The release code was WhatsApp to the I&AP and no further action is required.
3.	1. These comments and objections are submitted by AVDS Environmental Consultants on behalf of the Mr. Jan Picard of Ratelfontein Private Gamer Reserve (RPGR). 2. RPGR directly abuts the proposed Merino Wind Energy Facility (MWEF) on its southern boundary.	André van der Spuy EAP AVDS (representing Jan Picard: RPGR)	The comments and information on Ratelfontein Private Gamer Reserve are noted. Specific comments are addressed in the sections below.

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
	<p>3. RPGR's principle forms of business and functions are game farming, hunting and eco-tourism. RPGR generally operates in the high-end luxury ecotourism, hunting and game industry and has a number of lodges and a luxury country guesthouse, "Bloemhof". As such the hunting and tourism operations of RPGR rely fundamentally upon the areas natural and undisturbed scenery and the "sense of place" obtained from the expansive vistas which are typical of the Karoo. Any negative impact on the latter will therefore naturally have serious and un-mitigatable visual and secondary consequences for RPGR and its owner. The entire property of RPGR must be considered to be highly visually sensitive given the nature and extent of operations that range over the entire property. It is the concern of RPGR that the proposed Merino Wind Energy Facility (MWEF) and its associated renewable energy projects and electrical infrastructure will have serious negative impacts on RPGR and its operations and asset value and that such impacts will be at the very least of very high negative significance.</p>	<p>Letter: 14 June 2022</p>	
	<p>It must be noted that the concerns of the objector extend to the care and protection of the environment in general.</p>		
	<p>This objection reminds the EAP that the latter must ensure that "negative impacts on the environment and on (the objector's) environmental rights be anticipated and prevented, and where they cannot be altogether prevented, are minimised and remedied". Thus proper, correct and acceptable mitigation of the inevitable negative impacts (including those not yet identified or otherwise ignored or underplayed) must be effected, with the "no go" option considered as the ultimate mitigation measure. The "no go" option remains the objector's preferred option but should the MWEF proposal proceed, in any</p>		<p>The EAP is aware that "negative impacts on the environment and on environmental rights be anticipated and prevented, and where they cannot be altogether prevented, are minimised and remedied". The EIA process has included an assessment of all identified impacts as defined by the DFFE online screening tool and raised through the process. All information has been presented within the Revised EIA Report for review and comment by registered I&APs, Organs of State and the public. All comments received will be included in the</p>

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
	<p>amended or reduced form, then it will be necessary to fairly and equally compensate (all) affected parties for and/or offset those residual negative impacts which the final approved MWEF development would undeniably have upon the objector, and the environment itself.</p>		<p>final EIA Report which will be submitted to the DFFE for review and decision-making.</p>
	<p>This objection must not be presumed to constitute the full range of the objector's concerns with the MWEF, and the objectors reserve their right to table any further matters that may come to their attention going forward.</p>		<p>The objector's rights to table further comment is acknowledged.</p>
	<p><u>Visual Impact unacceptable.</u></p> <p>From the Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) that has been undertaken for the MWEF it is clearly apparent that the visual impact upon RPGR will be unacceptable despite whatever findings and justifications are given by the specialist and EAP and which parties have never bothered to ground truth their findings by conducting a visual impact assessment from the grounds of RPGR.</p>		<p>An additional site visit by the visual specialist project team was undertaken and the areas of concern visited (refer to attached minutes of the site meeting prepared by the visual specialist team – Appendix A). The VIA has been updated to include additional information on the impact of the project on the RPGR, and additional mitigation measures recommended (refer to Appendix K of the Revised EIA Report). The revised VIA was considered by the social specialist who also provided an updated SIA including additional recommendations for mitigation (refer to Appendix L of the Revised EIA Report).</p>
	<p>The VIA undertaken for the MWEF is an exceptionally poor study which is misleading and substantially inaccurate and it is clearly designed to favour the interests of the applicant and the MWEF's approval by understating the extent and significance of the high negative visual impacts. The fact that it mentions "Ratelfontein" but once in its entirety, despite RPGR being located directly adjacent to the MWEF, and being a visually sensitive tourism operation, and having a track record of some 8 years of public opposition to other proximate wind farms (such as Ishwati and Umsinde Emoyeni WEFs), speaks sufficiently to this point.</p>		<p>The additional information regarding RPGR, additional impact tables provided by the specialists specifically considering RPGR and the additional recommended mitigation measures have been included within the Revised EIA Report. Changes made to the Revised EIA Report are underlined for ease of reference.</p>
	<p>The visibility of wind turbines and electrical infrastructure from RPGR, from any distance, is unacceptable to the objector and will also be so to the clientele of RPGR. The visual sensitivity</p>		

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
	<p>distances used in the VIA and Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) significantly under-state the true negative visual sensitivity and associated impacts in order to unfairly advance the interests of the applicant. Furthermore, it is noted that the visual sensitivity analysis used a grossly and intentionally misrepresented turbine height for the visual impact analysis of the MWEF turbines by using a height of only 170m (hub height) instead of the full and true height of the moving turbine at 250m (tip height) – see Figure 9.16 of the DEIR. The difference of 80m additional visual pollution is significant and will raise the already unacceptable visual impact upon RPGR even further by another. Further visual impact assessment is therefore required by an objective and honest VIA specialist and the visual impact on RPGR will need to be accurately undertaken.</p> <p>Even although the cumulative visual impact assessment has used a significantly under-stated and misleading threshold radius of 30km from the MWEF for its assessment it nonetheless still finds that the cumulative visual impact contributed by the MWEF on the quality of the landscape will be of high negative significance and that mitigation will be of no use. This is a fatal flaw as its represents an environmentally unsustainable impact that cannot even be remedied. The transferred impact of this negative cumulative visual impact upon RPGR is ignored in the Draft EIR and VIA.</p> <p>The EAP and VIA specialist have not properly considered the cumulative visual impact upon RPGR. The visual impact of the approved Ishwati Emoyeni WEF on RPGR, in combination with that of the MWEF is ignored. From the Ishwati Final EIR (page 2 - 33) it was stated that;</p> <p>“The visual impact of the Ishwati Emoyeni Wind energy Facility has however been assessed to be high (regardless of mitigation</p>		

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
	<p>measures) for at least two farms which provide national and international tourists the opportunity to experience this characteristic of the landscape. Properties which constitute Ratelfontein Private Game Reserve and Badsfontein Country House border the Ishwati Emoyeni project area to the north and south respectively, and the Visual Impact Assessment (see Chapter 9) has determined that the viewpoints from these properties will be highly affected by the proposed wind turbines. In addition it is highly likely that the sense of remoteness which is an important tourist attraction of the region will be considerably reduced by the highly visible turbines regardless of the applied mitigation measures."</p> <p>The Ishwati Emoyeni WEF is the subject of an amendment (which is under appeal) but the latest VIA study undertaken for that Amendment Application has been found to be substantially applicant-biased and to understate significantly the true impact of the Amended Ishwati Emoyeni WEF. That notwithstanding, the VIA study (Section 10.2 "Constraints") for the amendment application still specifically listed RPGR as a "constraint" to the proposed Amended Ishwati emoyeni WEF, per:</p> <p>"There are two tourist related activities in the zone of visual influence, with the Ratelfontein Game Farm located adjacent to the project area. Although the lodge is located in a shallow valley on a northern aspect facing away from the wind farm, more elevated areas of the farm will be exposed to views of turbines."</p> <p>The Ishwati Emoyeni WEF socio-economic study offered the following relevant advice of significance:</p>		

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
	<p>"The visual specialist study notes that there are a number of viewpoints on the Ratelfontein Game Farm with scenic vistas that will be highly exposed wind turbines (Holland, 2014). This is a concern given that the relatively unspoilt nature of the area. It is also a particular risk, given the luxury hunting experience on offer at Ratelfontein where it is highly likely that the hunters would expect a wild and unspoilt experience. Badsfontein also sells itself on its unspoilt and quiet nature offering activities such as walking and horse riding trails that pass in close proximity to the proposed wind turbines just north of the farm boundary."</p> <p>It is therefore quite clear that consideration of merely the lodges and guesthouse on RPGR is inaccurate and misleading and the MWEF Draft EIR fails in this regard. It is also clear that RPGR already stands to be significantly negative visually impacted by the Ishwati Emoyeni WEF even before the MWEF adds its negative contribution and that the hunting experience will be very likely damaged. This aspect has not been considered by eth MWEF VIA and Draft EIR and instead the EAP has excused doing so on the basis that the owner(s) of RPGR have apparently indicated that they are not opposed to wind turbines located north of the N! National Road. On the contrary Mr. Jan Picard has made it explicitly clear to the author that he is opposed to the views of ANY and ALL wind turbines unconditionally.</p>		

3. COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING THE SCOPING REPORT REVIEW & COMMENT PERIOD

3.1. Organs of State

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
1.	Please apply for water use authorisation where necessary. Attached is the Section 21 c and I water uses checklist	Pieter Ackerman Chief Landscape Architect Sub Directorate Instream Water Use DWS E-mail: 11 November 2021	The water use authorisation application process will be initiated once positive Environmental Authorisations (EAs) have been received and the projects are selected as Preferred Bidder under the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Programme (REIPPPP) or a similar programme.
2.	Your notification dated 12 November 2021 refers. In reference to the Electronic Communications Act no. 36 of 2005 I hereby inform you that the proposed work indicated on your drawing is approved in terms of the Electronic Communications Act no. 36 of 2005 No underground telecommunication infrastructure owned by Telkom SA SOC Ltd is affected. Approval of the proposed route is valid for six months. If construction has not yet commenced within this time period then the file must be resubmitted for approval. Any changes and deviations from the original planning during construction must be immediately communicated to this office.	Portia Mkhathini Wayleave Officer Network Operations openserve (Telkom SA SOC Ltd) E-mail: 18 November 2021	The validity of the approval of the proposed route for a six (6)-month period is noted and has been submitted to the applicant for record keeping purposes. Consultation with Openserve will take place during the EIA Phase in which the company will be informed that should the projects receive positive EAs, the applicant will be in contact with Openserve before construction commences.
3.	The SAHRA Archaeology, Palaeontology and Meteorites (APM) Unit notes the pending assessment of the impact to heritage resources and requests that the assessment comply with section 38(3) of the NHRA. The Heritage Impact Assessment	Natasha Higgitt Heritage Officer SAHRA	As part of the Scoping Phase, a heritage screener was produced for the proposed development which indicated that as few or no surveys have been undertaken for the

	<p>(HIA) must contain an archaeological component that must be conducted by a qualified archaeologist and the report comply with the SAHRA 2007 Minimum Standards: Archaeological and Palaeontological Components of Impact Assessment Reports.</p>	<p>Letter: 03 December 2021</p>	<p>proposed development, a full Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) with a detailed field component must be undertaken. The full HIA will be submitted as part of the EIA Report during the EIA Phase of the process. As per this requirement, the HIA will contain an archaeological component which has been conducted by a qualified archaeologist. Furthermore, the report will be prepared in accordance with the SAHRA Minimum Standards: Archaeological and Palaeontological Components of Impact Assessment Report.</p>
	<p>The proposed development is located within an area of very high and moderate Palaeontological Sensitivity as per the SAHRIS PalaeoSensitivity map. As such, a field-based Palaeontological Impact Assessment (PIA) must be undertaken by a qualified palaeontologist. (See https://www.palaeosa.org/heritage-practitioners.html for a list of qualified palaeontologists). The report must comply with the 2012 Minimum Standards: Palaeontological Components of Heritage Impact Assessments.</p>		<p>A field based Palaeontological Impact Assessment (PIA) will be submitted as part of the EIA Report during the EIA Phase of the process. As per this requirement, the assessment will be conducted by a qualified palaeontologist listed on the list of heritage practitioners (https://www.palaeosa.org/heritage-practitioners.html). Furthermore, the report will be prepared in accordance with the 2012 Minimum Standards: Palaeontological Components of Heritage Impact Assessments.</p>
	<p>Any other heritage resources as defined in section 3 of the NHRA that may be impacted, such as built structures over 60 years old, sites of cultural significance associated with oral histories, burial grounds and graves, graves of victims of conflict, and cultural landscapes or viewsapes must also be assessed.</p>		<p>As per this requirement, the HIA will include an assessment of all relevant heritage resources as defined in Section 3 of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA), including cultural landscapes or viewsapes.</p>
	<p>Previous comments regarding buffers from scenic routes in the Northern Cape must be taken into consideration during the assessment on the cultural landscape or viewsapes, and the results of the Visual Impact Assessment must be incorporated into the HIA.</p>		<p>A cultural landscape assessment will be undertaken for the proposed development, the results of which will be incorporated into the HIA to be submitted as part of the EIA Report during the EIA Phase of the process.</p> <p>As per this requirement, the cultural landscape assessment will take into consideration buffers from scenic routes in the Northern Cape. In addition, the results of the Visual Impact</p>

	<p>Further comments will be issued upon receipt of the above requested reports and the draft EIA with all appendices.</p>		<p>Assessment will be incorporated into the cultural landscape assessment.</p> <p>A copy of the Final Scoping Report and the draft EIA Report and supporting appendices will be uploaded onto the South African Heritage Resources Information System (SAHRIS) website under SAHRIS CaseID 17539 for SAHRA's review and comment.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p><u>This letter serves to inform you that the following information must be included to the final SR:</u></p> <p>a) Listed Activities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Please ensure that all relevant listed activities are applied for, are specific and can be linked to the development activity or infrastructure as described in the project description. ii. The listed activities represented in the final SR and the application form must be the same and correct. iii. If the activities applied for in the application form differ from those mentioned in the final SR, an amended application form must be submitted. iv. Please note that the Department's application form template has been amended and can be downloaded from the following link https://www.environment.gov.za/documents/forms. <p>b) Layout & Sensitivity Maps</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The final SR must provide coordinate points for the proposed development site (note that if the site has numerous bend points, at each bend point coordinates must be provided) as well as the start, middle and end point of all linear activities. ii. All preferred turbine positions must be clearly numbered. The turbine position numbers must be 	<p>Herman Alberts Case Officer DFFE</p> <p>Letter: 06 December 2021</p>	<p>All relevant activities applied for in the application for an Environmental Authorisation (EA) and included in the Scoping Report are relevant to the Merino Wind Farm and its associated infrastructure as described in the project description.</p> <p>The listed activities applied for in the application form are the same as those included in the final Scoping Report. No amended application form is submitted with the final Scoping Report as no changes have been introduced to the application form since the version submitted to the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) on 12 November 2021. It can be confirmed that the latest version of the application form, dated April 2021, as available from the DFFE's website, has been used for this project.</p> <p>The final Scoping Report includes coordinate points of the proposed development site (refer to Table 1.1., Chapter 1).</p> <p>An appropriate facility layout showing all preferred turbine positions, including turbine position numbers, is not available at this stage of the process. A layout map will however be included as part of the EIA Report to be submitted during the EIA Phase of the process and as per this requirement, turbine positions will be clearly numbered, and the turbine position</p>

	<p>consistently used in all maps to be included in the reports.</p> <p>iii. The final SR must provide the technical details of the proposed facility in a table format as well as their description and/or dimensions.</p>		<p>numbers will be consistently used in all maps to be included in the report.</p> <p>The final Scoping Report includes technical details of the proposed facility in a table format as well as their description and dimensions (refer to Table 2.1, Chapter 2).</p>
	<p>iv. Please provide a layout map which indicates the following:</p> <p>a) The envisioned area for the wind energy facility, i.e. placing of wind turbines and all associated infrastructure;</p> <p>b) Permanent laydown area footprint;</p> <p>c) All supporting onsite infrastructure e.g. roads (existing and proposed);</p> <p>d) Substation(s) and/or transformer(s) sites including their entire footprint;</p> <p>e) Connection routes (including pylon positions) to the distribution/transmission network; and</p> <p>f) All existing infrastructure on the site.</p>		<p>An appropriate facility layout map indicating the infrastructure listed in this comment is not available at this stage of the process. A layout map will however be included as part of the EIA Report to be submitted during the EIA Phase of the process and will be prepared in accordance with this requirement.</p>
	<p>v. Please provide an environmental sensitivity map which indicates the following:</p> <p>a) The location of sensitive environmental features on site e.g. CBAs, heritage sites, wetlands, drainage lines etc. that will be affected;</p> <p>b) Buffer areas; and,</p> <p>c) All "no-go" areas.</p> <p>vi. The above layout map must be overlain with the sensitivity map and a cumulative map which shows neighbouring energy developments and existing grid infrastructure.</p>		<p>A map showing the envisioned area for the Merino Wind Farm overlain with sensitive environmental features on site, buffer areas and all no-go areas is included as Figure 10.1 (Chapter 10) in the final Scoping Report. Once a detailed facility layout is available for the proposed development, the layout map will be overlain with the sensitivity map as per this requirement.</p> <p>A cumulative map which shows the development area for the Merino Wind Farm in relation to neighbouring energy projects in the area and existing infrastructure is included as Figure 9.9 (Chapter 9) in the final Scoping Report.</p>
	<p>d) Alternatives</p> <p>i. Please provide a description of any identified alternatives for the proposed activity that are feasible</p>		<p>An overview of the various alternatives (i.e., property/location alternatives, design and layout alternatives, activity alternatives, technology alternatives and the 'do-nothing'</p>

	<p>and reasonable, including the advantages and disadvantages that the proposed activity or alternatives will have on the environment and on the community that may be affected by the activity as per Appendix 2 of GN R.982 of 2014 (as amended).</p>		<p>alternative) considered for the Merino Wind Farm is included in Chapter 3 of the final Scoping Report.</p>
	<p>ii. Alternatively, you should submit written proof of an investigation and motivation if no reasonable or feasible alternatives exist in terms of Appendix 2.</p>		<p>Where no alternatives have been considered, motivation has been included (refer to Section 3.3. of Chapter 3 of the final Scoping Report).</p>
	<p>e) Public Participation Process</p> <p>i. Please ensure that all issues raised and comments received during the circulation of the draft SR from registered I&APs and organs of state (<u>including this Department's Biodiversity & Conservation Section</u>), which have jurisdiction in respect of the proposed activity are adequately addressed in the final SR.</p>		<p>All issues raised and comments received during the 30-day review and comment period of the Scoping Report, including those of the DFFE: Directorate Biodiversity Conservation, have been adequately addressed in this C&RR to be included as Appendix C9 to the final Scoping Report.</p>
	<p>ii. Proof of correspondence with the various stakeholders must be included in the final SR. Should you be unable to obtain comments, proof should be submitted to the Department of the attempts that were made to obtain comments.</p>		<p>Proof of correspondence with the various stakeholders is included as Appendix C5 and C6 of the final Scoping Report, including attempts to obtain comments during the 30-day review and comment period of the Scoping Report.</p>
	<p>iii. The Public Participation Process must be conducted in terms of Regulation 39, 40 41, 42, 43 & 44 of the EIA Regulations 2014, as amended and as per the approved PP Plan.</p>		<p>The Public Participation Process has been conducted in terms of Regulations 39, 40, 41, 42, 43 & 44 of the EIA Regulations 2014, as amended (GNR 326), as well as in accordance with the approved Public Participation Plan (Appendix C1) as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project database: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A register of I&APs has been compiled and will be updated throughout the EIA process (Appendix C2). ● EIA & Public Participation process announcements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The BID, accompanied by a cover letter inviting I&APs to register on the project database, was distributed via email to identified I&APs and relevant OoS on 21

			<p>October 2021 (refer to Appendices C4, C5 & C6 of the final Scoping Report).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">o An advertisement was placed in The Echo Newspaper on Thursday, 23 September 2021 (refer to Appendix C3 of the final Scoping Report).o Site Notices announcing the EIA process were placed at visible points the along the boundary of the proposed development site in accordance with the requirements of the EIA Regulations on 28-30 September 2021 (refer to Appendix C3 of the final Scoping Report).o Process Notices were placed at various public places in Richmond on 28-30 September 2021 (refer to Appendix C3 of the final Scoping Report).• Scoping Report available for review and comment:<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Registered I&APs were notified of the availability of the Scoping Report for a 30-day review and comment period via e-mail on 12 November 2021 (refer to Appendix C6 of the final Scoping Report).o Commenting authorities, municipal councillors and local and district municipalities which have jurisdiction in the area were requested to submit written comments on the Scoping Report via e-mail on 12 November 2021 (refer to Appendix C5 of the final Scoping Report).o An advertisement was placed in The Echo Newspaper on Friday, 12 November 2021 (refer to Appendix C3 of the final Scoping Report).o Live read (radio) on Radio Sonder Grense (RSG) 100-104 FM announcing the availability of the Scoping Report for a 30-day review and comment period was aired on Saturday, 13 November 2021. A further live read as a reminder of the availability of the Scoping Report for review and comment was aired on Saturday, 29 November 2021 (refer to Appendix C3 of the final Scoping Report for proof of the live read).
--	--	--	--

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attempt to obtain comments on the Scoping Report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An e-mail to all registered I&APs and OoS as a reminder of the availability of the Scoping Report for review and comment was sent on 06 December 2021 (refer to Appendices C5 & C6 of the final Scoping Report). ● Various Meetings were held during the 30-day review and comment period of the Scoping Report (refer to Appendix C8 of the final Scoping Report for the meeting notes): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A virtual Key Stakeholder Workshop (KSW) was held on 23 November 2021. ○ A virtual Focus Group Meeting (FGM) with District & Local Municipal Officials was held on 06 December 2021. ○ An Information Session / Poster Display was held at the Richmond Showgrounds on 02 December 2021 from 14h00 to 17h00. ○ A FGM with landowners and land occupiers was held on 02 December 2021 at 18h00. ○ A FGM with the Ubuntu Local Municipality Officials was held on 03 December 2021. ● Consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Proof of consultation with I&APs and OoS throughout the EIA process to date is included in Appendices C5 & C6 of the final Scoping Report. ● Comments & Responses Report: All comments received from the announcement of the Scoping and EIA process and those submitted during the 30-day review and comment period of the Scoping Report have been captured in this C&RR which is attached to the final Scoping Report as Appendix C9.
	<p>iv. A comments and response trail report (C&R) must be submitted with the final SR. The C&R report must incorporate all historical comments for this</p>		<p>All comments received from the announcement of the Scoping and EIA process and those submitted during the 30-day review and comment period of the Scoping Report have</p>

<p>development. The C&R report must be a separate document from the main report and the format must be in the table format as indicated in Annexure 1 of this comments letter.</p>		<p>been captured in this C&RR which is attached to the final Scoping Report as Appendix C9.</p>
<p>v. Please refrain from summarising comments made by I&APs. All comments from I&APs must be copied verbatim and responded to clearly. Please note that a response such as "Noted" is not regarded as an adequate response to I&APs' comments.</p>		<p>Comments received have not been summarised for inclusion in the C&RR and have been captured verbatim.</p> <p>All comments have been responded to adequately, as applicable, and no comments have been responded to as "noted".</p>
<p>vi. The final SR must provide evidence that all identified and relevant competent authorities have been given an opportunity to comment on the proposed development particularly the Western Cape Department of Western Cape Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, and the District and Local Municipalities.</p>		<p>The Scoping Report has not been submitted to the Western Cape Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning as the project is located within the Northern Cape Province. The Scoping Report has been submitted to the relevant competent authorities within the Northern Cape Province for comment, including the Pixley ka Seme District and the Ubuntu Local Municipalities.</p>
<p>vii. Minutes and attendance registers (where applicable) of any physical/virtual meetings held by the Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) with Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) and other role players must be included in the final SR.</p>		<p>All meeting notes (virtual and face-to-face meetings) are included in Appendix C8 of the final Scoping Report, including attendance registers.</p>
<p>f) Specialist Assessments</p> <p>i. Specialist Declaration of Interest forms must be attached to the final SR. The forms are available on Department's website (please use the Department's template).</p>		<p>Signed and commissioned specialist declarations have been included as Appendix N to the final Scoping Report.</p>
<p>ii. The final EIAR and all the attached specialist studies must indicate and adequately assess a consistent number of turbines.</p>		<p>The final EIA Report to be submitted during the EIA Phase of the process, including the specialist studies, will assess a consistent number of turbines.</p> <p>The final Scoping Report, including the attached specialist studies, assess a consistent number of turbines (i.e., 45 turbines).</p>

	<p>iii. The EAP must ensure that the terms of reference for all the identified specialist studies include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A detailed description of the study's methodology; indication of the locations and descriptions of the development footprint, and all other associated infrastructures that they have assessed and are recommending for authorisation. b) Provide a detailed description of all limitations to the studies. All specialist studies must be conducted in the right season and providing that as a limitation will not be allowed. c) Please note that the Department considers a 'no-go' area, as an area where no development of any infrastructure is allowed; therefore, no development of associated infrastructure including access roads is allowed in the 'no-go' areas. d) Should the specialist definition of 'no-go' area differ from the Department's definition; this must be clearly indicated. The specialist must also indicate the 'no-go' area's buffer if applicable. e) All specialist studies must be final, and provide detailed/practical mitigation measures for the preferred alternative and recommendations, and must not recommend further studies to be completed post EA. f) Bird and Bat specialist studies must have support from Birdlife South Africa and SABAA. g) Should a specialist recommend specific mitigation measures, these must be clearly indicated. 		<p>The identified specialist studies include a detailed description of the methodology followed as well as an indication of the location and description of the development and all other associated infrastructure. Furthermore, the specialist studies, with the exception of the heritage screener, provide a detailed description of the limitations to the studies. The full HIA to be submitted as part of the EIA Report will however include limitations to the study.</p> <p>The specialist's definition of 'no-go' area is the same as that of the Department and various 'no-go' areas, including their associated buffer areas, have been recommended by the specialists for consideration in the design of the facility layout.</p> <p>Since the project is currently in the Scoping Phase, the specialist studies attached to the final Scoping Report only include scoping of potential issues. A full assessment of the identified issues will be undertaken by the specialists during the EIA Phase of the process. These assessments will include mitigation measures and where relevant, enhancement measures.</p> <p>The Bird and Bat specialist studies have been undertaken in accordance with the approved guidelines for bird and bat studies for wind energy developments. These guidelines are supported by Birdlife South Africa and the South African Bat Assessment Association (SABAA).</p>
	<p>iv. Should the appointed specialists specify contradicting recommendations, the EAP must clearly indicate the most reasonable recommendation and substantiate</p>		<p>This comment is noted and will be taken into consideration during the EIA Phase of the process.</p>

	<p>this with defensible reasons; and were necessary, include further expertise advice.</p>		
	<p>v. Please ensure that all mitigation recommendations are in line with applicable and most recent guidelines.</p>		<p>This comment is noted and will be taken into consideration during the EIA Phase of the process.</p>
	<p>vi. It is further brought to your attention that Procedures for the Assessment and Minimum Criteria for Reporting on identified Environmental Themes in terms of Sections 24(5)(a) and (h) and 44 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998, when applying for Environmental Authorisation, which were promulgated in Government Notice No. 320 of 20 March 2020 (i.e. "the Protocols"), and in Government Notice No. 1150 of 30 October 2020 (i.e. protocols for terrestrial plant and animal species), have come into effect. Please note that specialist assessments must be conducted in accordance with these protocols.</p>		<p>The specialist studies have been conducted in accordance with Government Notice No. 320 of 20 March 2020 (i.e., "the protocols"), and Government Notice No. 1150 of 30 October 2020 (i.e., protocols for terrestrial plant and animal species).</p>
	<p>vii. <u>As such, the Specialist Declaration of Interest forms must also indicate the scientific organisation registration/member number and status of registration/membership for each specialist.</u></p>		<p>Signed and commissioned specialist declarations, including the scientific organisation registration/member number, and status of registration/membership for each specialist are contained in Appendix N of the final Scoping Report.</p>
	<p>g) Cumulative Assessment</p> <p>i. If there are any other similar facilities within a 30km radius of the proposed development site, a cumulative impact assessment must be conducted for all identified and assessed impacts which must indicate the following:</p> <p>a) Identified cumulative impacts must be clearly defined, and where possible the size of the identified impact must be quantified and indicated, i.e. hectares of cumulatively transformed land.</p> <p>b) Detailed process flow and proof must be provided, to indicate how the specialist's recommendations,</p>		<p>Ten authorised renewable energy facilities within a 30km radius of the proposed development have been identified as detailed in Section 9.4 of the Scoping Report. An evaluation of potential cumulative impacts will be undertaken during the EIA Phase of the process in accordance with these requirements.</p>

	<p>mitigation measures and conclusions from the various similar developments in the area were taken into consideration in the assessment of cumulative impacts and when the conclusion and mitigation measures were drafted for this project.</p> <p>c) The cumulative impacts significance rating must also inform the need and desirability of the proposed development.</p> <p>d) A cumulative impact environmental statement on whether the proposed development must proceed.</p>		
	<p>h) Specific comments</p> <p>i. Please provide a clear indication of who the contact person for the Applicant is.</p> <p>ii. The approved PP plan with the approval email must be submitted with the final SR and must be included as an Appendix under the Public Participation Process.</p>		<p>The contact persons for the Applicant (Ms Romaya Dorasamy (Project Manager) and Mr Tobias Hobbach (Managing Director)) are included in the EA application form submitted to the DFFE on 12 November 2021.</p> <p>The approved PP plan, including the approval e-mail, is included as Appendix C1 to the final Scoping Report.</p>
	<p>i) General</p> <p>You are further reminded to comply with Regulation 21 (1) of the NEMA EIA Regulations 2014, as amended, which states that: "<i>If S&EIR must be applied to an application, the applicant must, within 44 days of receipt of the application by the competent authority, submit to the competent authority a scoping report which has been subjected to a public participation process of at least 30 days and which reflects the incorporation of comments received, including any comments of the competent authority</i>"</p> <p>You are further reminded that the final SR to be submitted to this Department must comply with all the requirements in terms of the scope of assessment and content of Scoping reports in</p>		<p>All timeframes as per regulations Regulation 21(1) of the NEMA EIA Regulations 2014, as amended, will be adhered to.</p>

	<p>accordance with Appendix 2 and Regulation 21(1) of the EIA Regulations 2014, as amended.</p> <p>Further note that in terms of Regulation 45 of the EIA Regulations 2014, as amended, this application will lapse if the applicant fails to meet any of the timeframes prescribed in terms of these Regulations, unless an extension has been granted in terms of Regulation 3(7).</p> <p>You are hereby reminded of Section 24F of the National Environmental Management Act, Act No. 107 of 1998, as amended, that no activity may commence prior to an Environmental Authorisation being granted by the Department.</p>		
5.	<p>The Directorate Biodiversity Conservation has reviewed and evaluated the report and does not have any objections to the Draft Scoping Report & Plan of Study provided that all relevant National and Provincial biodiversity guidelines will be considered in the final report.</p> <p>NB: The Public Participation Process documents related to Biodiversity EIA for review and queries should be submitted to the Directorate: Biodiversity Conservation at Email; BCAdmin@environment.gov.za for attention of Mr. Seoka Lekota.</p>	<p>Portia Makitla DFFE: Biodiversity Conservation Directorate</p> <p>Letter: 10 December 2021</p>	<p>The comment that the Directorate does not have any objections to the Draft Scoping Report and Plan of Study is noted, and no further action is required.</p> <p>It can be confirmed that all relevant National and Provincial biodiversity guidelines have been taken into consideration with the drafting of the final Scoping Report.</p> <p>The Public Participation Process documents will be submitted together with the final Scoping Report to the Directorate: Biodiversity Conservation using the contact information provided.</p>

3.2. Key Stakeholders and I&APs

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
1.	<p>Business & Financial: We have no objection to any solar development.</p>	<p>Jan Pickard Director Ratelfontein Farms</p>	<p>The comment regarding no objection to any solar developments is acknowledged and will be included in the solar energy facilities' C&RRs.</p>

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
	Any wind energy facility will greatly affect the financial viability of Ratelfontein Farms which include Ratelfontein Hunting Safaris and Bloemhof-Karoo Guest House.	Registration & Comment Form: 12 December 2021	Potential business and financial impacts on Ratelfontein Farms, Ratelfontein Hunting Safaris and Bloemhof-Karoo Guest House are noted and will be fully assessed through the Social Impact Assessment to be undertaken in the EIA Phase.
	Any wind energy facility will impact on: 1) Visual Impact (visitors come to experience nature and openness of space – 220m turbines will have a direct impact.		The potential visual impact of the project will be assessed in detail in the EIA Phase.
	2) Turbines are not situated outside 5,2km of active Verreux Eagle Nests – will destroy many birds.		Various no-go areas, including the Verreux's Eagle nests, have been identified from an avifaunal perspective and will be used to inform the facility layout design which will be presented and assessed in the EIA Phase.
	A detailed objection to follow.		No detailed written objection has been received to date.

4. COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE SCOPING PHASE OF THE EIA PROCESS

4.1. Organs of State

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
1.	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF THE GREAT KAROO CLUSTER OF RENEWABLE ENERGY FACILITIES AND GRID CONNECTION INFRASTRUCTURE NEAR RICHMOND, NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE With reference to your above- mentioned application, I hereby confirm that the proposed work installation is approved in terms of Section 29 of the Electronic Communications Act No. 36 of 2005 as amended.	Chris Schutte Mvelaphande Trading (Telkom SA SOC Ltd) Email: 04 November 2021	It is noted that no Openserve infrastructure will be impacted by the Great Karoo Cluster of Renewable Energy Facilities and Grid Connection Infrastructure. The comment has been submitted to the applicant for consideration in the design and construction of the proposed facility.

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
	<p>No infrastructure of our Client (Openserve) will be affected by this proposal. We did our utmost to ensure that we indicate our route as accurate as possible and should you discover any of our cables that is not on the sketch please stop and contact us immediately to arrange a site meeting. In the event that our cables are exposed and damaged/stolen by a third party the damages will be repaired at the customer's account. Please make use of pilot holes in order not to damage our infrastructure. Therefore, any damages occurred during construction of work will be repaired at the customer's account.</p>		
	<p>Although we are not affected by this proposal, Mr Vivian Groenewald must be contacted at telephone number 081 362 6738 from our Network Field Services. Two (2) weeks prior to commencement of proposed work. It's important that all services are shown on site before construction starts.</p>		<p>Should the proposed development receive a positive EA and become preferred bidder under the REIPPPP or a similar programme, Mr Vivian Groenewald will be contacted two weeks prior to commencement of the proposed work as per this requirement.</p>
	<p>Approval of the proposed route is valid for six months. If construction has not yet commenced within this period, then the file must be resubmitted for approval.</p>		<p>The validity of the approval of the proposed route for a six (6)-month period is noted and has been submitted to the applicant for record keeping purposes.</p>
	<p>Any changes/deviations from the original planning during or prior to construction must immediately be communicated to this office.</p>		<p>These comments are noted, and no further action is required.</p>
	<p>On completion of this project, please certify that all requirements as stipulated in this letter have been met. Please note that should any of our Client (Openserve) infrastructure has to be relocated or altered as a result of your activities the cost for such alteration or relocation will be for your account in terms of section 25 of the Electronic Communication Act.</p>		

4.2. Key Stakeholders and Interested & Affected Parties

No.	Comment	Raised by	Response
No comments received.			



09 September 2022

**MERINO WIND ENERGY FACILITY RATELFONTEIN PRIVATE GAME RESERVE SITE VISIT
MEETING MINUTES
19 AUGUST 2022**

On the 19 August 2022 a meeting was held at the Ratelfontein Private Game Reserve (RPGR) between representatives from RPGR, AVDS Environmental Consultants and Nuleaf Planning and Environmental. This meeting was held to discuss the Visual Impact concerns by RPGR with regards to the proposed Merino Wind Energy Facility (WEF) located on a neighbouring farm. It must be noted that Nuleaf Planning and Environmental undertook the site visit on behalf of Lourens du Plessis from LoGIS, the visual specialist appointed to undertake the Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) for the proposed Merino WEF. It was the understanding of the parties present at the meeting that the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process is currently underway and is being carried out by Savannah Environmental, the appointed Environmental Assessment Practitioners (EAP) for the proposed development. A sit-down meeting was held at the Bloemhof Karoo Guest House, following which a drive was undertaken through RPGR. The minutes reflected below were undertaken during the sit-down portion of the meeting and do not extend to matters discussed during the drive undertaken on RPGR.

Present:

RPGR

Mr. Jan Pickard (JP)

AVDS Environmental Consultants

Mr. Andre van der Spuy (AvdS)

Nuleaf Planning and Environmental (hereby referred to as Nuleaf)

Mr. Peter Velcich (PV)

Mrs. Tosca de Villiers (TdV)

Apologies:

LoGIS

Mr. Lourens Du Plessis (LdP) (unavailable)

Tony Barbour Environmental Consulting

Mr. Schalk van der Merwe (unwilling to attend)

Meeting Minutes:

PV:

PV kicked off the meeting by introducing the purpose of the meeting and provided context with regards to Nuleaf's role within the context of the meeting.

PV stated that both he and TdV have read LdP's VIA Report for the Merino WEF and reported back that LdP does state in his report that there will be a high visual impact on Bloemhof, and recommends that the eight turbines located on the Bakenskop ridge be removed or relocated (set back in line with the northern most turbines), in order to try mitigate the impact of visual encroachment on the areas south of the N1.

- JP & AvdS: Both acknowledged Nuleaf's role and expertise in the VIA field. They then both confirmed that neither have received the VIA Report in question and were unaware of LdP's findings and recommendations¹.
- TdV: TdV stated that Nuleaf would request the EAP to make a copy of this report available to both JP & AvdS.
- JP: JP submitted that the amendment made to the initial Merino WEF layout undertaken, where some of the turbine locations were moved away from directly adjacent to RPGR and placed instead north of the national N1 road, was undertaken as a result of an eagles nest and not as a result of his concerns raised with the EAP and Mr. Schalk van der Merwe, the Social Impact Assessment (SIA) Specialist, regarding the high potential visual impact. Turbines at 250m high clearly have an extremely high impact that even a child could point out with obvious consequences for abutting landowners.
- TdV: TdV noted that the potential visual impact as a result of the Merino WEF, as is indicated by the viewshed generated, would likely predominantly affect the northern portion and some of the higher elevation areas in the south of RPGR. The central portion of RPGR is most likely to be screened.
- AvdS: AvdS placed the following on record at the meeting:
1. A very high negative high cumulative visual impact on RPGR will be experienced when taking into consideration the other proposed WEF's (UmsindeEmoyeni, Khangela, and IshwatiEmoyeni) located to the south of RPGR as well as the Angora WEF and associated solar farms.
 2. The Merino WEF is going to have a very high negative visual impact on RPGR and all parts of the RPGR are visually sensitive since guests and hunters there traverse the entire property in their activities for which is the purpose of their visit to RPGR.
- JP: JP added that he would just like the specialist to be independent and reasonable. He also stated that Windlab had approached him to develop a WEF on RPGR but he declined as it was felt that this type of development was not compatible with the land uses (i.e. hunting and tourism) of the property. LP stated that RPGR would appoint and do its own VIA should it believe that the final VIA to be submitted was neither independent, objective nor reasonable, with due legal process to follow.
- PV: PV enquired if the RPGR was officially proclaimed. JP confirmed that it was not officially proclaimed.
- AvdS: AvdS stated that the general mitigation measures suggested in VIA's such as planting of trees at the sensitive receptor sites like lodges, dwellings and residences was ineffective and ludicrous. He stated that it is commonly accepted and proven that WEFs cannot be visually mitigated except through alternative location or "no go" alternative which must be considered equally and fairly as a real alternative.
- PV: PV confirmed that realistically mitigation of WEF's is not possible given the turbines sheer scale.
- AvdS: AvdS stated that, in his opinion, the Karoo is more suited to Solar Energy Facilities. He then further stated that the primary concern is to not to have a WEF at all. Even if LdP states that there is a significant visual impact as a result of the Merino WEF, it will most likely be approved and go ahead.
- PV: PV acknowledged both JP's and AvdS's concerns regarding the visual impact and suggested that Nuleaf would like to go to the areas of impact to take photos towards the Merino WEF in order to undertake Photo Simulations from these points. Additionally, LdP will further use these in his revised VIA.

¹ Post-meeting note: Apologies, AvdS was mistaken in this as I have seen the VIA and recorded its failures in our objection dated 14/6/2022 and submitted on behalf of RPGR.

- AvdS: AvdS raised concerns regarding the accuracy of Photo Simulations and reiterated why he and JP requested the launching of a gas filled balloon as well.
- PV: PV noted AvdS's concerns regarding Photo Simulations. However, he assured both AvdS and JP that LdP had recognised this possible shortcoming in his report, noting that Photo Simulations can under represent the degree of visibility and object scale. For this reason, LdP had compiled a number of enlarged (zoomed) snap-shots of the Photo Simulations already undertaken in the report to provide a more accurate representation.
- JP: JP stated that, should this development go ahead and be developed, he should be compensated, as the reality is that he would most likely have to close RPGR and Bloemhof Karoo Guest House as it would no longer be able to offer a "wilderness" and "sense of place" experience.
- AvdS: AvdS noted that, in the NEMA mitigation hierarchy, remedy of residual negative impacts, as directed in NEMA, is never considered but compensation is probably the easiest quantifiable remedy.
- JP: JP noted that the EIA identifies job creation as a positive reason for the development of WEF's. He however questioned why the potential loss of jobs on surrounding properties such as the RPGR are not considered. Additionally, he was not aware that LdP stated that the RPGR will experience a high visual impact.
- PV: PV noted that compensation is a valid argument, however, this is something to take up with Savannah (the EAP).
- AvdS: AvdS clarified again the roles of PV & TdV as visual impact specialists themselves and as representatives of LdP in terms of Visual Impact.
- PV: PV confirmed that Nuleaf are assisting LdP.
- AvdS: AvdS asked what is considered a fatal flaw. He stated that, based on reading VIA's undertaken by LdP in the past, he knows that LdP's fatal flaw methodology from a visual perspective is based on Lawson and Olberholzer's guidelines stating that a fatal flaw occurs when:
 - There is non-compliance with Acts, Ordinances, By-laws and adopted policies relating to visual pollution, scenic routes, special areas or proclaimed heritage sites.
 - Non-compliance with conditions of existing Records of Decision.
 - Impacts that may be evaluated to be of high significance and that are considered by the majority of stakeholders and decision-makers to be unacceptable.

He submitted that this fatal flaw methodology is in itself flawed as, for instance, the "decision-maker" will only consider the impacts AFTER the VIA specialist has completed his visual impact assessment.

He then stated that LdP's approach to determining a fatal flaw on this basis is always based upon LdP's interpretation which is designed to avoid triggering any of the 3 points, such as for example stating that he could find no conclusive evidence of the majority of stakeholders having found the visual impact to be unacceptable – even when the public participation process reveals majority opposition.

He stated that a high negative impact, post-mitigation, for any particular environmental impact should be considered a fatal flaw for any development.
- TdV: TdV confirmed that LdP's methodology in determining a fatal flaw is based on the Olberholzer and Lawson's guideline document.

PV: PV confirmed that there are generally acknowledged concerns with the Lawson and Oberholzer guidelines and that Nuleaf will take these concerns up with LdP. It is anticipated that LdP will amend his report based on the findings of this site visit. Nuleaf cannot talk for LdP with regards to if this would be considered a fatal flaw.

The sit-down meeting was then concluded and all parties present undertook a drive through RPGR. No specific meeting minutes were undertaken during this time, however, general outcomes and observations emanating from the drive around RPGR are listed below:

1. It was verified that the northern portions of RPGR would likely experience a very high visual impact as a result of the proposed turbines of 250m high of the Merino WEF and associated the Angora WEF. This was especially evident along the northern ridgeline of RPGR, as well as, some of the southern portions of RPGR which were traversed during the drive. It was also verified that the properties of Vogelstruisfontein and Rondawel were clearly visible from RPGR.
2. Many internal roads and viewpoints are in fact located along this northern ridgeline of RPGR overlooking the proposed Merino WEF. These are utilised by RPGR as part of their guest experience.
3. It was verified that the homestead known as Bloemhof Karoo Guest House would experience a very high visual impact, should the Merino WEF and Angora WEF be constructed, yet it was also confirmed that this very high visual impact would be extensive beyond the homestead itself due to the nature of the land uses being essentially ecotourism and hunting for international clients, as well as, due to the general rise in topography of RPGR away from the Merino and Angora WEFs.
4. It was observed that RPGR does have a view towards the existing Noblesfontein WEF near Victoria West town. These turbines could be clearly identified with the naked eye despite JP advising that they were approximately 50km away from the point of observation and were only 80m (150m tip height) as opposed to the 250m tall turbines proposed for Merino WEF and which will be merely 5km away. However, it is assumed by PV and TdV that the impact of Noblesfontein WEF will be greater at night as a result of the aircraft warning lights.
5. The scenic value of the landscape on and surrounding RPGR is high and is fundamentally important to the guest "sense of place" and overall experience offered by RPGR.
6. It was noted that the cumulative impact of the various WEF's authorised already such as Windlab's Ishwati Emoyeni, Umsinde Emoyeni and Khangela WEFs and other WEFs proposed, will constitute a significant very high negative impact on the majority of the RPGR. AvdS produced viewshed analyses from the EIAs for the Windlab WEFs which showed that much of RPGR would be significantly negatively impacted and AvdS advised that when combined with the visual impact of Merino and Angora WEFs then RPGR will be very highly negatively impacted over almost its entire extent. AvdS also presented an extract from the Ishwati Emoyeni WEF, which specifically referenced RPGR, and which stated that the visual impact, post-mitigation, of that WEF would be of high negative significance.
7. AvdS stated that, based upon his site observations, in his professional opinion, it was clear that the Merino WEF and the Angora WEF, and associated developments, would have a very high negative and unacceptable visual impact upon RPGR and which are a fatal flaw.
8. All parties agreed that there will be a very high visual impact and this has to be considered properly. JP and AvdS are of the opinion that this is a fatal flaw to any abutting landowner other than perhaps a sheep farmer.