

# Background Information Document

16 February 2024

Environmental Impact Assessment for the development of a 200MW Solar Farm

MAC Project Number: 23-CFP-112

DFFE Ref Number: 2024-01-0028





# Proposed Solar PV Project in Rietfontein Farm, Lephale, Limpopo Province.



Doc No: MAC-04-08-02

Rev: 00

Date:16-02-2024

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Background Information Document (BID) is to provide all interested and affected parties (I&APs) with information about the development of the Rietfontein Solar PV Plant in Limpopo Province. In addition to the aforesaid, the BID aims to:

- Introduce and explain the Scoping and Environmental Impact Assessment (S&EIA) process as well as other related parallel environmental processes;
- Introduce and explain the public participation process which is prescribed by the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA);
- Invite all I&APs to comment on:
  - The ecological, physical, socio- economic aspects of the project as well as any other issues of concern;
  - The proposed public participation and environmental assessment process, and
  - Any other suggestions which might be of relevance

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – CONTACT DETAILS

<b>Contact Person(s):</b>	Reatlegile Mashiteng / Nonkululeko Mbasane		
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<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:reatlegile@mindsalikeconsultants.co.za">reatlegile@mindsalikeconsultants.co.za</a> / <a href="mailto:nonkululeko@beyondges.co.za">nonkululeko@beyondges.co.za</a>		
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="https://www.mindsalikeconsultants.co.za">https://www.mindsalikeconsultants.co.za</a>	<b>Website QR Link:</b>	

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT PRACTITIONERS

**MINDS ALIKE CONSULTANTS:** We are a small, transformed, and dedicated company that believes in taking the grudge out of consulting through delivering a bespoke service that specialises in safety, health, environmental, quality and business culture improvement based on our customer’s needs. Our shareholders have a shared vision of delivering exceptional service to our clients and the industry. We achieve this through our in-house and expansive partner network of specialists. Our network spans across a wide range of industries, thus our clients can be catered for with innovative modern solutions. We pride ourselves in our ability to provide a high-quality standard of work, which enables us to strengthen our relationships with our clients through years of experience.

MAC will act as the Independent Environmental Assessment Practitioner, as well as the Public Participation Practitioner for this EIA, Environmental Authorisation Processes and Public Participation Processes.

## WHAT IS AN EIA/EMP AND WHAT DOES AN EIA/EMP CONTAIN?

The National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) prescribes the processes to be followed when compiling the Environmental Impact Assessment and the Environmental Management Programme, in respect of listed activities, which forms the legal basis of this authorisation. The process aims to ensure that all relevant factors are considered when evaluating the potential environmental impacts of a project, as well as developing appropriate environmental management measures to mitigate these impacts. The purpose of the EIA is to assess the current environment in which a proposed activity will take place and assess all potential impacts in terms of its extent, duration, intensity, and significance relating to the specific activity. The EMP describes the goals and objectives for environmental management to minimise or eliminate the potential environmental impacts, the action plans to bring effect to those goals and objectives, the procedures to be implemented to ensure integration of environmental management into the daily operations, as well as a plan to raise awareness of employees and the surrounding community with regards to environmental management.

## ABBREVIATIONS

BID	Background Information Document	CRR	Comments and Response Report
DSR	Draft Scoping Report	DWS	Department of Water and Sanitation
FSR	Final Scoping Report	EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
DEIR	Draft Environmental Impact Report	GA	General Authorisation
FEIR	Final Environmental Impact Report	EMP	Environmental Management Plan
I&AP	Interested and Affected Party	DFFE	Department of Forestry, Fisheries & Environmental
NEMA	National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No.107 of 1998)	NWA	National Water Act
PPP	Public Participation Process	EAP	Environmental Assessment Practitioner
PV	Photovoltaic	MAC	Minds Alike Consultants

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## BACKGROUND

Cullinan Fourways Properties (Pty) Ltd proposes to develop a Photovoltaic power plant and associated infrastructure on farm Rietfontein no.360, in the Lephalale Local Municipality, of the broader Waterberg District Municipality, Limpopo province. The proposed development land area is +/- 196 hectares and comprises of a Solar PV farm with an output of 200MW output.

The typical components associated with Solar PV Farms include:

- Solar field/arrays
- Internal service roads
- Internal underground (where possible) reticulation (i.e., low – medium voltage lines up to 33kV)
- Perimeter fencing
- Auxiliary buildings (including, but not limited to, O&M buildings, admin, workshop, gatehouse, security, control centre, offices, warehouses, etc.)
- Backup water storage tank minimum of 500Litres – 3Million Litres (borehole fed water)

## PROJECT LOCATION

The project aims to establish the solar farm on farm Rietfontein no. 360, in the Lephalale Local Municipality, of the broader Waterberg District Municipality, Limpopo province. The Rietfontein farm is located approximately 60km South West of Lephalale along the R510. The project area covers an area of approximately 196 hectares in total. The locality map for the proposed project is indicated below.

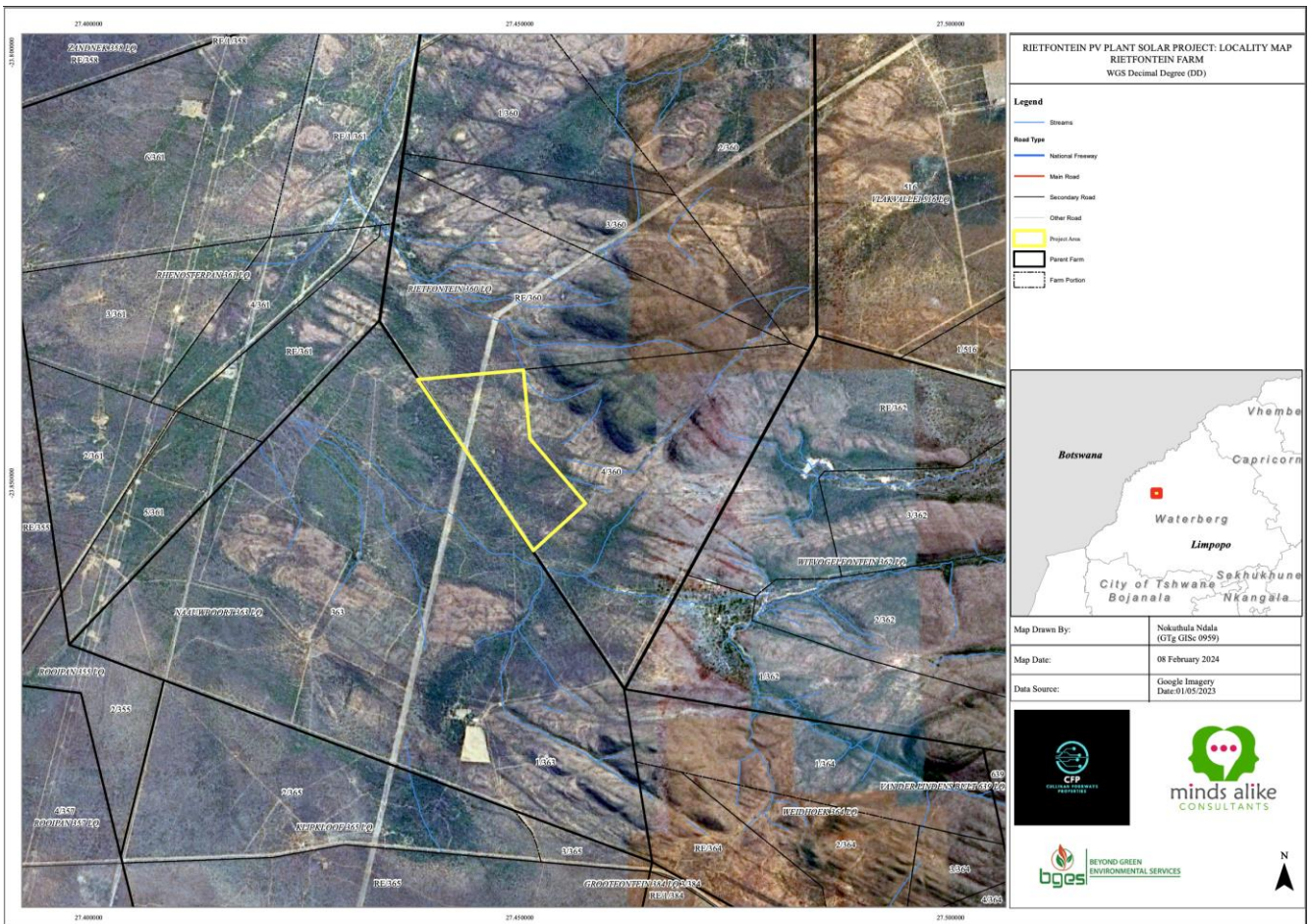


Figure 1: Locality Map of the proposed Rietfontein Solar PV project Site.



# Proposed Solar PV Project in Rietfontein Farm, Lephalale, Limpopo Province.



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## PROPOSED SPECIALIST INVESTIGATIONS

The specialist investigations identified below are in the process of being undertaken for the proposed development (in terms of the NEMA). These have been listed below:

- Socio Economic Impact
- Terrestrial Biodiversity Impact Assessment
- Aquatic and Wetland Impact Assessment
- Visual and Landscape Impact Assessment
- Avifauna Impact Assessment
- Heritage/Paleontological Impact Assessment

## REGULATORY CONTEXT

The NWA stipulates that, activities which have the potential to impact on a water resource require that a water use licence be issued by the DWS. General Authorization is an authorization to use water without a licence, provided that the water use is within certain limits and complies with conditions set out in the Gazetted General Authorisation. This authorization requires a registration with the Department prior to exercising the water use(s).

In accordance with the requirements of the NWA, a water use license will be compiled and submitted to the DWS to ensure the legality of the identified water uses associated with the proposed development.

The following environmental authorisation processes will be undertaken for the Solar Farm development.

- Environmental Authorization in terms of the NEMA (DFFE Ref No. 2024-01-0028); and
- General Authorisation in terms of the NWA (Ref No. XXX).

The regulatory context for the proposed project is summarized in Table 2 below. The table identifies the listed activities that will require environmental authorisation in terms of the NEMA and the National Water Act.

## NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT ACT, 1998 (ACT 107 OF 1998) (NEMA)

**GN. No. R. 983, December, 2014**

Listed Activity	Project Activity
<b>Activity 11:</b> The development of facilities or infrastructure for the transmission and distribution of electricity- (i) <i>outside urban areas or industrial complexes with a capacity of more than 33 but less than 275 kilovolts; or</i> (ii) <i>inside urban areas or industrial complexes with a capacity of 275 kilovolts or more</i>	The Solar Plant will be developed on a farm which will have a cable network and a fully built 132 kV.
<b>Activity 56:</b> The widening of a road by more than 6 metres, or the lengthening of a road by more than 1 kilometre- (i) <i>where the existing reserve is wider than 13,5 meters; or</i> (ii) <i>where no reserve exists, where the existing road is wider than 8 metres; excluding where widening or lengthening occur inside urban areas</i>	The existing internal farm roads will be widened by more than 6m to accommodate heavy vehicle turning.

**GN. No. R. 984, December, 2014**

<b>Activity 1:</b> <i>The development of facilities or infrastructure for the generation of electricity from a renewable resource where the electricity output is 20MW or more excluding where such development of facilities or infrastructure is for photovoltaic installations and occurs within an urban area.</i>	The proposed solar (PV) facilities would have a generation capacity of 200 MW as such this activity is triggered.
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<p><b>Activity 15</b> The clearance of an area of 20 hectares or more of indigenous vegetation, excluding where such clearance of indigenous vegetation is required for-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) <i>the undertaking of a linear activity; or</i></li> <li>(ii) <i>maintenance purposes undertaken in accordance with a maintenance management plan.</i></li> </ul>	<p>Clearance of areas associated with the construction footprint.</p>
<b>THE NATIONAL WATER ACT</b>	
<p>The water uses, in terms of Section 21 of the NWA, which may be applied for by the applicant include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 21. (a): taking water from a water resource:</li> <li>• Section 21. (b): storing water:</li> </ul>	<p>Backup water storage tank minimum of 500Litres – 3Million Litres (borehole fed water).</p>

Table 1: Regulatory Context

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

Public involvement is an essential part of any environmental assessment process. You have been identified as an I&AP who may want to receive information regarding the abovementioned project and be allowed to provide your input into the environmental assessment process. All comments will be recorded in the CRR and presented to the project team and regulatory authorities. You will receive feedback on how your comments have been considered and the outcome of the assessment.

I&APs include any person who will be directly or indirectly involved and/or affected by the project. To be recognized as an I&AP one must register with Minds Alike Consultants to be added to the stakeholder database for the project and may communicate via fax, email or telephone to obtain further information or comment on the proposed project. All registered I&APs will be kept informed of the decision taken by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment.

Proposed steps in the process are as follows:

<p><b>Step 1:</b> Notify I&amp;APs and identify issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notify I&amp;APs of the project proposal;</li> <li>• Identify any issues/concerns of I&amp;APs;</li> <li>• Provide I&amp;APs with a BID on the project, including a locality map and a Registration and Comment Sheet; and</li> <li>• I&amp;APs are required to register their interest in the project to receive further project information.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 2:</b> I&amp;AP review of Draft Scoping Report (DSR)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues and concerns raised by I&amp;APs are contained in a CRR for inclusion in the DSR;</li> <li>• The DSR is released for a 30-day commenting period; and</li> <li>• All registered I&amp;APs on the project database are notified in writing of the opportunity to comment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 3:</b> Final Scoping Report (FSR)</p>	<p>Comments received from I&amp;APs during the review process are considered in the compilation of the FSR which will be submitted to DFFE.</p>
<p><b>Step 4:</b> Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) and Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for I&amp;AP review</p>	<p>Compilation and release of a DEIR and EMP for a 30-day review period.</p>
<p><b>Step 5:</b> Final Environmental Impact Report EIR and Draft EMPr</p>	<p>The FEIR, including the CCR and Draft EMPr will be compiled for submission to DFFE for decision making.</p>
<p><b>Step 6:</b> Environmental Authorisation and Appeal Period</p>	<p>All registered I&amp;APs will be notified in writing of the environmental authorisation for the project and the appeal period, as well as the manner of appeal.</p>
<p><b>Public Notification</b></p>	<p>A major part of the Public Participation Process (PPP) is to notify members of the public of the proposed activities, particularly those who may be directly or indirectly affected by the proposed project. This will be achieved via the following means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The placement of an advertisement in a regional newspaper, i.e. the Information required;</li> </ul>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Notices, in English, Afrikaans and Sepedi will be placed at the site;</li><li>• Distribution of BIDs to landowners and occupiers of land adjacent to the proposed prospecting area and to I&amp;APs on request; and</li><li>• Local authorities will be notified in writing and automatically registered as I&amp;APs.</li></ul>
<b>Documents for Public Review</b>	<p>The DSR and the DEIR will be made available for public review and comment as required by legislation. All registered I&amp;APs shall be notified of document availability and review dates. A hard copy of the reports shall be made available at the Mogwase Library 935 Station Road, Mogwase, and an electronic copy shall be made available online at the Minds Alike Website <a href="http://www.mindsalikeconsultants.co.za">www.mindsalikeconsultants.co.za</a></p> <p>Comments on the DSR and the DEIR must be forwarded to Minds Alike Consultants during the commenting periods for inclusion in the FSR and FEIR respectively. All comments will be included in the final reports submitted to the DFFE</p>
<b>Introductory Public Meeting</b>	<p>The introductory public meeting will be held virtually. Details for the meeting will be made available on the Minds Alike Consultants website and will also be forwarded to all registered I&amp;AP's.</p>
<b>How to comment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Should you wish to register as an I&amp;AP in order to be kept informed, please complete the registration form on the overleaf and submit to Minds Alike Consultants via fax, post or email.</li><li>• Any further enquiries can be directed to Minds Alike Consultants telephonically, or via fax or email.</li><li>• It is important that you provide your contact details so that we may respond to your comments or questions.</li></ul>
<b>POPI</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As per POPI act, all I&amp;AP's contact information will be kept confidential and only questions, comments and concerns raised will be shared with I&amp;AP name and organisation.</li></ul>
<b>Note:</b>	<p>Kindly note that should you require any other party to be contacted, please provide their contact details as well.</p>



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## I&AP Comment and Registration Form

DFFE Ref Number: 2024-01-0028

MAC Ref No: 23-CFP-112

Title:		Name:		Surname:	
Organisation / Interest:					
Postal / Residential Address:					
Contact Details:					
Tel:					
Fax:					
Mobile:					
Email:					

Please select the applicable options below to indicate whether you would like to participate in the process:

Yes, I would like to participate in the process and receive periodic updates

No, I am not interested in participating and do not wish to receive further information

Preferred method of communication: Email  Fax  Post

Please indicate any issues, comments, and concerns with regards to the proposed project:


Please indicate in which aspects you would require more information:


Please indicate the contact details of Any I&AP's whom you think should be considered:

Title:		Name:		Surname:	
Tel:				Fax:	
Mobile:				Email:	

In order to be registered as an I&AP for this project, fax, mail or email the completed registration form to:

Reatlegile Mashiteng / Nonkululeko Mbasane  
083 280 2729 / 072 172 8374  
[reatlegile@mindsalikeconsultants.co.za](mailto:reatlegile@mindsalikeconsultants.co.za) / [nonkululeko@beyondges.co.za](mailto:nonkululeko@beyondges.co.za)



Follow the QR link or register online at <https://www.mindsalikeconsultants.co.za>