



27 May 2025

Dear Mr. & Ms. Stewart,

RE: Response to your Concerns Regarding Proposed Solar Energy Facility

The Public Participation is a process that is designed to enable all Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) to voice their opinion and/or concerns which enables the practitioner to evaluate all aspects of the proposed development, with the objective of improving the project by maximizing its benefits while minimizing its adverse effects. I&APs include all interested stakeholders, technical specialists, and the various organs of state who work together to produce better decisions. A comprehensive Public Participation Process has been undertaken as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process for the proposed **Solar Energy Facility in Hartebeesfontein, near Hopefield**. The Project spans across 5 farms and will serve as the main source of power for the **proposed Hydrogen Plant which will be dealt with in a separate EIA** and follow the same full process.

The world is undergoing an extraordinary energy transition, moving from fossil fuels to green alternatives like e-Fuels and hydrogen, an unprecedented shift that promises to cut global emissions, create millions of new jobs, and build cleaner, more resilient communities around the world. We are determined to make South Africa a global leader in this transformation, harnessing our vast renewable resources to drive sustainable industry, unlock economic growth, generate high-quality jobs, and position our country at the forefront of the global green economy.

As of the first quarter of 2025, South Africa's official unemployment rate stands at 32.9%, with youth unemployment at 43.1%. This equates to approximately 8.23 million individuals who have no income, many of whom live in poverty.

In his 2025 State of the Nation Address, President Ramaphosa highlighted the government's commitment to inclusive growth and job creation, stating: *"Our most urgent task is to grow our economy so that we can create jobs, reduce poverty and improve the lives of all South Africans."*

We have had outstanding support from the Government, with our plan to invest R47bn in a new Solar Energy Facility near Hopefield and create 2500 jobs.

Our Clean Energy process will use local Solar energy to extract hydrogen from wastewater, (H₂O), which is two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen. We simultaneously extract carbon from straw, procured by local farmers, and combine

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that with the green hydrogen to produce e-Fuel. This is 100% clean fuel which will replace fossil fuel for global shipping. There are no emissions, and the fuel is a clear liquid with properties similar to petrol, intended for export via ships from the ports of Saldanha or Cape Town.

We are at the initial stage of a long and complex Governmental Control process that is undertaken for any large industrial investment, The Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries & the Environment, the Saldanha Bay Municipality and the Government of the Western Cape are all required, by law, to ensure on behalf of the Public, that the proposed development is fully in compliance with all laws and regulations in South Africa.

We would like to clarify that our current Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries & the Environment in Pretoria as the competent authority is for the first part of the process which is **our Solar Farm**.

In July 2025, we plan to submit a full EIA to the Western Cape Government for the e-Fuel Plant. Additionally, later this year we will submit a proposal for a wind farm about 16 kms from Hopefield.

We understand that a development of this scale raises valid questions. Please allow me to address each of your concerns directly:

1. Traffic and Associated Issues

We have collaborated closely with municipal authorities and traffic engineers to ensure non-disruptive traffic flows particularly during peak hours. We will schedule deliveries and movements carefully and use designated routes. Temporary access roads and clear signage will also be implemented to avoid burdening existing town infrastructure. The current R45 is significantly underutilized. This matter will be fully addressed in the e-Fuel EIA.

2. Accommodation for Temporary Workforce

Whilst priority will be given to the local Hopefield workforce, we anticipate that some construction labour will be sourced from surrounding towns such as Saldanha, with transport via coach service. We see most of our permanent workforce and families will eventually gravitate towards Hopefield. This will afford a growth and investment opportunity for the town and its business community.

3. Information Centre (IC)

We are planning to open an Information Centre (IC) in the area within the coming weeks. This will be open to the public and will have detailed displays of the planned project. We will announce locally when this is ready.

4. Project Phasing

The project is designed in phases with the primary focus to meet the market demand. The planned phases are still as outlined however should the market demand accelerate the phases will be accelerated.

Motivation

The desirability of the proposed Phelan Green Energy Solar Energy Facility must be evaluated within the framework of national policy, legal directives, and sustainable development principles. The following key policy documents provide foundational support for the development of renewable energy infrastructure in South Africa:

- White Paper on Energy (1998),
- White Paper on Renewable Energy (2003),
- South African Renewables Initiative (2010)

These policies are reinforced by the environmental management principles outlined in the South African National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (NEMA), which promote responsible development that serves both present and future generations.

The proposed development aligns with **Section 2** of NEMA, which requires that development must be socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable. This includes considering the disturbance of ecosystems, loss of biodiversity, pollution, and degradation of the environment; the use of non-renewable resources; and the generation of waste. The Phelan Green Energy project has been designed to reflect minimizing environmental impact while maximizing socio-economic benefits.

South Africa, as a developing country, relies on a stable and growing economy, underpinned by secure and reliable energy supply. The ongoing national electricity crisis has highlighted the need for alternative, sustainable energy solutions. In line with NEMA's precautionary principles (Section 28: Duty of Care), which advocates for proactive measures to prevent environmental harm where there is scientific uncertainty, investment in solar energy provides a forward-thinking response to the dual challenges of energy insecurity and climate change.

South Africa has a world-class, proven track record in the successful deployment of solar farms, demonstrating both technical capability and investor confidence in large-scale renewable energy projects. Solar energy is clean, abundant, and renewable, and it plays a critical role in reducing reliance on fossil fuels, lowering emissions, and advancing South Africa's commitment to climate resilience and a just energy transition.

In conclusion, the Phelan Green Energy Solar Energy Facility is not only desirable from a policy and infrastructure standpoint, but it also meets the environmental management principles set out in NEMA.

It represents a sustainable, forward-looking solution to South Africa's energy challenges and a significant contribution to the country's broader goals of environmental protection, climate resilience, and inclusive economic growth. Solar energy has been identified by government as a key pathway for South Africa to lead in the new industrial revolution, unlocking local economic activity, creating high-quality jobs, and positioning the nation as a major exporter in the global green economy.

Our commitment is not only to build a project that provides clean, reliable energy but to be a responsible member of the Community and respectful to our neighbours throughout the process.

Thank you once again for your engagement. Your voice is essential in shaping a sustainable future that benefits us all.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Blair Phelan', with a stylized, cursive script.

Blair Phelan
Head of Development
Phelan Green Group

cc. Department of Forestry, Fisheries & the Environment