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DRAFT PART 2 AMENDMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORISATION (12/12/20/873)

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

FOR THE PROPOSED ADDITION OF THE SYNCHRONOUS CONDENSERS TO THE EXISTING GAMMA SUBSTATION AND ITS ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURES WITHIN JURISDICTION OF THE UBUNTU LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, UNDER THE PIXLEY KA SEME DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY, IN THE NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE.

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List of Abbreviations

BID	Background Information Document
CA	Competent Authority
DFFE	Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
EA	Environmental Authorisation
EAP	Environmental Assessment Practitioner
EIA Regulations	Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations
EMPr	Environmental Management Programme
I&APs	Interested and Affected Parties
IRR	Issues and Response Report
NEMA	National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act 107 of 1998)
SAHRA	South African Heritage Resources Agency

1. INTRODUCTION

Quality Environmental and Business Management Solution cc (QEMS) has been appointed by The National Transmission Company South Africa (NTCSA) to prepare and submit an application for the amendment of the Environmental Authorisation. This amendment application is undertaken in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 5, Part 2 (Regulations 31–32) of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014, promulgated under the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998). The amendment pertains to the proposed installation of synchronous condensers and the development of associated infrastructure at the Gamma Substation.

Eskom SOC Ltd, South Africa's state-owned power company, has historically relied on large coal-fired power stations and a few hydro plants for electricity generation. The national grid, primarily consisting of 400 kV and 765 kV overhead lines, transmits power across the country. To enhance grid reliability amid growing renewable energy adoption, the National Transmission Company South Africa (NTCSA), a subsidiary of Eskom, plans to implement Synchronous Condensers at seven host main transmission substations (MTSs). The host substations are in the Eastern (two) and Northern Cape (five), where there is an immediate need to improve grid stability. Synchronous condensers (SynCons) are large spinning machines that act like stabilizing anchors to the grid. SynCons are a proven technology that is commonly used to provide inertia, damping, voltage support and stronger grid conditions. This in turn enables the reliable operation of renewable energy inverters. Gamma Substation is one of the seven MTSs and its siting on the main transmission corridor from North to South is shown by studies that this intervention at the substation would support the national grid's stability.

2. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

The current Environmental Authorisation (EA) for the Gamma Substation was originally approved on 9 November 2007 (Ref. No.: 12/12/20/873). The EA was subsequently amended in 2022 and 2023 to accommodate the construction of the 765 kV Gamma Substation and associated powerline infrastructure. These amendments included updates to the substation layout and associated powerline turn-in infrastructure to facilitate the integration of renewable energy into the substation (Ref. No.: 12/12/20/873/AM3).

The latter included the development of the 400 and 132 kV yards at the substation. The then substation development footprint was assessed as part of the powerline and grid connection infrastructure associated with the following authorized projects:

- Umsinde Emoyeni Wind Energy Facility (DFFE Ref. No.: 14/12/16/3/3/2/686)
- Khangela Emoyeni Wind Energy Facility (DFFE Ref. No.: 14/12/16/3/3/2/687)
- Ishwati Emoyeni Wind Energy Facility (DFFE Ref. No.: 12/12/20/2351)

To enhance grid reliability in response to the increasing integration of renewable energy within the Eastern, Northern and Western Cape, NTSCA now proposes the addition of the Synchronous Condensers and their associated infrastructure at the Gamma Substation. These components were not included in the activities authorized under the original EA dated 9 November 2007, nor in the subsequent amendments.

3. PROJECT LOCALITY

Gamma Substation is located on the border of the Northern Cape and Western Cape, approximately 40 kilometres east of the town of Victoria West. The substation is located on Portion 1 of the farm Uit Vlucht Fontein No. 265 and the remainder of farm Schiekuil No. 3. The proposed development area for the Synchronous Condensers and associated infrastructure is located within the Northern Province, on Portion 1 of the Farm Uit Vlucht Fontein No. 265. The proposed development falls within the Strategic Transmission Corridor as depicted in Figure 2 below. The approximately central coordinates of the substation are 31°40'54.71"S; 23°24'30.88"E.

Table 1: Corner coordinates of the proposed site

Corner	Coordinates	
	Latitude	Longitude
Corner 1	31°40'55.66"S	23°24'25.04"E
Corner 2	31°40'48.46"S	23°24'28.70"E
Corner 3	31°40'52.30"S	23°24'37.71"E
Corner 4	31°40'59.85"S	23°24'33.71"E

Table 2: Farm properties

Farm name and no.	Portion	21 SDIGS code
UIT VLUGT FONTEIN 265	1	C08000000000026500001

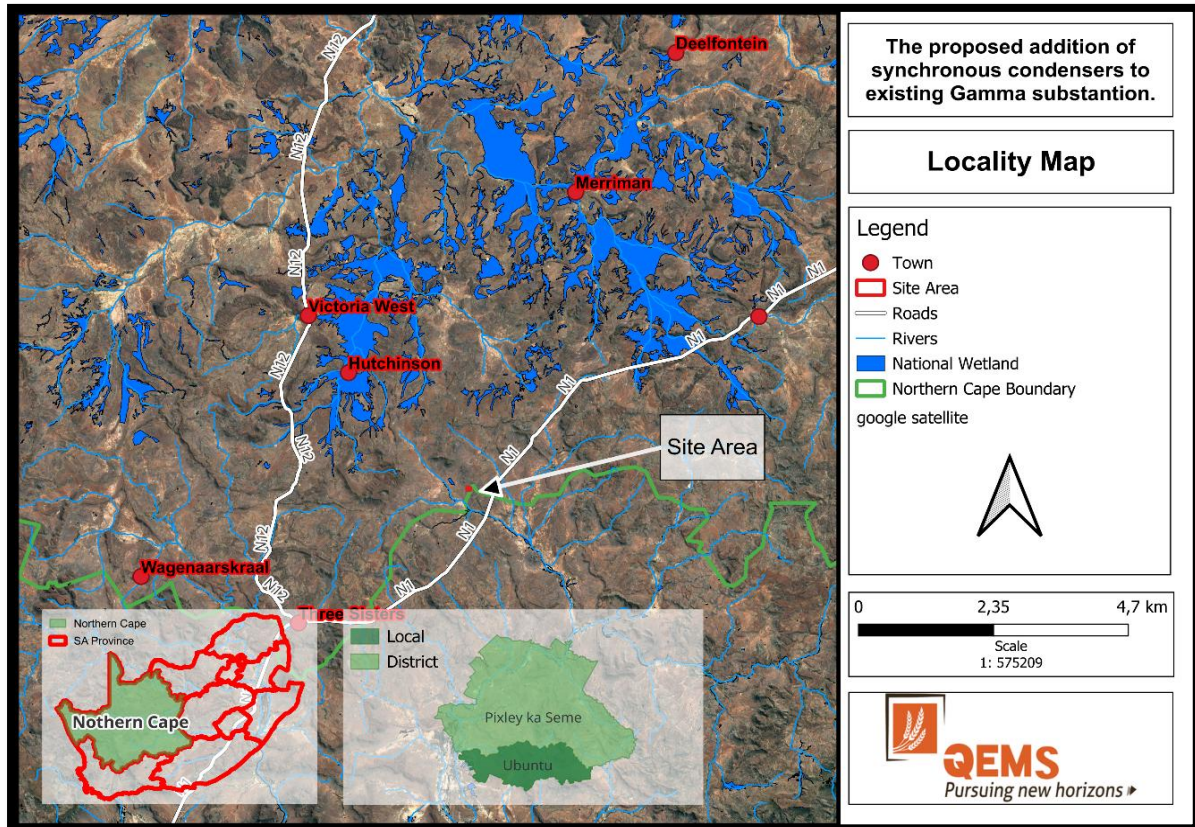


Figure 1: Locality map

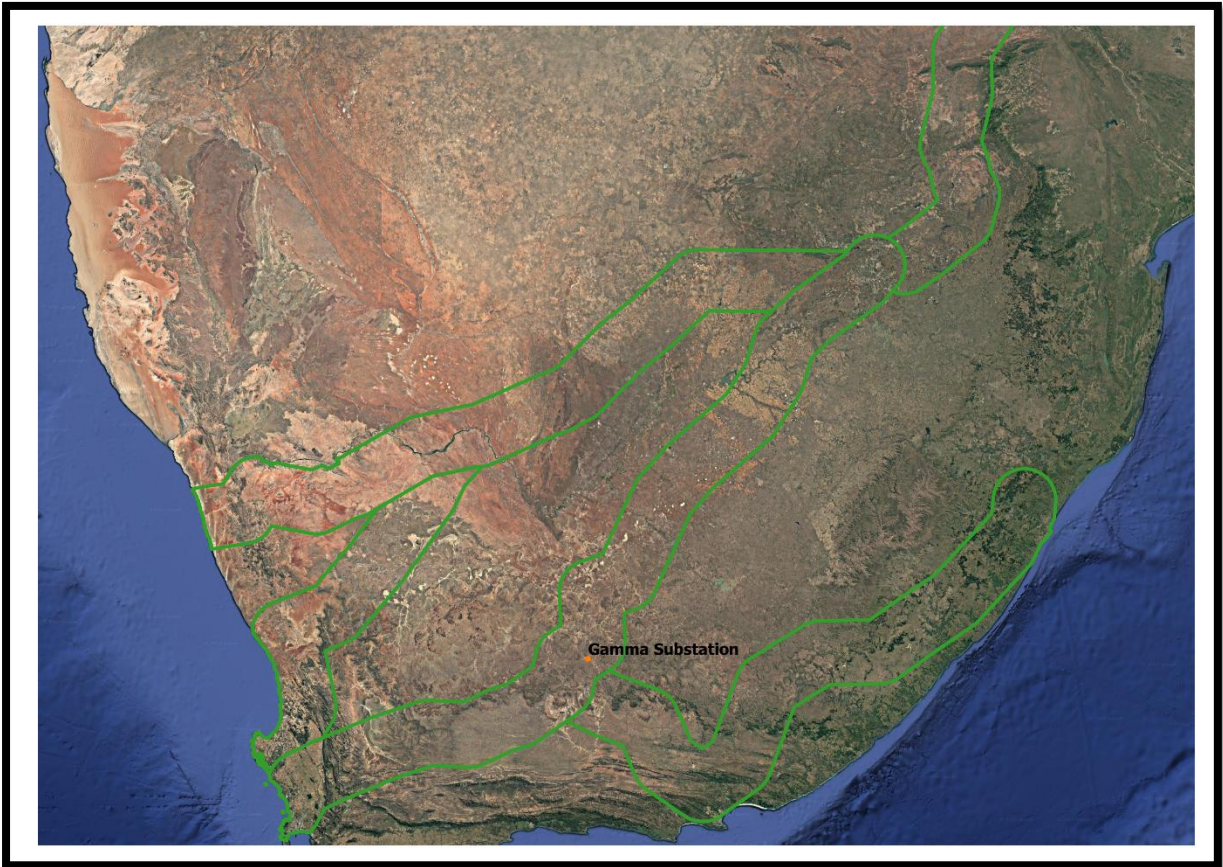


Figure 2: Strategic Transmission Corridor Map

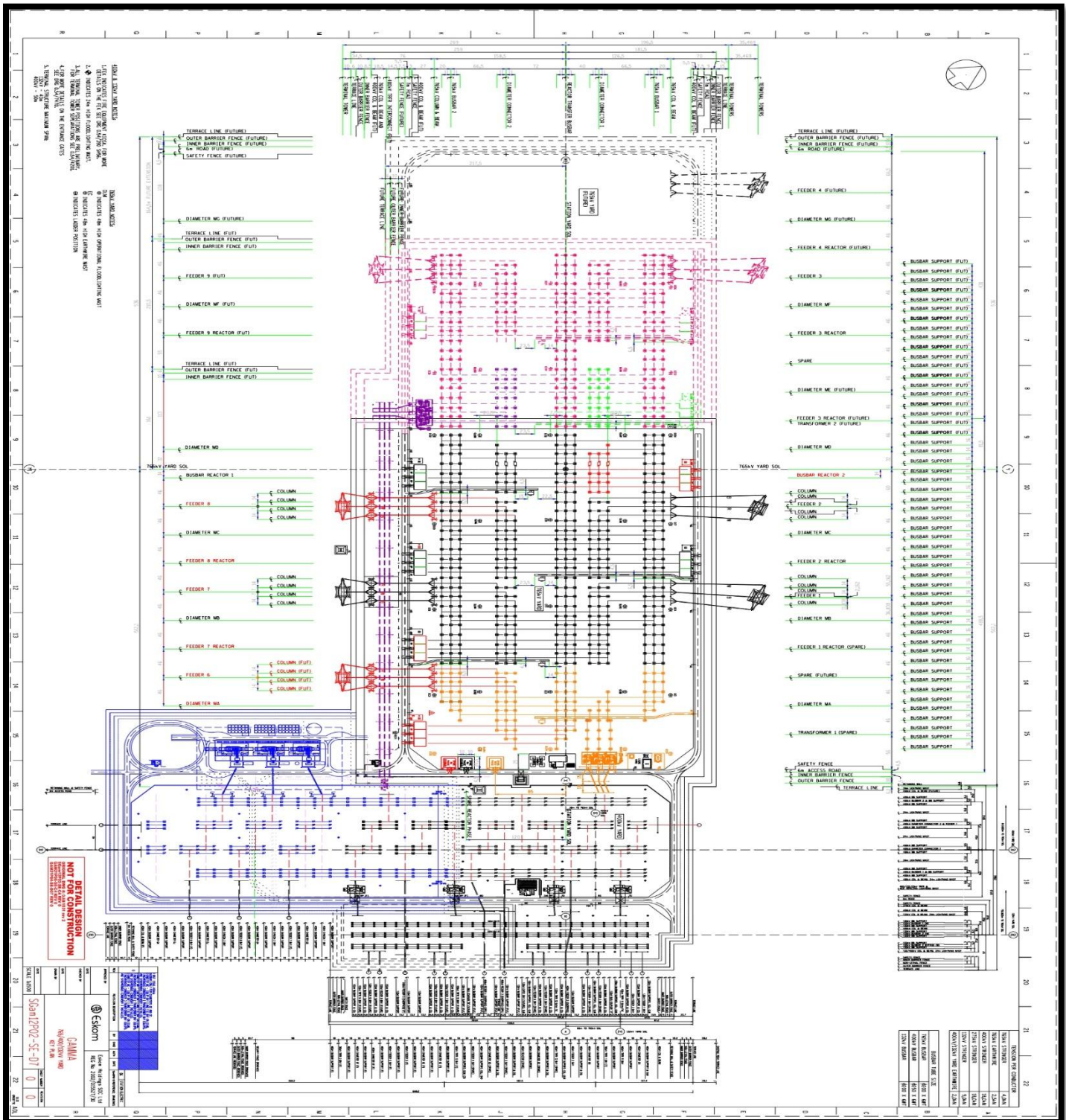


Figure 3: Layout Plan

4. LEGISLATION REQUIREMENTS

4.1. NEMA

The proposed amendment will be applied for as per the EIA Regulations 2014 (As amended) as promulgated under the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA, Act No. 107 of 1998, as amended). Section 31 and 32 of these regulations outline a Part 2 Amendment (amendments where a change in scope occurs) and require the new scope of the development to be assessed from an environmental perspective. As such, the proposed changes to the approved development require an application for an amendment to the existing EA, prior to commencement of construction and operation. The process of the Part 2 Amendment is outlined in Figure 4.

In compliance with the requirements of a Part 2 Amendment in terms of Section 32(1) of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014 (as amended), the potential impacts associated with the proposed addition of the Synchronous Condensers and their associated infrastructure need to be identified and assessed as part of this amendment process. Where necessary, specialist studies will be required to undertaken, and the findings need to be incorporated into the relevant assessment reports.

The competent authority for this application is the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), which issued the original Environmental Authorisation (EA) for the construction of the Gamma Substation.

Section 32 (1) of the 2014 EIA Regulations (as amended) requires that a report reflecting the details of the amendment is submitted to the competent authority within 90 days of acknowledgement of the application form, which includes the following:

- (i) An assessment of all impacts related to the proposed change;
- (ii) Advantages and disadvantages associated with the proposed change; and
- (iii) Measures to ensure avoidance, management, and mitigation of impacts associated with such proposed change; and
- (iv) Any changes to the Environmental Management Programme (EMPr).

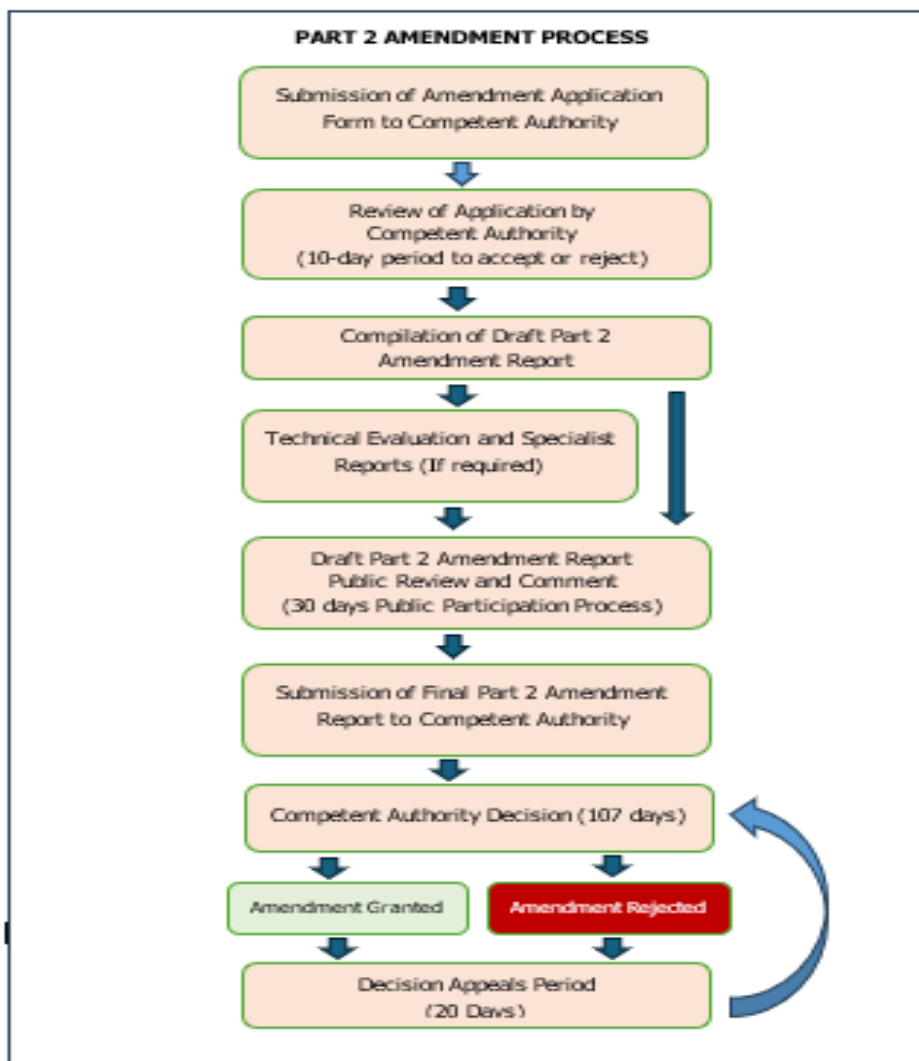


Figure 4: Part 2 Amendment Process

4.2 LISTED ACTIVITIES TRIGGERED

The following table provides the listed activities triggered.

Table 3: Triggered listed activities

Listing Notice and Activity Number	Description	Relevance
Listing Notice 1 Activity 27	The clearance of an area of 1 hectare or more, but less than 20 hectares of indigenous vegetation, except where such clearance of indigenous vegetation is required for—	The proposed development entails the clearance of approximately 6 hectares of indigenous vegetation.

	i) the undertaking of a linear activity; or (ii) maintenance purposes undertaken in accordance with a maintenance management plan.	
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4.3 NWA

The developer intends to drill a borehole; a formal water use license application (WULA) will be lodged to the Department of Water and Sanitation in terms of Section 21 of the National Water Act (Act No 36 of 1998). The WULA Procedure is regulated under the ‘Procedural Requirements for WaterUse License Applications and Appeals (GNR 267, 24 March 2017) published in terms of the NWA.

Table 4:Water Use Activities Triggered under NWA

WULA Triggered Activity	Description	Relevance
Section 21(a)	Taking water from a water resource	Abstraction of underground water through a borehole

5. NEED AND DESIRABILITY OF THE PROJECT

The proposed installation of synchronous condensers supports both national and regional socio-economic development by strengthening electricity supply reliability and enabling the continued integration of renewable energy into the national grid. Eskom SOC Ltd plays a critical role in ensuring energy security, which is essential for economic growth, industrial development, and service delivery across the Republic of South Africa. The NTCSA as custodian of the national electricity grid is required to ensure that the Grid is able to support these goals and objectives.

The Northern Cape has experienced significant growth in renewable energy projects, which contribute to job creation, local economic development, and infrastructure investment. However, the variability of renewable energy generation can place strain on the transmission network, potentially affecting supply reliability if grid stability measures are not implemented. The proposed synchronous condensers will improve voltage control and network resilience,

allowing renewable energy facilities to operate more efficiently and reducing the risk of energy curtailment.

Improved grid stability will support economic activities within the region by ensuring consistent electricity supply to industries, businesses, and communities. Reliable electricity supply is fundamental to maintaining productivity, attracting investment, supporting small and medium enterprises, and enabling socio-economic upliftment. The project will also contribute to South Africa's transition towards a more sustainable energy mix, supporting long-term environmental and socio-economic resilience. Furthermore, the project may generate temporary employment opportunities during construction and support skills development through infrastructure expansion. By strengthening transmission capacity and supporting renewable energy integration, the project contributes to national development priorities and supports sustainable economic growth.

6. CHANGES TO THE EMPR

The EMPR will be amended to accommodate the Synchronous Condensers impact management actions. Hereunder we discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the project and thus said amendment.

7. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF AMENDMENT

The table below sets out the advantages and disadvantages of the amendment.

Table 5: Advantages and disadvantages of amendment

Advantages	Disadvantages
▪ Enhance grid stability by providing reactive power support and improving voltage in weak grid areas, thereby reducing the risk of voltage instability and potential grid collapse. ▪ Increase system inertia by introducing mechanical inertia to the power system, thereby improving frequency response during disturbances and enhancing overall network resilience and stability. ▪ Support the high penetration of wind and solar energy in the Northern Cape by strengthening	▪ Additional loss of vegetation

the grid, thereby enabling greater renewable energy integration and reducing the need for curtailment. ▪ Increase short-circuit strength by improving fault-level support and overall system strength, thereby enhancing fault ride-through capability and improving overall system reliability. ▪ Enhance voltage control by maintaining stable voltage levels across transmission lines, thereby optimising transmission performance and reducing network constraints.	
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8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The public participation process (PPP) is a key requirement of the EIA process. For this application it needs to satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Management Act Regulations (Regulation 40-44). The PPP identifies potential I&APs on the project and provides an opportunity for the expression of public views on the environmental and social impacts of the application. All public views on impacts will be documented, addressed and responded to in the public participation process and incorporated into the final EIR for consideration by the DFFE.

Potential interested and affected parties will be given an opportunity to comment on or raise issues relevant to, specific project matters. Specifically, Regulation 40(3) of the EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended, states that potential Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs), including the Competent Authority, may be provided with an opportunity to comment on reports and plans contemplated in Regulation 40 (1) of the EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended, prior to the submission of an application but must be provided an opportunity to comment on such reports once an application has been submitted to the Competent Authority.

The public participation process will take place from 08 July 2026 to 06 August 2026. This process will include the placement of site notices and the publication of advertisements in a local newspaper. In addition, a public meeting will be held to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to engage with the project and provide feedback. This is to be held in the end of July 2026.

9. IMPACT RATING METHODOLOGY

After a list of potential impacts has been identified, the aim of the EIA process is to predict the nature of the impact, rank, and quantify it. From the rating system, the impacts of most significance can be highlighted.

According to the EIA Regulations of 2014, a significant impact means: “An impact that may have a notable effect on one or more aspects of the environment or may result in non-compliance with accepted environmental quality standards, thresholds, targets, and is determined through rating the positive and negative effects of an impact on the environment based on criteria such as duration, magnitude, intensity, and probability of occurrence”.

The list of identified impacts for the proposed expansion of the Gamma Substation footprint, through the addition of the synchronous condensers, will be evaluated by considering several rating scales as listed below. These ratings include: extent, duration, intensity, significance, status of impact, and probability. The significance of impacts will be calculated as follows:

$$\text{Significance} = (\text{Extent} + \text{Duration} + \text{Intensity}) \times \text{Probability}$$

The rating system is described below in the set of pages and then thereafter the impacts are listed and assessed.

Table 6: Impact Rating Assessment Methodology

Criteria: EXTENT		
“Extent” defines the physical extent or spatial scale of the potential impact		
RATING		DESCRIPTION
1	Site specific	Impacts extending only as far as the activity, limited to the site and its immediate surroundings
2	Local	Impacts extending within 5km from the site boundary
3	Regional	Impacts extending to the district (20km from the boundary of the site) of Vhembe District
4	Provincial	Impacts extending to provincial scale, e.g., Easter Cape Province / Northern Cape Province
5	National	Impacts extending to within the country, i.e., South Africa.
6	International	Impacts extending beyond the international border / the borders of South Africa
Criteria: DURATION		
"Duration" defines the temporal scale		
RATING		DESCRIPTION

1	Immediate	Less than 1 year
2	Short term	1-5 years
3	Medium term	6-15 years
4	Long term	Between 16 – 30 years
5	Permanent	Over 30 years. Where mitigation either by natural processes or by human intervention will not occur in such a way or in such time span that the impact can be considered transient.

Criteria: INTENSITY			
“Intensity” establishes whether the impact would be destructive or benign.			
Status	RATING		DESCRIPTION
Negative	0	Negligible	Where impacts do not really affect the environment and no mitigation is required
	1	Low	Where impacts will result in short term effects on the social and/or natural environment. These impacts are not deemed largely substantial and are likely to have little real effect. (marginally affected)
	2	Medium	Where impacts will result in medium term effects on the social and/or natural environment. These impacts will need to be considered as constituting a fairly important and usually medium-term change to the environment, these impacts are real but not substantial. Impacts are fairly easy to mitigate
	3	High	Whereby effects will be long term on social, economic and/or bio-physical environment. These will need to be considered as constituting usually long-term change to the environment. Mitigation is considered challenging and expensive
	4	Very High	Where impacts should be considered as constituting major and usually permanent change to the environment, and usually result in severe to very severe effects. Mitigation would have little to now effect on irreversibility
Criteria: INTENSITY			
Status	RATING		DESCRIPTION
Positive	0	Negligible	Where impacts affect the environment in such a way that natural, cultural and social functions and processes are not greatly and in instances no mitigation measures will be required. (environment not really affected)

	1	Low	Minor improvement is anticipated over a short term on the social and/or natural environment.
	2	Medium	Where moderate improvements are anticipated over a medium- to long-term on the social and/or natural environment.
	3	High	Where large improvements are anticipated over a long term on social, economic and/or bio-physical environment.
	4	Very High	This results in permanent improvements at the social/or natural environment.

Criteria: STATUS		
“Status of impact” - describes whether the impact would have a negative, neutral or positive effect on the affected environment		
RATING		DESCRIPTION
+	Positive	Benefit to the environment
=	Neutral	Standard/impartial
-	Negative	cause damage to the environment

Criteria: PROBABILITY		
“Probability” describes the likelihood of the impact occurring.		
RATING		DESCRIPTION
0	Improbable	Where the possibility of the impact occurring is low.
1	Probable	Where there is a distinct possibility that the impact will occur.
2	Highly probable	Where it is most likely that the impact will occur.
3	Definite	Where the impact will occur regardless of any prevention measures.

Criteria: SIGNIFICANCE	
“Significance”- attempts to evaluate the importance of a particular impact with mitigation measures included and also excluded. The significance was calculated using the following formula: Significance = (Extent + Duration + Intensity) X Probability	
RATING	DESCRIPTION

0-4	Very Low	Where the impacts will not influence the development, social, cultural or natural environment
5 -12	Low	Where impacts will result in short term effects on the social and / or natural environment. The impacts merits attention however is not deemed largely substantial are likely to have little real effect
13-25	Medium	Where impacts will have a medium-term effect on the social and/or natural environment. These impacts need to be considered as constituting a fairly important and usually medium-term change to the environment, these impacts can be mitigated by implementing effective mitigation measures.
26-44	High	Whereby effects will be long term on social economic and or biophysical environment. The impacts could have a major effect on the environment. This may bring forth the consideration of no-go areas/open areas on the development land regardless of mitigations implemented. Mitigation is however possible.
45	Very High	Whereby effects will be permanent on the social economic and or biophysical environment. Such impacts cannot be mitigated.

Table 7: Environmental Impacts

Identified impacts	Significance Without mitigation	Mitigation measure	Significance With mitigation
Noise emissions from rotating machinery and cooling systems	High	To ensure continued compliance and minimise potential impacts, the following mitigation measures should be implemented: • Install acoustic enclosures around major noise-generating equipment. • Use low-noise cooling fans and machinery where feasible. • Maintain equipment regularly to prevent excessive noise due to wear and tear. • Conduct periodic noise monitoring to ensure compliance with applicable standards.	Low
Oil leakage from lubrication and auxiliary systems	High	To ensure continued compliance and minimise potential impacts, the following mitigation measures should be implemented: • Secondary containment (bund walls) • Oil leak detection systems • Routine inspections and maintenance • Spill response plan and spill kits on-site	Low
Transformer oil contamination (if step-up transformer used)	High	To ensure continued compliance and minimise potential impacts, the following mitigation measures should be implemented: • Bunded transformer bays (110% capacity)	Low

		• Oil-water separators • Regular inspection of seals and valves • Emergency spill response procedures	
Stormwater contamination	Medium	To ensure continued compliance and minimise potential impacts, the following mitigation measures should be implemented: • Maintain drainage systems • Install oil interceptors • Prevent discharge of contaminated water • Routine inspection after rainfall events	Low
Fire risk (oil systems, electrical faults)	Medium	To ensure continued compliance and minimise potential impacts, the following mitigation measures should be implemented: • Fire detection and suppression systems • Fire walls between equipment • Routine thermographic inspections • Emergency response plan	Low
Waste generation (used oil, filters, oily rags)	Medium	To ensure continued compliance and minimise potential impacts, the following mitigation measures should be implemented: • Hazardous waste storage in labelled containers • Use licensed hazardous waste contractors • Maintain waste manifests	Low
Soil contamination from oil leaks or spills	Medium	Install bunded areas, spill containment systems, and implement spill response plans	Low

Dust generation during construction activities	Medium	Implement dust suppression measures such as water spraying and covering of materials	Low
Increased energy consumption for auxiliary systems	Low	Use energy-efficient auxiliary equipment and optimize operational performance	Low
Improvement in grid stability and voltage control	High	Not applicable – maintain proper operation and maintenance	Medium

10. SPECIALIST STATEMENT AND OPINION

10.1. Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment Report

A biodiversity assessment conducted on 22 January 2026 found that the study area falls within an Other Natural Area (ONA) as per the Northern Cape C-Plan. While ONAs are not classified as Critical Biodiversity Areas or Ecological Support Areas, they remain important for ecosystem functioning and connectivity. Development should be limited to preferred areas, guided by sensitivity maps, with no-go areas verified by an Environmental Control Officer (ECO). No fatal flaws were identified, and the proposed development can proceed.

10.2. Aquatic And Wetland Compliance Statement report

The site has low aquatic ecological sensitivity, with no wetlands or regulated watercourses within the footprint, except for a non-perennial drainage line. It lies outside key freshwater priority areas and river buffers, reducing potential hydrological impacts. Minor disturbances are present but reversible. With standard environmental controls in place, the site is suitable for development, with no significant aquatic constraints. Favourable ground conditions also support construction, provided stormwater is properly managed to prevent erosion.

10.3. Heritage Impact Assessment

Desktop research revealed that the broader project area is rich in archaeological sites ranging from ESA, MSA, to LIA; however, the field study did not identify any sites of significance within the proposed sites. In terms of archaeology, there are no obvious 'Fatal Flaws' or 'No-Go' areas. In terms of Section 36 of the NHRA, the study did not identify any burial sites within the proposed development site. In terms of the built environment, the study did not identify any buildings and structures that qualify for protection in terms of Section 34 of the NHRA. Based on the study results, the potential of encountering chance finds during construction is very limited, although the contractors must be watchful during construction. The procedure for reporting chance finds has clearly been laid out and if this report is adopted by SAHRA, then there are no archaeological reasons why the proposed installation of new synchronous condensers at the Gamma Substation cannot be approved.

11. CONCLUSION

The proposed EA amendment should be authorised to ensure compliance with environmental laws and regulations. The expansion of the Gamma Substation footprint, through the addition of the synchronous condensers each with a capacity of 300 Mvar each will significantly enhance electricity network stability, voltage control, and overall system reliability.

The environmental assessment identified potential impacts primarily associated with the construction and operational phases; however, these impacts are expected to be localised and can be effectively managed through the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures. In addition, the project will contribute positively to infrastructure development and create short-term employment opportunities.

Based on the assessment findings, the benefits of the project outweigh the potential environmental impacts. It is therefore recommended that Environmental Authorisation be granted, subject to the implementation of the proposed mitigation and environmental management measures.

12. UNDERTAKING BY EAP

I **Dr Patrick Sithole** declare that I act as the independent environmental practitioner in this application; do not have and will not have any financial interest in the undertaking of the activity other than remuneration for work performed in terms of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014; do not have and will not have a vested interest in the proposed activity proceeding; have no, and will not engage in, conflicting interests in the undertaking of the activity; undertake to disclose to the competent authority any material information that has or may have the potential to influence the decision of the competent authority or the objectivity of any report, plan or document required in terms of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations; will ensure that information containing all relevant facts in respect of the application is distributed or made available to interested and affected parties and the public and that participation by interested and affected parties is facilitated in such a manner that all interested and affected parties will be provided with a reasonable opportunity to participate and to provide comments on documents that are produced to support the application; will ensure that the comments of all interested and affected parties are considered and recorded in reports that are submitted to the Department in respect of the application, provided that comments that are made by interested and affected parties in respect of a final report that will be submitted to the Department may be attached to the report without further amendment to the report; will keep a register of all interested and affected parties that participated in a public participation process and will provide the Department with access to all information at my disposal regarding the application, whether such information is favourable to the applicant or not.



Signature of the Environmental Assessment Practitioner:

QEMS Business Solutions and Management

Name of company:

02 July 2026

Date