

# Cabinet approves Renewable Energy Development Zones

PRETORIA: Cabinet has approved the gazetting of eight Renewable Energy Development Zones (REDZ) and five Power Corridors, which will assist South Africa with its electricity challenges.



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“These Renewable Energy Development Zones and Power Corridors are geographical areas where wind and solar photovoltaic technologies can be incentivised and where ‘deep’ grid expansion can be directed and where regulatory processes will be streamlined,” the Department of Environmental Affairs said on Wednesday, 24 February.

The REDZs act as energy generation hubs and provide anchor points for grid expansion, thereby allowing for strategic and proactive expansion of grid into these areas.

This will ensure that the grid expansion does not hamper the progress of the renewable energy power purchase agreement process.

“The REDZs and Power Corridors support two of the 18 Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs) that were identified in the Infrastructure Development Plan, which is aimed at promoting catalytic infrastructure development to stimulate economic growth and job creation,” the department said.

The department has embarked on a programme of Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) for large-scale

developments to support the SIPs.

This will ensure that when required, environmental authorisations are not a cause for delay.

“The intention of undertaking Strategic Environmental Assessments is to pre-assess environmental sensitivities within the proposed development areas at a regional scale to simplify the site specific environmental impact assessments (EIA) when they are undertaken, and to focus the assessment requirements to addressing the specific sensitivity of the site,” the department said.

The REDZs and Power Corridors were identified through the development of three Strategic Environmental Assessments as part of the department’s Strategic Environmental Assessment programme.

According to the department, the outputs of the three SEAs must now be gazetted to allow them to be implemented.

“The outcome of the gazetting process will mean that wind and solar PV activities within the eight Renewable Development Zones and electricity grid expansion within the five Power Corridors will be subjected to a Basic Assessment and not a full EIA process.

“This reduces the review and decision making time and the level of assessment required for each project based on the fact that scoping level pre-assessment was already undertaken in those areas,” the department said.

It will take 147 days for an application for Environmental Authorisation.

Once gazetted the SEA reports, maps locating the REDZs and Power Corridors as well as the development protocols and the integrated authorisation process will be made accessible through various government department websites.

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