

Coal is still king and nuclear takes a backseat in draft IRP

Coal will remain top of the heap, with gas and wind being the next most important contributors in the long-awaited Integrated Resource Plan (IRP), which details the country's energy mix in 2030.



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The first IRP, published in 2010, was meant to be updated every two years to account for new economic data and evolving technology costs.

But the revisions became bogged down in politics, and former president, Jacob Zuma's ambitious nuclear plan which according to some estimates carried a price tag of up to R1trn.

The draft IRP does not include additional nuclear power apart from the 2.5% installed capacity provided by the Koeberg Nuclear Power Station.

The 20-year energy blueprint to meet SA's future power needs comprises:

- 34,000MW of coal, representing 46% of installed capacity
- 11,930MW of gas, or 16% of installed capacity
- 11,442MW of wind, or 15% of installed capacity
- 7,958MW of photovoltaic (PV, or solar)

- 4,696MW of hydropower, or 6% of installed capacity

The balance will consist of pump storage, concentrated solar power (CSP) and nuclear power.

"A 'just transition' requires that while we move with speed to respond to the changing landscape, we take calculated steps to ensure we leave no one behind," Energy Minister, Jeff Radebe said at the release of the new programme.

"As it is evident from the report for the year 2030, there is no plan to increase that [nuclear] ... post that, there will be a detailed technical analysis to see how much will be needed," Radebe said.

Drop in demand

The new plan acknowledges that demand for power has dropped and is at about the same level of demand seen in 2007.

As such, "the pace and scale of new capacity developments needed up to year 2030 must be curtailed compared with what was projected in the IRP 2010", Radebe said.

"Energy investment choices made in the IRP 2018 update will have long-term effects for the economy as a whole, and the successful, timeous achievement of the energy transition. It is therefore critical that public inputs call for the finalised IRP to be based on choices that allow for transition-related investment certainty and job-creating local manufacturing growth in particular," said Brenda Martin, CEO of South African Wind Energy Association.

The association has asked for clarity on the planned sequence of wind investments which currently suggest a three-year gap in procurement between 2022 and 2024. The Industry cannot deliver the many socio-economic benefits and the scale of investment associated with wind power supply, with a stop-start approach.

The public and interested parties have 30 days to comment on the draft.

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