

Public opinion could shape the IRP2016

The forum for public comment on the Integrated Resources Plan 2016 update report (IRP2016) draws to a close on 31 March, and is expected to include valuable insights and opinions from organisations in the energy sector as well as the broader public.

The IRP2016 is about three years overdue, which is a significant period considering that energy technology changes at a rapid rate. While the IRP2010 was last updated in 2013, that report was never confirmed and so the country has been working with an outdated energy plan for far too long. Having invited public input, the department of energy (DoE) has a moral obligation to consider all recommendations received, says the South African Renewable Energy Council (Sarec).



“The general public have become well informed as to the long-term implications of various power supply options and are thus well-placed to influence the energy investment choice pathways up to mid-century,” Brenda Martin, chair of Sarec says.

Sarec’s submission indicates that the IRP process should be a purely techno-economic exercise providing rational input into the policy debate. “The 2016 update process itself has detracted from the valuable capacity of the IRP modelling tool to identify the cost-optimal build and technology mix for the South African economy; this mix could result in electricity price competitiveness and tariff affordability,” she states.

REIPPPP has contributed significantly to economy

The renewable energy independent power producers procurement programme (REIPPPP) in South Africa has contributed significantly to the country’s economy since the publication of IRP2010, leading to massive direct foreign investment, job creation and socio-economic dividends.

This alone demonstrates the importance of getting the IRP correct and creating market confidence. However, the past two years have seen significant delays to the REIPPPP which have dented confidence in South Africa as a serious destination for green energy investors, developers and equipment suppliers, the council says.

Sarec believes that renewable energy can play a significant role in the re-industrialisation of the country, transitioning away from the carbon-based minerals energy complex towards a more sustainable future. A scheduled, consistent renewable energy programme, which includes all available renewable energy technologies combined with a gas-build programme provides an opportunity to drive and sustain a power system which re-skills mineworkers to undertake 21st century jobs and economic opportunities.

Achieving a sustainable future requires a shared commitment from government, citizens and the industry – a commitment that extends beyond policy and planning, into practice. South Africa's renewable energy industry is ready to take up the challenge.

The public participation process is an ideal opportunity for South African citizens to sway the long-term investment choices that will serve the country up to 2050. "We don't often have an opportunity to influence government policy, so this is a significant moment, not just for the energy industry, but for all South Africans," says Martin.

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