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Dear Susanna,

RE: Avifaunal Specialist Input for Water Use License Application (WULA) Erf Number 4038, Farm Wolhuterskop 670

This purpose of this confirming statement is to provide the required avifaunal input and specialist opinion to inform the ongoing amendment of the Environmental Management Programme (EMPr) for the Bethlehem Quarry, undertaken in accordance with the provisions of the National Environmental Management Act (Act No. 107 of 1998, as amended). This statement specifically serves to confirm whether the previously compiled Avifaunal Impact Assessment (dated 5 November 2021) remains valid, applicable, and representative of current site conditions, taking into account any changes in the receiving environment, land use context, and observed avifaunal assemblages since the original assessment was undertaken.

The original Avifaunal Impact Assessment was undertaken in support of a Water Use License Application (WULA) for the proposed drilling of a borehole at the Bethlehem Aggregates facility, intended to supply an alternative, non-potable water source for dust suppression and thereby reduce reliance on municipal water. The assessment specifically considered potential indirect impacts on Loch Athlone Dam, located approximately 500 m from the proposed borehole, with particular focus on potential changes in water availability and the implications for associated avifaunal communities. Historical data indicate that the dam previously supported a moderate diversity of waterbirds (34 species), although only two Red List species were recorded and in very low numbers, and the site has subsequently been deregistered as a CWAC site. Broader SABAP2 data reflect relatively high regional species richness (282 species), including 21 Red List species; however, most occur at low reporting rates and only a small subset may utilise the dam, which is already subject to ecological degradation and ongoing anthropogenic disturbance that likely limits its suitability for sensitive or breeding species. Field verification confirmed the presence of predominantly common, disturbance-tolerant species, with no Red List species observed within the study area, and demonstrated that available habitats, comprising grassland, surface water, cultivated lands, exotic tree stands, and transformed/urban areas, are of low to moderate sensitivity. On this basis, the study concluded that the proposed borehole would result in impacts of low to moderate significance on avifauna, which

can be effectively mitigated through standard environmental management measures, including restricting the disturbance footprint and ensuring sustainable groundwater abstraction in line with recharge rates and specialist recommendations.

A review of the relevant conservation planning frameworks confirms that the status of both the Important Bird Area (IBA) and Coordinated Waterbird Counts (CWAC) site associated with Loch Athlone Dam remains unchanged from that described in the original assessment, and the proposed borehole footprint does not fall within a designated Key Biodiversity Area (KBA). Updated SABAP2 data indicate a marginal increase in recorded species richness within the pentad, with an additional 10 species bringing the total to 292 species, of which 27 are currently listed as Red List species in the most recent national assessment. While the majority of species continue to be recorded at low reporting frequencies, and fewer than half of the Red List species have been recorded within the past three years, it is acknowledged that certain Red List species, including Secretarybird, are observed with some regularity in the broader area. These observations suggest a level of ongoing ecological use of the landscape by species of conservation concern, and may include localised breeding activity; however, in the absence of evidence for consistent or significant breeding reliance on the immediate study area or the dam, the sensitivity of the site remains moderate to low.

In light of the above, the impact pathways, identified impacts, and associated significance ratings remain unchanged from those presented in the original report. The proposed development is still expected to result in impacts of low to moderate significance on avifauna, which can be effectively mitigated through the implementation of standard environmental management measures. The recommendations provided in the initial assessment remain valid and applicable; however, particular emphasis is placed on the critical importance of sustainable groundwater management. It is essential that abstraction from the proposed borehole is strictly controlled and informed by appropriate hydrogeological input to ensure that extraction rates do not exceed natural recharge on an annual basis. The recommendations of the aquatic specialist must be rigorously implemented and monitored to safeguard the integrity and long-term sustainability of the groundwater resource, thereby avoiding any indirect impacts on surface water systems and associated avifaunal habitats.

Based on the review of current data and site conditions, it is confirmed that the Avifaunal Impact Assessment for the proposed borehole remains applicable and provides a reliable basis for the amendment of the Bethlehem Quarry EMPr.

Yours sincerely



MEGAN DIAMOND
Avifaunal Specialist