

CAPEARGUS NEWS

Civil society groups to appeal environmental authorisation of Searcher Seismic Survey Project



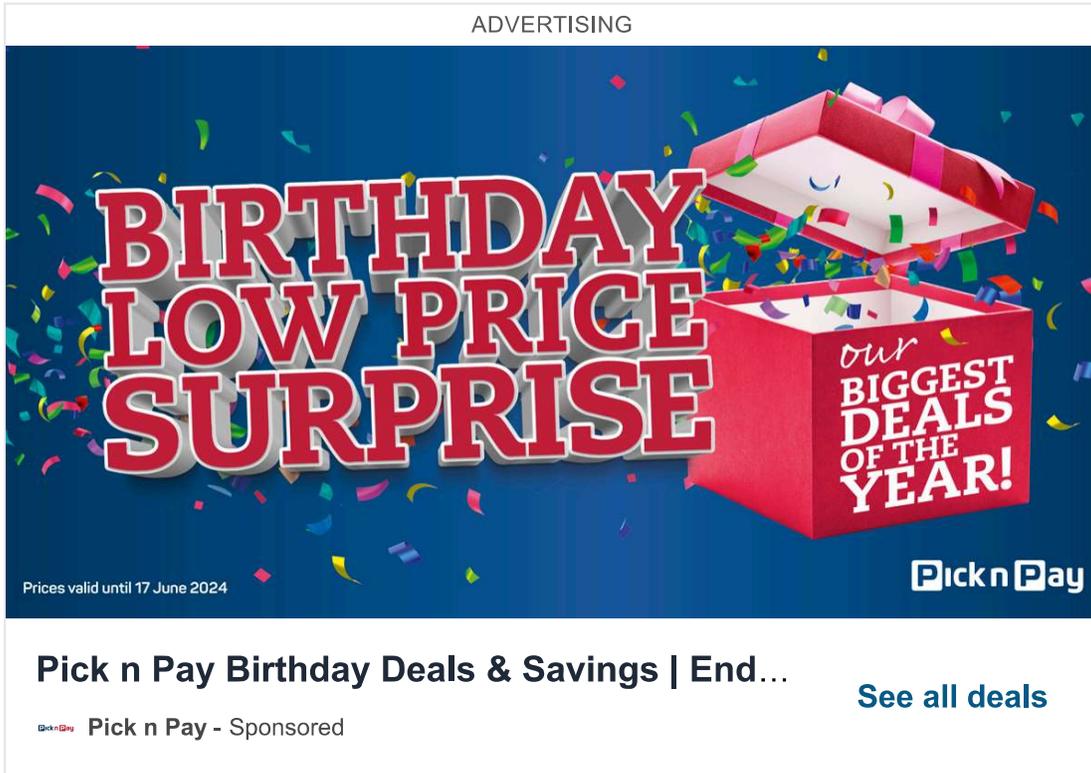
Several civil society environmental organisations, supporters and community members protested in Paarden Eiland to call on government to protect the livelihoods of coastal communities and end all offshore oil and gas extraction activities. File Picture: Armand Hough/African News Agency (ANA)

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Cape Town - The battle against seismic surveys on South Africa's coast will continue as civil society groups vowed to appeal the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy's (DMRE) decision to grant environmental authorisation for the proposed Searcher Seismic survey project to search for oil and gas resources off the West Coast.

The project, located approximately 256km offshore of St Helena Bay to 220km offshore of Hondeklip Bay, off the West Coast, was granted Environmental Authorisation on December 20 by the DMRE.

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The advertisement features a dark blue background with colorful confetti. On the left, the text "BIRTHDAY LOW PRICE SURPRISE" is written in large, bold, red, 3D-style letters. To the right is a red gift box with a white ribbon, open to reveal more confetti. The side of the box has the text "our BIGGEST DEALS OF THE YEAR!". At the bottom left, it says "Prices valid until 17 June 2024". At the bottom right is the "Pick n Pay" logo.

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On the reasons for the decision, DMRE director-general Jacob Mbele said the identification and assessment of potential impacts of the activity, including cumulative impacts, was adequately undertaken, and the proposed mitigation and management measures were aligned with potential impacts.

“Furthermore, the implementation of mitigation measures in all phases of the proposed 3D seismic activities will ensure that the planned activities will not result in any detrimental impact on the environment,” Mbele said.

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attempt at this project, remained concerned that insufficient attention was given to the inadequacy of mitigation measures, particularly as endangered leatherback turtles were known to migrate through the area.

The Green Connection strategic lead Liz McDaid said: “The DMRE has also authorised this specifically to search for oil and gas and appears to ignore the climate crisis we face.

“We do not believe that the seismic survey part of the process to explore for oil and gas should be studied in isolation and that cumulative impacts should be studied and presented.”

McDaid said they will appeal to the Minister of Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment to overturn the approval.

Gilbert Martin, founder of civil society group We Are South Africans, said: “We will be appealing the decision. The DMRE granted this even though our questions were not answered in full.

“There is a serious flaw in the process of public participation as well as its timing of these activities. Over December there were quite a few, all of which we will oppose nationwide.

“The public participation process is a ruse. The only reason a public participation is run by this government is so they can say ‘we told you so and we did let you know’”

Searcher vice-president Alan Hopping said they took on board the learnings from their last attempt to address all the issues raised, this included selecting a much smaller area, Environmental Impact Assessment conducted by a local South African environmental specialist company (EIMS), as well as thorough community consultation.