

# Coal mine in hot water

Exxaro's Glisa coal mine in Mpumalanga has been criminally charged by the Department of Water Affairs for allegedly contravening the National Water Act.



According to Nigel Adams, the head of the Blue Scorpions, the company has been operating without a water licence and had not been treating polluted water properly.

"Glisa placed dirty water in an open pit rather than in what is called a pollution-controlled dam, where the water would be treated," said Adams.

"By doing this, the likelihood that the dirty water would seep into ground water and pollute natural water was high."

The mine, situated near Belfast, was also accused of "diverting natural water courses without authorisation".

The mine has applied for a water licence, but the Escarpment Environment Protection Group opposed the application, saying Glisa's own reports show "large areas of wetland have been destroyed, polluted, degraded and damaged".

Dr Koos Pretorius, an activist for the group, said Exxaro also did not conduct a social study to measure the impacts of Glisa mine's blasting, dust and noise pollution on the nearby Belfast and Siyathuthuka communities.

Exxaro's spokesman, Hilton Atkinson, said he was unaware of a criminal charge, only of a criminal complaint against the company. He said that Exxaro had been co-operating with that investigation. He also stated earlier that the mine was in possession of the required documentation.

Pretorius warned that, by granting a licence, the Department of Water Affairs "would create a dangerous precedent that risks encouraging individuals and companies to start mining without authorisation", knowing they will not face the consequences.

Adams said the department had to take a "zero tolerance" approach.

According to an independent report, Glisa breached the National Heritage Resources Act by mining near graves older than

60 years and damaging them.

There are 46 mines currently operating without water licences, according to Minister of Water Affairs Edna Molewa. One of them is Exxaro's Leeuwpan mine in Delmas.

Source: *The Times* via I-NET Bridge

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