

PLETTENBERG BAY AIRPORT



Plettenberg Bay Airport, Airport Road, Plettenberg Bay
0861 AIRPORT |

**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Plettenberg Bay Airport Runway Refurbishment Progresses to Engineering Phase

Plettenberg Bay, South Africa – Garden Route Aero (GRA) is pleased to announce significant progress in the refurbishment of Plettenberg Bay Airport's runway. Following the issuance of the license by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to GRA on 7 September, work on the runway refurbishment has moved beyond the initial groundwork phase into detailed engineering assessments.

The detailed survey of the runway and associated areas has already been completed. This included **falling weight deflection tests** to measure the strength and elasticity of the runway's pavement structure, as well as the **digging of test pits** along various sections to extract subgrade and foundational materials. These materials are being analysed in specialised laboratories, providing vital data that will inform the next phases of the project.

With the survey and laboratory analysis being finalised, the focus will shift to **pavement engineering and geotechnical engineering** where experts will assess the geometry and drainage systems of the runway. These are crucial elements for ensuring the long-term durability and safety of the pavement. The final engineering assessments will guide decisions on **base replacements** or the potential need for a **complete runway rebuild**.

While every effort is being made to **complete the planning and engineering assessments by the end of this year**, the **actual remedial works are scheduled to begin next year**. As a result, operations at Plettenberg Bay Airport will remain limited to **general aviation and private flights**, with **commercial airlines, like CEMAIR, unable to resume operations until the runway upgrades are completed**.

Although the airport had previously secured a **Category 5 license**, which relates specifically to Aircraft Fire Fighting and Rescue Services (AFFRS), this rating was based on the **vehicle, equipment, and training** provided at that time. By the time the runway work is complete, these resources will need to be **re-established**. The airport currently has a Category 2 license.



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"Considerable progress has been achieved in a short amount of time," said Deidre Davids, spokesperson for Garden Route Aero. "Having completed the detailed ground survey, our engineers are now well-equipped to develop the best solutions for ensuring the future resilience of the runway. This is an important step towards modernising the infrastructure at Plettenberg Bay Airport and restoring scheduled commercial flight operations. The necessary runway repairs and the re-establishment of critical services like fire and rescue will take time. This is not a short-term solution – we are adopting a long-term view to ensure the future sustainability of the airport. We are committed to ensuring that when completed, the airport meets all operational and safety standards."

Upon completion of the work described above, Plettenberg Bay Airport will be able to apply for the reclassification of its Category 5 license, enabling the return of regional scheduled commercial flights. "We know that the runway closure will cause inconvenience to passengers, and we deeply regret this. But this short-term pain, will lead to a long-term gain – an airport not hindered by safety issues", said Davids.

"We're also using the time to make improvements to the terminal building so that there is an improved passenger experience overall once the airport re-opens. The building has essentially been gutted with new floors being added, new furniture and fittings and other improvements being made", concluded Davids. The airport has also acquired new refueling equipment - two 30m3 tanks, one for Avgas and one for Jet A1.

Passengers are requested to make direct contact with their airline to make any necessary alternate travel arrangements with the airport being closed to scheduled commercial traffic this summer season.

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