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Community members living alongside the R36 blocked off the road last Wednesday. *Photo: Narda Engelbrecht*

# Ultimatum given for the R36's rehabilitation

**Narda Engelbrecht**

**BADFONTEIN** - The Mpumalanga Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport has been given seven days to respond to the local community along the R36/Bambi road's grievances.

The residents closed off the road, preventing any traffic from moving into and out of Lydenburg, on Wednesday February 21. Hundreds of ore-carrying trucks were stranded there. Two trucks were parked across the road, making it impossible to get to or from Lydenburg.

A 15km-long line of trucks had formed on account of the blockade. A community activist, Siphon Nkosi, told Steelburger/

Lydenburg News on that day that it had been more than three years since the main contractor, Edwin Construction, had started with the rehabilitation of an 11km stretch of road. "The company had to stop and evacuate twice on account of non-payment by the department of transport. We have had enough. Either they come and address us and see the road conditions for themselves, or we close it off indefinitely," Nkosi said.

The road, however, was reopened the following day. Nkosi confirmed the road was reopened as the community had been invited by delegates of the Thaba Chweu Local Municipality (TCLM) to attend a meeting regarding the current situation that same day, during which a letter and memorandum

was handed over in which the community raised their dejected opinion on the state of the R36.

Nkosi told the newspaper on Tuesday that the department had been given seven days to respond to the letter sent.

In the letter, dated February 22, the community stated that they expect the work to commence and be completed as soon as possible. The letter also said that should the department and the municipality fail to respond within the seven-day period, trucks will once again be prevented from making use of the road, this time indefinitely.

The newspaper sent queries to the department. Bongani Frederik Dhlamini, the spokesperson for this office, confirmed

that it is working to get the payment to the contractor finalised by February 29. "The project is still within the contractual construction period, and the delays encountered have been as a result of community disruptions for various reasons. The contractor had to obtain a court interdict to stop the disruptions. The only delay due for the late payment has been the current work suspension, which is partly caused by the need to reprioritise the available budget after the Treasury's instruction for budget cuts during the 2023/24 mid-year budget adjustment," Dhlamini told the newspaper on Monday.

Nkosi confirmed on Tuesday that they have yet to receive feedback on their letter.