

# An air hub for cargo from the SADC region



Gateway Airports Authority Limited has ambitious plans for Limpopo's most important airport.



**P**olokwane International Airport is equipped with two runways sufficient to accommodate large aircraft of the size of Boeing 747 and Airbus A346.

A major goal of Gateway Airports Authority Limited (GAAL), which manages all non-private airports and runways in Limpopo, is to develop Polokwane International Airport (PIA) as the hub of the SADC region and the north of South Africa. In pursuit of that aim, cargo operations are to be introduced in the course of 2023. New senior management are in place and have filled critical key positions to enable maintenance of infrastructure and improving compliance with SACAA and ICAO requirements at PIA. The airport is now on its way to becoming a true destination of choice for both passenger and cargo traffic.

Short-term interventions which are in progress include:

- promoting the airport as a diversion airport for major domestic and international operators
- promoting the air service between Polokwane International and OR Tambo International Airports to improve passenger numbers
- introducing an additional route between Polokwane and Cape Town

## Infrastructure upgrades

In the medium term, GAAL is planning to refurbish both runways 05/23 and 01/19 to improve friction and strength. Runway 01/19 will also be extended

by 1km to complete and join it with the taxiway and threshold that has already been built in anticipation of this extension. This will allow the airport to handle heavy cargo operations, which is the ultimate business objective set for 2024-2029.

The airport has an apron facility of 74 000 square metres of parking space and is able to accommodate nine B747-type aircraft and 13 B737/A321-type aircraft. Furthermore, the airport has 16 hangers of 540m<sup>2</sup> and one 6 450m<sup>2</sup> hangar, with the immediate potential of setting up multi-functional cargo facility.

Runway 05/23 is equipped with a runway-lighting system and it will soon be converted from halogen to LED lights, thereby reducing maintenance costs and improving reliability and availability.

Availability of aviation fuel is critical for airport operations. The provision of JETA1 and AVGAS fuel has been outsourced and GAAL is in the process of refurbishing the one-million-litre JetA1 Fuel Farm, with an associated 30 000-litre AVGAS facility at the airport.

Polokwane International Airport has:

- two runways big enough for Boeing 747 and Airbus A346
- 17 hangers
- Category 7 licence
- 400 parking bays
- Conference facilities
- Clinic and emergency centre
- Shops

## GAAL mission

There are approximately 56 airstrips and airports which GAAL oversees in the province. Among GAAL's objectives are to create and develop hub-and-spoke flight operations network in Limpopo to feed PIA and to collaborate with our key stakeholders to stimulate economic and social development for the people of Limpopo. ■