



citizens for

BEIRABAIXA

WHO WE ARE

Citizens for Beira Baixa (“Cidadãos pela Beira Baixa”) is a group of people united in their commitment to leaving a Beira Baixa that is **respected, vibrant and fertile for future generations**.

We live in, work in, or love this land, and we believe that **caring for the territory means caring for all of us and those who will come after us** —people, animals, rivers, trees, and ways of life that flourish here.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

In the short term, to **object to the megaprojects Sophia Photovoltaic Solar Power Plant and associated Very High Voltage lines** (“Central Solar Fotovoltaica (CSF) de Sophia e as Linhas de Muito Alta Tensão (LMAT) associadas”), in the municipalities of Fundão, Penamacor and Idanha-a-Nova, and **Beira Photovoltaic Power Plant (269 MWp) and 220kV Power Line connecting to the Public Electricity Regulator** (“Central Fotovoltaica da Beira (269 MWP) e Linha Elétrica 220kV de Ligação à RESP”), in the municipalities of Castelo Branco and Idanha-a-Nova.

These projects shall occupy **thousands of hectares of natural and rural land**, including areas of high ecological, landscape and cultural value. In the case of the “Beira” project, they include areas within the **International Tejo Natural Park** (Parque Natural do Tejo Internacional), where there are protected species of flora and fauna, such as the Spanish imperial eagle, black vulture, pin-tailed sand grouse and black stork, among many others.

We want the decision-making process for these megaprojects to be **transparent, informed, and participatory**, involving local communities, local authorities, public entities, and developers, in order to ensure that the **principles of precaution and proportionality** are respected.

We advocate for **sustainable and regenerative development models** that promote responsible use of natural resources and ensure **landscape preservation**, a **common good** and collective right, recognized in the European Landscape Convention and the Portuguese Constitution.

Landscape destruction is an irreversible loss - an impoverishment of the life and identity of us all.

WE REQUEST

The municipalities involved:

- As elected representatives of the communities, to **publicly express your opposition** to the “Sophia” and “Beira” projects, according to the public consultation requirements.
- To **participate in the public consultation** of the “Sophia” project, by **rejecting and justifying your position**, in compliance with applicable terms and deadlines.

- That you **promote an information and public debate campaign** directed at the community, explaining the cumulative impacts of these and other megaprojects that intend to be installed in the territory.
- That you **listen to and collaborate with** local groups and associations in building pathways to sustainable development.

To citizens, businesses, and institutions:

- That **before November 20th 2025, you participate in the public consultation** of the “Sophia” project, by **rejecting it and justifying your position**, using the link: <https://participa.pt/pt/consulta/a-csf-de-sophia-e-as-lmat-associadas>
- That regarding the “**Beira**” project, whose public consultation ended on October 9th 2025, you remain **attentive and mobilized, given the process is ongoing and contestation remains necessary**.

We invite you to read our MANIFESTO — a collective appeal to defend the territory, life and future of Beira Baixa.

MANIFESTO FOR BEIRA BAIXA

For the Earth and the Life that sustains us

1. Introduction — The climate emergency and the duty of coherence

The transition to renewable energy sources is essential and cannot be postponed.

However, **the way this transition is carried out** defines whether we move towards regeneration or a new form of destruction.

The “**Sophia**” and “**Beira**” projects, which together cover thousands of hectares in Fundão, Penamacor, Idanha-a-Nova and Castelo Branco, raise **serious environmental, economic, social and cultural concerns**, especially due to their size and location in areas of high ecological sensitivity.

The real challenge of the energy transition is to **produce clean energy without sacrificing the ecosystems, communities and landscapes that sustain life**.

There are alternatives - such as already artificialized locations (highways, railways, industrial areas) and solutions that respect the territory, generating benefits for a large number of individuals and regional companies, such as agro-photovoltaics and energy communities.

2. Environmental Dimension — When “Green” Threatens the Natural Balance

The installation of the “Sophia” and “Beira” mega-photovoltaic plants threatens to **profoundly transform land use and the landscape**.

The “Beira” project encroaches upon areas of the **Tejo Internacional Natural Park and the Natura 2000 Network**, jeopardizing essential **habitats and threatened species**, including migratory birds and priority species for conservation.

The occupation of hundreds of hectares with **metal structures and waterproof surfaces** alters the water cycle, degrades soils, and increases local temperatures.

The **landscape — an element of identity and collective heritage — is put at risk**, with irreversible visual impacts, including the felling of thousands of adult native trees, such as Pyrenean oaks, cork oaks, and holm oaks.

The compensation measures presented by the developer are **insufficient and out of context**, ignoring, for example, the **need to restore native forests and ecosystems**.

These interventions constitute a **violation of the precautionary and proportionality principles**, paving the way for what international law is now beginning to recognize as **ecocide**: the deliberate and large-scale destruction of vital ecosystems.

3. Social Dimension — Communities on the Margins of Decision-Making

The communities of Beira Baixa are **guardians of a unique cultural and human heritage**, woven over centuries of a balanced relationship with the territory.

Projects of this magnitude and impact, decided without effective public participation, break bonds of trust and weaken the sense of belonging.

These solar power plants, and the very high voltage lines that accompany them, **will alter the rural way of life profoundly** – which based on proximity, care and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge - and undermine the great effort made in Beira Baixa to reverse the demographic crisis affecting the entire interior of the country, compromising its social regeneration and promoting its abandonment once again.

Social sustainability requires that **people be an active part of decisions from the outset**, and that the benefits of the energy transition be **equitably distributed**.

Without the voice or presence of communities, **there is no possible energy justice**.

4. Economic Dimension — Between promise and reality

The promises of job creation and local investment are unfounded and fallacious.

Experience in other territories shows that **new jobs are temporary** and **profits are concentrated in the promoting companies**, usually unrelated to the region.

In contrast, the **negative impacts on long-lasting sectors** — sustainable agriculture, nature tourism, local production — are profound and prolonged and affect those who live here.

The loss of environmental and landscape quality **jeopardizes the sustainable development strategy** that has long been pursued in the region, **disappoints the expectations of many individuals and companies that have lived and invested here**, and compromises the economic potential of Beira Baixa, where ironically the ex-libris are a **Bio-region, as well as the Naturtejo Geopark, the protected areas of Serra da Gardunha and Tejo Internacional, the Mountain Villages and the Historical Villages of Portugal**.

True economic sustainability arises from **decentralized and cooperative models** that strengthen local autonomy and resilience.

5. Cultural and Heritage Dimension — The landscape as a right and living memory

Landscape is a human and collective right — the ultimate expression of the relationship between people, history and nature.

The “Sophia” and “Beira” photovoltaic plants threaten a **millennial cultural heritage**, visible and impactful in places like **Monsanto or Castelo Novo**, and on the **GR22 trail**, recognized for their landscape quality.

The loss of this integrity is **not merely aesthetic, it is about identity**: the destruction of the landscape erases memory and wounds the sense of place.

The energy we want is the kind that continues the stories of this land — not the kind that erases them.

6. Conclusion — Energy for the future, not at the cost of life

The fight against climate **change cannot justify a new form of exploitation and destruction of natural and rural territory**.

The energy transition must be **fair, balanced and planned with communities**, respecting ecosystems, landscapes and ways of life.

The **“Sophia” and “Beira”** projects, as proposed, **contradict the principles of sustainability** that solar energy should symbolize.

We advocate a **distributed, participatory energy production model in harmony with the territory** — one that guarantees clean and accessible energy for all, vibrant landscapes and resilient communities.

May the sun's energy illuminate the future, without extinguishing the light and life of Beira Baixa.

Thank you all!

Citizens for Beira Baixa / Cidadãos pela Beira Baixa

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