

2.2 MH, with inputs from KN, gave further details on the conditions and situation at the preferred and alternative sites. They explained some of the more important criteria that were used and briefly outlined the reasons why a number of the sites could not be considered further. For example, sites 3, 5 and 6 are either undermined or have coal resources, these conditions are considered fatal flaws. Site 2 is not large enough for a full capacity facility and site 4 is situated close to an unpolluted tributary and the Blinkpan village.

LG said that the selection process seemed reasonable, and provided that the decisions taken were explained and backed up with the appropriate data, it was unlikely that the DEAT would reason to question them.

2.3 MH went on to explain that Site 7, at the existing ash dam facility was preferred over all other sites on the basis of a number of criteria. However, one of the main factors counting against the site is that it is too small. The engineers have estimated that at a load factor of 95% the site only has capacity until 2022. However, as it is a brownfields site, the use of this site prior to a new site will ultimately reduce the footprint of any future greenfields disturbance. KN added that although Eskom cannot commit to any scenario and the worst case must be considered, it is possible that Komati may operate at lower load factors or for a shorter period as other new developments come on line from 2008 and 2009. Should this happen then Site 7 may in fact have sufficient capacity.

2.4 MH added that an additional concern is that Site 7 will also occupy an area with a small drainage line. This drainage line has a very small catchment that is largely occupied by the existing ash dams. The drainage line is currently wet, and has wetland vegetation present. This is however almost certainly as a result of seepage from the ash dams which have been kept wet over the past 10 years. MH questioned whether DEAT would view this as a problem. LG responded that the rationale sounded plausible but that it would be appropriate to engage a specialist to confirm this.

3. Discussions on the EIA Process

3.1 MH said that the purpose of the meeting was to ascertain from DEAT their requirements for this project and understand where time savings could be obtained. The project is urgent, perhaps critical as the power station cannot operate without an ash disposal facility. He asked whether an exemption from any of the EIA process may be possible.

3.2 LG responded that DEAT has had high-level, internal discussions on exemptions and that the outcome was that exemptions would not be considered for any of the processes in their entirety. Applications would however be considered for exemption from specific points of the regulations, as and when these were applicable to specific projects. Thus exemption from scoping or the EIR would not be possible, but exemption would be considered from aspects of the process.

LG recommended that, based on the site selection screening process undertaken for the project, it would be possible to apply for exemption from the consideration of alternatives during the EIA. She said that with the inclusion of the relevant motivating information, such as the site selection workshop report and supporting information, an exemption from alternatives may be viewed

favourably. Notification of the exemption process could be included with the advertising for the EIA.

- 3.3 In response to a question on DEAT's decision-making time commitments LG responded that time efficiencies could be improved should Eskom take the decision to elevate the project to the 'Urgent' list at the following DEAT/Eskom forum.

LG commented that the process could be streamlined from Eskom and the consultants end by running the processes concurrently where possible. The EIR should be ready for submission shortly after the Scoping. It is not necessary to produce a long and complicated scoping report – the report should be concise and document the issues to be addressed in the EIR.

- 3.4 The possibility of a further EIA for the re-alignment of the powerlines was introduced by KN. He said that two powerlines currently run through the ash dam area and would have to be relocated. There is no space within the Eskom property and they will have to go outside. Land owner negotiations will commence shortly. He asked the advice of LG on whether a joint application should be made or if a separate application would be advantageous.

- 3.5 LG said that it would probably be advantageous to make separate applications, although the process and studies could be done jointly. There a number of reasons why, the most powerful being that objections to one of the projects could stop the ROD of the other if they were linked.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 The meeting concluded and MH thanked everyone for their attendance. An application form for the ash dam EIA, with an exemption form alternatives motivation, would be submitted to DEAT shortly Application for the powerline re-alignment would be submitted shortly thereafter.

Compiled by: Matthew Hemming

Date: 10 August 2007

Note: These minutes reflect the understanding of the author as to the key issues that were raised at the meeting. Should you wish to make any amendments or additions to the minutes, please be so kind as to submit these in writing before 17 August 2007 to:

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