

## **ESKOM GENERATION**

### **Steelpoort Pumped Storage Scheme**

#### **Pre- application Meeting with Authorities**

Date: 01 August 2006

Time: 11H00

Venue: DEAT Offices – Pretoria

#### **PRESENT**

Mosili Ntene	Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, DEAT
Nico Gewers	Eskom Generation
Tobile Bokwe	Eskom Generation
John Lestipa	Eskom Enterprises
Ashlea Strong	Bohlweki Environmental
Greg Seymour	Bohlweki Environmental
Sibongile Hlomuka	Bohlweki Environmental

#### **APOLOGIES**

Siphiwe Mahlangu	Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture and Land Administration; MDALA
Tsundulka Hatlane	Limpopo Department of Economic Development; Environment and Tourism; L DEDET

#### **AGENDA**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Background to the project and need and justification**
- 3. EIA and Public Participation Process**
  - Application Forms
  - Advertising
  - Scoping Process
  - Authorities site visit
  - Timeframes
  - Listed Activities
- 4. General:**
  - Case Officer
  - Specialist Reviewers
- 5. Closure**

## **1. Introduction**

Ms Ashlea Strong, Bohlweki Environmental, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for coming. She proceeded to introduce all attendees. She presented apologies on behalf of Mr. Sipiwe Mahlangu of M DALA and Mr. T. Hatlane of L DEDET, as they could not attend the meeting due to prior commitments. Minutes of the meeting will be forwarded to them for their information. Ms Strong went through the draft agenda, there were no changes and was therefore adopted by everyone as a final agenda.

## **2. Background to the project and need and justification**

John Lestipa, Eskom, gave an overview of the project; he explained that Eskom has a strategic plan (ISEP) for sustainable electricity supply. Eskom investigated nationally best locations for future pumped storage schemes and results of the investigative studies were ranked and Steelpoort was ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> behind Braamhoek which was ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in the top five (5) best locations. As per ISEP plan, two new Pumped Storage Schemes need to be functional by 2015, and construction is starting at Braamhoek site, located near Harrismith in the Free State province and Steelpoort is the next site to follow. The plan is for Braamhoek PSS should be functional by 2012 and Steelpoort PSS by 2014

John explained that Eskom has an approved record of decision (RoD) from MDALA for on-channel Pumped storage scheme in the Steelpoort area, which was obtained in 2000

Tobile Bokwe, Eskom explained that the new proposed Steelpoort PSS is an off-channel scheme and would depend on the building of the proposed De Hoop dam for its functioning.

## **3. EIA and Public Participation Process**

### **3.1 Application**

Ms Strong requested clarity on the issue of application forms. Bohlweki have been informed that the provincial boundaries had recently been changed in the area, but have not yet received finality on the new boundaries. Due to this and the change in regulations clarity is required on how the application must be submitted as the project potentially involves two provinces and the national DEAT. Ms Strong asked if perhaps the National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) had yet developed their own application form that should be used.

Ms Ntene, DEAT explained that the National DEAT application needs to be submitted. Ms Ntene stated that she will request the application form from DEAT's Policy Section before the end of the week and will e-mail it to Bohlweki. Ms Strong explained that although the application won't be submitted to the provincial authorities they will be kept informed of all the project developments and will be highly involved in the public participation process.

Nico Gewers, Eskom enquired about a number of appeals that still need to be dealt with by the department on the de Hoop Dam EIA.

Ms Ntene explained that the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, is working on the issues and it is estimated that a decision should be reached within a month or two.

### **3.2 Advertising**

Advertising was not discussed at this meeting. Ms Strong suggested that it would be better to discuss it at a later stage in the project.

### **3.3 Scoping Process**

Ms Strong explained that according to the screening report compiled by BKS Palace consultants eight to nine sites were looked at for the proposed study. Two sites scored equally as the best sites (Site A option 3 and Site C). Site A was found to be the most preferable site, as although the alternative Site C ranked equally, it was found to have a number of flaws, i.e. there is a fault that runs through the site and it is not as technically feasible.

Bohlweki has been in discussions with an Environmental lawyer who has given advice and the risks involved with the application for exemption from the scoping phase.

Ms Strong indicated to Ms Ntene that there are various options that have been looked at by Bohlweki and Eskom with regards to proceeding with the project in terms of process:

- *Option 1:* Undertake a full EIA process, utilising the information in the screening report as the basis for the scoping report.
- *Option 2:* Application according to Regulation 51: the application for exemption from the scoping phase in order to undertake a full comprehensive EIA on one site. The screening report and a motivational memorandum describing the way forward will accompany the application.
- *Option 2:* Application according to Regulation 51: the application for exemption from the scoping phase in order to undertake a full comprehensive EIA on site A and site C.

Ms Ntene indicated that she would have to consult with her team regarding the proposal and suggested that Bohlweki should submit a formal written request and include all the necessary documentation that could be of assistance for DEAT to reach a quicker decision. She indicated that the Chief Director will only be in the office on the following week and that is the only time when they will be able to discuss the matter.

### **3.4 Authorities Site Visit**

Ms Strong explained that it is often ideal to have a combined site visit with the authorities and the specialists, however the authorities are often not comfortable with this type of arrangement. Ms Strong asked Ms Ntene as to her thoughts on this matter. Ms Strong also emphasised that in the event the authorities do attend the same site visit, the specialist group would be separate from Bohlweki and authorities.

Ms Ntene explained that she would prefer a site visit with the provincial authorities, as they would get an opportunity to discuss certain issues as authorities. Ms Ntene will check her availability but indicated that the proposed dates (i.e. 16, 17 August 2006) would be too soon for her.

### **3.5 Time Frames**

Ms Ntene confirmed that the time frames applicable to the authorities are as follows:

- Within 14 days the authorities acknowledge the receipt of the application
- In 30 days the authorities will go through the scoping and plan of study report
- Within 115 days of receiving the final EIA report an RoD would be issued out

### **3.6 Listed Activities**

Ms Strong asked for clarity of how the listed activities should be included on the application form. Ms Strong mentioned that the project had a number of activities that were potentially applicable. Ms Strong went through some of the activities that have been identified to date and noted that activities from both schedule 386 and 387 were included. Ms Strong asked if it was necessary to list all applicable activities or just those from the schedule 397.

Ms Ntene stated that she would obtain clarity from her policy section on this matter.

#### **4. General**

##### **4.1 Case Officer**

Ms Strong asked Ms Ntene if a case officer had been allocated as yet for the Project.

Ms Ntene indicated that the officer will only be allocated once the application forms have been submitted. At the moment we will liase with her directly.

##### **4.2 Special Reviewers**

Ms Strong queried whether DEAT foresee the need for specialist reviewers for the project as this stage.

Ms Ntene stated that this type of project has been undertaken before and that at this stage no specialist reviewers are seen as necessary.

##### **4.3 Remark**

Mr Gewers indicated that at some stage in the project, Eskom would like to negotiate some cut-off dates in the processes followed to speed up the process. Mr Gewers specifically mentioned the review of draft documentation to speed up the process of review.

Ms Ntene indicated that the officials are working under strenuous conditions and as it is they have shorter time frames under the new regulations.

##### **4.4 Way forward: (deliverables)**

###### **DEAT**

Forward Bohlweki an application form.

Let Bohlweki know on her availability for a site visit

Check with the Policy Section and advise on the activities, which should be applied for.

###### **Bohlweki Environmental**

Submit a letter of opinion or an application form for the full process depending on the clients decision

Submit all relevant documentation for exemption purposes in the event that this is deemed the best way forward.

#### **5. Closure**

The meeting closed at 12H00