

# CONSTRUCTION & UPGRADE OF ACCESS ROADS

## For the Eskom Braamhoek Pumped Storage Scheme

### **COMMENTS & RESPONSE REPORT 2 (JUNE 2005): FINAL SCOPING REPORT**

*The various sources of the comments contained in this Comments and Response Report include:*

- *Records of public, key stakeholder and focus group meetings.*
- *Comments received by fax, e-mail and mail.*
- *Transcribed telephone conversations.*

*All comments received from I&APs as part of the EIA process have been categorised as follows:*

#### **CONSTRUCTION AND UPGRADE OF ACCESS ROADS**

1. Tourism-related issues.
2. Agriculture and farming operations.
3. Ecological impacts and biodiversity conservation.
4. Cultural heritage resource management.
5. Social and socio-economic issues.
6. Land tenure and compensation.
7. Job creation and economic opportunities.
8. Project alternatives.
9. Technical queries and comments.
- 10 (a) EIA Process (technical).
- 10 (b) EIA Process (public participation).
11. Braamhoek Pumped Storage Scheme.
12. Eskom Distribution Queries
13. Other queries and comments.

*1. The project team has tried to reflect as accurately as possible, the issues raised by I&APs. Should you feel that your issues are not accurately captured or have been placed under the incorrect category, please contact the Public Participation Office.*

*2. "Unidentified stakeholders" refer largely to persons who attended meetings and verbally raised issues without the project team managing to capture their name. This in no way diminishes the value of the issue raised. Should you recognise your issue and would like to have your name recorded next to it, please contact the Public Participation Office.*

## CONSTRUCTION AND UPGRADE OF ACCESS ROADS

### 1. Tourism-related issues

Mrs L Kleynhans Berg Bohaai	The N3 and the future further development of the De Beers Pass alternative to the N3 must be fully considered in the Scoping Report. The N3 carries a high volume of traffic, and the correct choice of access roads to the Braamhoek Pumped Storage Scheme can open the vast eco-tourism potential and experience of the surrounding areas.	The future N3 development has been considered in the Scoping Report. It is recognised that the study area has a vast eco-tourism potential. Eskom is, however, constrained by the Record of Decision for the Braamhoek Pumped Storage Scheme, which requires the sustainable management of the environment. To this Eskom has formed the braamhoek Partnership with various NGOs to manage the integration of social, economic and environmental factors into the planning and implementation phases of the Scheme.
Mrs GE Johnson Little Church Tea Garden & Gift Centre	I attended the second Swinburne Focus Group Meeting solely in the interest of Van Reenen. I assumed that the proposed upgrade of access roads meant that they would be tarred, and was prepared to fight for the road via Oaklands to be considered, but as tarring is not the case we will stay as is. Furthermore, I was there to promote Van Reenen, which is the nearest village together with Swinburne, to the scheme. And on the N3 in close proximity to Harrismith and Ladysmith. Both villages have much to offer in the way of accommodation and B&Bs. However, at the meeting, I gained the impression that only Harrismith and Ladysmith were the key figures involved and as the Swinburne meeting dealing with persons who have nothing to do with this area, jumping on the bandwagon, and are now acting like role players. Yet the villages with the potential and those closest to the scheme are being neglected. The environmental and the farmers groups appear to come first.	Certain roads will be required to be tarred. Other roads required by Contractor's during the construction period will remain as gravel roads and will be maintained by Eskom during the construction period and thereafter their maintenance will revert back to the Provincial roads authorities. The EIA team has attempted to obtain input from all the stakeholders. No particular group of stakeholders will be given preference over another in the EIA process.

### 2. Agriculture and farming operations

Mr T de Jager Theuns de Jager Trust	New roads must not cross possible cultivated land. Negotiations with landowners whose land will be crossed are of high importance and this has not been done to date.	The current and potential landuse, as well as agricultural potential of the land to be traversed has been taken into account by the team that proposed the layout of the road alternatives, as well as the environmental team that assessed these alternatives as part of the scoping Study.
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### 3. Ecological impacts and biodiversity conservation

Mr G Galloway Skeurklip Conservancy	The conservancy area to be established by Eskom is 8000 ha. Nature conservation is important and the 8000 ha should be open to the public. Alternatives 3 and 4 will provide ideal access to the conservancy land. Alternative 3 is the most practical option.	Noted.
Mr F Poggenpoel Swinburne Farmers Association	It is important that impacts on fauna and flora on the escarpment are taken into consideration.	These impacts have been considered and will be studied during the impact assessment phase.
Mr Ken Gordon WESSA	What impact will there be on watercourses in the area? This could be a serious issue.	In terms of the scheme itself, the largest impact on water would be on flow regime of rivers. Specialist studies have been undertaken on hydrological aspects. We are currently compiling the Integrated Water Use Licence Application Document, which will include these specialist study reports. Also, an EIA was conducted for the scheme in 1999 where various aspects, including water impacts, were investigated.

### 4. Cultural heritage resource management

No issues raised.	-	-
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### 5. Social and socio-economic issues

Pastor K Strubon Van Reenen Resident	Please consider that the people in this area frequently use the S793. We would prefer Eskom to consider using and upgrading this road too.	Noted.
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Mrs L Kleynhans Berg Bohaai	I would like to oppose the suggestion made by Mr Strubon (above), as there would be no benefit for Harrismith should Eskom use the S793.	Noted.
Mr H Badenhorst Maluti a Phofung	What work has been done on the socio-economic impacts of this development?	A social impact assessment is underway to assess impacts on labour tenants on site for the scheme. The tenants need to move so that the conservancy area can be established in terms of the Record of Decision. A further study will be undertaken for the access roads component during the Impact Assessment Phase, by the same consultants who are familiar with the demographics of the area.
Ladysmith/Emnambithi Local Municipality Focus Group Meeting Discussion	There are housing developments planned in the Besters area. Cllr Reddy requested that Mr Pillay liaise with the Department of Housing in this regard and feedback to the Project Team.	Noted. We await your response in this regard.
Mr TE Mazibuko Emnambithi Local Municipality	I refer to Page 3 of the Draft Scoping Report (Figure 1). This is the most favoured alternative. It should be considered to upgrade the D797 Road and the link road from Zaaifontein Farm to Rantjesvlakte to enable the Zaaifontein Community access to public transport (taxes and buses) to town and to Kleinsfontein Clinic, Entonjeni High School, shops, churches etc. as a social development. It will save cost and more emphasis can be put on social development of the surrounding densely populated settlements. The pump station will be close to the communities that are without electricity and it will be a great social development for them if these areas are electrified – Kleinfontein, Rantjesvlakte, Roodepoort, Watershed, Baldaskraal, Doornhoek and Mathondwane.	Noted.
Ms L Kleynhans Berg Bohaai	The environmental impacts and socio-economic considerations of the access roads must consider the "bigger picture", and a scenario should be developed whereby various broader aspects, other than the costs, benefits and convenience to Eskom must be fully acknowledged.	An attempt has been made to assess the potential environmental impacts of the proposed alternative access roads on a macro scale.
Mr ST Mkhize Emvundlweni Development Committee	The area and community is in need of roads. In the past, the community requested that the Department of Transport build or upgrade roads but nothing has happened. There is a road which has been constructed but has not been finished. We wrote a letter asking help, with no response to date.	The community needs are noted. Eskom's core business is the provision of energy for South Africa's inhabitants and will therefore only construct roads where this assists the organisation in achieving this strategic objective. It is the responsibility of the Provincial roads authorities to construct and upgrade provincial roads.
Mr Grant-Smith Van Reenen Resident	I own a General Dealer Business in Van Reenen many of whose customers come from Oaklands and Oban who use the road in question (S793) to get to Van Reenen. Many of these people also have to come to Van Reenen to collect pensions every month. In the wet season, this road sometimes becomes impassable so that these people cannot get to the village for their provisions. Van Reenen children also use the school at Waterfall. Apart from the store, I also have a Bed & Breakfast, which would also get more customers if a road through the valley would open up the area.	The need for the upgrade of S793 is noted. It is, however, not Eskom's responsibility to construct roads but to provide energy for South Africa's inhabitants. Eskom will therefore only construct roads where this assists the organization in achieving this strategic objective. Eskom will, however, consider community needs when deciding on alternative road routes for consideration.
Mr FA Kite Van Reenen Resident	I stay in Van Reenen and farm at Helderfontein and Net In Tyd on the S793. I travel this road daily on 2 or 3 occasions. There are also two cash crop farmers (one with cabbages and one with potatoes) who employ numerous staff and who use this road. The upgrading/tarring of this road would be an asset to us as members of the local community and as it is the most used road it would be of great benefit to the community at large.	The need for the upgrade of S793 is noted. It is, however, not Eskom's responsibility to construct roads but to provide energy for South Africa's inhabitants. Eskom will therefore only construct roads where this assists the organization in achieving this strategic objective. Eskom will, however, consider community needs when deciding on alternative road routes for consideration.

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Mr SG Nhlapho Mpophomo Combined School	The Principal and Staff of the Mpophomo Combined School fully recommend the construction and upgrade of the road across our school. This will be of great benefit to our children and the community who are using the road on a daily basis. This is also one of the busiest roads in this community. Our children are transported by bus every day to and from the school and the situation of the road as it is now poses a great danger for the lives of the children. This also impacts negatively on the smooth running of the school because when it rains it means that there is no school. Bridges sometimes overflow, the road becomes slippery and transport gets stuck in the mud. Normal teaching and learning can therefore not take place on such days. Attached please find herewith a map showing the different routes the bus uses to transport the children to and from school. There are 225 learners who will benefit from the construction of this road.	The need for the upgrade of the roads indicated is noted. It is, however, not Eskom's responsibility to construct roads but to provide energy for South Africa's inhabitants. Eskom will therefore only construct roads where this assists the organization in achieving this strategic objective. Eskom will, however, consider community needs when deciding on alternative road routes for consideration.
Mr TCS Mapp Harrismith Farmer	The Kiesbeen Road has a bus that runs four times a week from Kiesbeen to Ladysmith. Construction workers will use this and increase traffic on this road. Eskom should, therefore, maintain this road into the future.	Eskom will only maintain roads during the construction period, as impacts during operation do not warrant on-going maintenance. There will only be one or two vehicles driving between reservoir sites per day. Also, on-going maintenance will become the responsibility of the regional Department of Transport.
Mr William Thulezweni Dlamini Community Environmental Workers Trust (CEWT)	In the Thukela District Municipality there are 5 local municipalities and about 100 CEWT groups. This organisation consists of volunteers that teach communities about maintaining a clean and safe environment. CEW organisations also promote HIV/AIDS awareness. Please call me on 0837393660 if Eskom can assist us or use this in any way .	Noted.
<b>6. Land tenure and compensation</b>		
Ladysmith/Emnambithi Local Municipality Focus Group Meeting Discussion	Eskom needs to be aware of the change of ownership on a number of farms within the study area.	Noted. This has been investigated and data will be updated accordingly.
<b>7. Job creation and economic opportunities</b>		
Mr H Badenhorst Maluti a Phofung Local Municipality	How many jobs will be created for Free State people and how many for KwaZulu-Natal people in the construction and upgrade of access roads?	Construction of the upper reservoir will entail the construction of the dam, the tunnel and a vertical shaft. Construction of the lower reservoir will entail the construction of the same, as well as the power station itself. Thus, most construction activities will occur at the lower reservoir (located in KwaZulu-Natal). Jobs created will be approximately 20% Free State and 80% Kw aZulu-Natal. Of the 2000 jobs created, 80% will be local and 20% will comprise the contractor's core staff. Thus, it is broadly anticipated that there will be 80 jobs created at the upper reservoir located in the Free State.
Ladysmith/Emnambithi Local Municipality Focus Group Meeting Discussion	How is Eskom going to deal with sourcing of labour and materials locally? Discussions should be held between the Emnambithi Chamber of Business, Emnambithi Local Municipality and Eskom regarding Eskom's procurement policy.	The contract documents will specify that the lead contractors must use local sub-contractors where possible. Eskom will liaise with Emnambithi Municipality on the availability of local skills and service providers.
Mr B Le Roux Ladysmith/Emnambithi Local Municipality	What is happening in terms of the Local Chamber of Commerce registering local businesses on the tender list?	This will be done in the near future and would be a separate process. All relevant parties will be contacted once the process has been initiated.

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Councillor ZS Nene Abantungwakholwa Traditional Authority	My request is that Eskom should make sure that they employ people from our area since there are many people without jobs. They should also contact me soon to let me know what type of people are they looking for. There is wide range of people looking for jobs in our area, including educated, uneducated, women and the youth. Areas that are mostly affected by unemployment are Zaafontein, Rantjiesrakte, Roodepoort and Mathondwane.	Noted.
Mr BS Cibane Vukuzakhe Association	I appreciate the opportunity and this is a step forward for Eskom. It is important for Eskom to look into developing the small emerging contractors when building access roads, especially black companies. This can be done by allowing these companies to register on Eskom's database and allocate jobs accordingly. The process should be well supervised to avoid favouritism to family members and friends of Eskom employees. If there are any forms to register on the database, please provide them. Keep the good work going and I am looking forward to your response.	Eskom will run a separate commercial process in order to procure suitable suppliers. A meeting between Eskom Commercial and the Chamber of Commerce will be arranged and information will be shared on how they can register as service providers or suppliers. At the time of the meeting, there will be more information on required resources.
Mrs L Kleynhans Berg Bohaai	The impression, on reading the Draft Scoping Report, is of a strong bias toward the KwaZulu-Natal side of the project. The Free State wish to have their fair share of the developmental benefits that this scheme can create especially in job opportunities and future socio-economic spin-offs. May we once again stress that, while we fully understand the need for the Pumped Storage Scheme, we feel that, with fully integrated planning, this project must bring huge social benefit to this under-resourced and under-developed area, thus creating a true win-win situation. We would further reiterate our strong conviction that Alternative 3 would bring huge benefit to the entire area and community, while not having a serious negative impact on the project as a whole.	The EIA has involved stakeholders from both Provinces. The alternative favoured is noted and has been taken forward for further evaluation in the EIA Phase.
Mr Bruce Acutt Department of Transport KZN	The Department of Transport requested that we make use of the Vukuzakhe Programme to unpack the construction contracts to allow for different levels of companies to get involved in the project. The EIA Consultants are aware of the Programme. This programme will be beneficial to the local community and provide for skills development.	Noted.
Ms Angela Ngoato	We would like some assurance that you have consulted with local communities on job creation and social benefits. If people have the necessary technical qualifications, will they be considered for employment?	We have consulted with the community as well as the Emnambithi/Ladysmith Local Municipality and the Harrismith Municipalities. The issue of job creation has been discussed. We have done preliminary calculations on the numbers and types of jobs that will be created as part of this project. Also, at the previous public meeting, Eskom undertook to commence with the registration of local companies onto their procurement database and this process has been initiated. The most the EIA consultant can do is to make recommendations.

**8. Project alternatives**

Mrs Joyce Gumede KwaNalu Farmers Association	Have you considered the Driefontein Road? This road runs through many farms in the area.	The road has been considered but it does not fulfil the requirements of providing either external or internal access to the Scheme.
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**9. Technical queries and comments**

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Mr H Badenhorst Maluti a Phofung Local Municipality	<p>What is the anticipated volume of traffic coming into the area on the external access roads and from KwaZulu-Natal?</p> <p>The De Beers Pass upgrade will assist with Eskom's operational costs into the future.</p>	<p>The external access roads will need to be maintained for people residing at the upper construction camp or in Harrismith during the construction phase. Heavy equipment will be required at the reservoir sites which will probably be brought in from Gauteng.</p> <p>We cannot presume that access will be provided along the upgraded De Beers Pass. Also, an interchange will need to be constructed and this would need to be negotiated with the N3TC and SANRAL.</p>
Mrs L Kleynhans Berg Bohaai	<p>In your discussions with the various roads authorities, did you discuss the possibility of sharing the costs of constructing De Beers Pass as this would cut down on costs for Alternative 3? In response to your statement regarding interchanges, there are many off-ramps off the N3 that are not necessarily expensive interchanges.</p>	<p>The timing of the two projects is a problem in this regard, however, we will continue to discuss this possibility. Important to note is that the upgrading of the N3 project is worth billions of Rands, whereas this roads project is worth millions. The scales are very different.</p> <p>An interchange or off-ramp would need to be negotiated and approved by the N3TC and SANRAL.</p>
Mr H Badenhorst Maluti a Phofung Local Municipality	<p>Does Alternative 2 contain the construction of new roads?</p>	<p>Yes, some of the roads will be new (the roads highlighted in red on the map).</p>
Mr G Galloway Skeurklip Conservancy	<p>Please provide the cost for each alternative.</p> <p>Will Alternative 1 and 2 contain private roads?</p>	<p>These are broad estimates of cost: Alternative 1: R 200 million Alternative 2: Just over R 200 million Alternative 3: R 300 million Alternative 4: R 250 million Yes. The roads will be private with limited access for landowners in the area. We cannot link these roads and promote thoroughfare in such an environmentally sensitive area that will form part of a conservancy (in accordance with the Record of Decision obtained for the scheme).</p>
Mr T de Jager Theunis de Jager Trust	<p>The current road corridors are 20 metres wide from fence to fence. At the Swinburne Focus Group Meeting, it was discussed that the road corridors would be 30 metres wide. If this case, Eskom must take the responsibility of re-fencing. The bridge that crosses the Klip River is sometimes flooded for over 24 hour due to heavy rains. This bridge must be higher and wider to accommodate implements and vehicles from Eskom.</p>	<p>The final road corridor will be the standard 20 m wide. A road corridor of 30 m width is being investigated during the EIA.</p> <p>The comment regarding the flooding of the Klip River is noted.</p>
Mr N Bodger Eskom Transmission	<p>The proposed roads come from the south, so some parallel transmission lines running with the roads might be possible below the lower dam. There are of course complications with this if the road is a proclaimed road, in that there are prescribed distances which have to be met. Has the Access Roads EIA determined if any reticulation lines need to be moved due to change in status of a road? This applies specifically for the D48 which has a 10 metre reserve, but will be changing to main road standard with a 30 metre reserve. Normally lines up to 22kV may not be within 20 metres of the centre line of such a road and lines over 22kV (such as our proposed 88kV line) must be at least 35 metres from the centre line. There is currently an 11kV line running alongside D48.</p>	<p>The team that has proposed the layout of the road alternatives has taken into account the existence of and future need for transmission power lines.</p>

<p>Mr CJ Landman SANRAL</p>	<p>Having liaised with N3TC on the construction and upgrade of access roads for the Braamhoek Pumped Storage Scheme, we respond to the three applications for crossings as follows:</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>
<p>Letter addressed to Braamhoek Consultants Joint Venture</p>	<p><b>S922 at N3-7</b> (Proc No 2398/89 – P249/89 sheet 2 of 7) This crossing is located within what appears to be the provision for a future interchange. Should the interchange not be built initially, Eskom shall be responsible for the provision of the crossing to the standard required by SANRAL in consultation with the N3TC or any realignment of the crossing to suit the N3. A wayleave may be considered on acceptance of these conditions.</p> <p><b>Farm access at N3-7</b> (Proc No 2398/89 – P249/89 sheet 1 of 7) This crossing is located on what appears to be the provision for a farm access (refer existing layout drawing). As a single lane this would not be suitable for a crossing as requested. There will be a need for this crossing to be upgraded to accommodate the anticipated traffic to the Pump Storage Scheme and provided Eskom is willing to cover the extra costs of the upgrade a wayleave could also be considered here.</p> <p><b>D48 at N3-6</b> (Proc P2401/89 – P251/89 sheet 4 of 5) The layout in the N3TC's possession would indicate that the N3 falls outside the proclaimed road reserve (see attached A4 copy – the dotted lines indicate the proclaimed road reserve and the solid lines indicate the proposed road reserve). They are still in the process of investigating the reason for this anomaly. It would seem that in this case no future road crossing is planned not withstanding the fact that there is a proclamation/alignment discrepancy and provided Eskom is willing to accept liability for the provision of a future over or underpass bridge a wayleave can be considered here.</p> <p><b>TAKE-OFF FROM EXISTING N3</b> It would appear that the existing intersection at N3-7X, Km 12.29, southbound is the preferred option. Although this portion of the N3 is a declared abnormal route, the intersection is not and as such it will have to be upgraded. The cost of upgrading the access will be for Eskom's account.</p> <p><b>GENERAL</b> ESKOM shall undertake to finance any deviation from the current design of structures on the De Beers Pass and be prepared to carry the costs of additional structures required as a result of their proposed access roads whether these are along provincial roads or not and shall indemnify SANRAL and the N3TC of any costs involved with the removal, or relocation of anything for which a wayleave approval has been given.</p> <p>Once wayleaves are approved they will be subject to similar formalised conditions in terms of the SA National Roads Agency and National Roads Act, Act 7 of 1998. Your request for wayleaves will therefore be considered once Eskom have indicated their acceptance of the above requirements, which will be more specifically described once formal approval is given. Please also liaise further on the matter with N3TC.</p>	

Mr CJ Landman SANRAL	<p>The Draft Scoping Report has reference. It is noted that no mention is made of our latest letter to Braamhoek Consultants Joint Venture. As these comments were related to access across the proposed De Beer's Pass, it is assumed that it will receive attention in the EIA dealing with access roads primarily. It has also been confirmed that ACER (Africa) will be consulting with the N3 Toll Concessionaire (N3TC) on these matters. This office awaits the outcome of your meeting with N3TC who will be liaising with us on the statutory matters.</p>	<p>Thank you for forwarding correspondence as submitted to the Braamhoek Consultants Joint Venture. The contents will be included in the Comment and Response Report of the Final Scoping Report. Also, I have forwarded your recent correspondence to the Braamhoek Consultants Joint Venture for their information. Kindly note that a focus group meeting has been arranged with the N3TC for 12 May 2005 to discuss the findings of the Draft Scoping Report and concerns regarding the proposed development.</p>
N3TC comments Focus Group Meeting Discussion	<p>This summarises key points that were discussed:</p> <p>Way leaves for crossings of the N3 road reserve by any of the proposed access roads outlined in the alternatives are required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Road S922: Swinburne to Bedford. Eskom will not upgrade or make any improvements on this road, but will maintain the portion to the De Beers Pass road during construction. This is not in conflict with present N3 planning.</li> <li>▪ Escarpment link. Current N3 planning allows for a farm overpass. If the current farm road is altered or if Eskom requires a servitude for this road, an application for a way leave will be required. Should Eskom require a wider bridge, the additional cost will be incurred by Eskom. The actual position of the overpass/underpass of the farm access road may also change.</li> <li>▪ Road D48: De Beers Pass. The N3 crosses the D48 and a bridge for a provincial district road will be provided under N3 concession. Should Eskom require a higher standard bridge, the additional cost will be incurred by Eskom. The actual position of the bridge may also change.</li> </ul> <p>The entrance from the existing N3 to the S790 at Swinburne was discussed. Improvements are required to the intersection for abnormal loads. If required, this will be provided at Eskom's cost. Use of the N3 will also require approval by the Abnormal Load Permit Office. Crossing of the N3 with Braamhoek Transmission Power Line Turn In was discussed. This crossing is an issue that needs to be addressed by the Eskom Transmission Power Line Environmental Consultant. It may be necessary to place the transmission power line so that the future N3 is accommodated. The BCJV will contact WSP to obtain information on borrow pits proposed for N3 planning.</p> <p>Phillip du Plessis, N3TC, will submit a letter to the South African National Roads Agency Limited (SANRAL) on the above issues to obtain SANRAL's agreement and/or amendment of the statements made by N3TC at the meeting. The statements made by N3TC (at the meeting) are based on its own interpretation of SANRAL's rights and are made without prejudice to SANRAL's rights.</p>	-
Mr Ken Gordon WESSA	<p>I am concerned about the new N3 De Beers Pass to be constructed in the future. Has this been taken into consideration during your EIAs?</p>	<p>Yes, the new N3 has definitely been considered in the studies conducted. Also, we have had discussions with the N3TC, SANRAL and Provincial Roads Departments. We have future meetings scheduled with these organisations to discuss the matter further. Notably, the projects are running with different timeframes.</p>
Mr Bruce Aitken	<p>There is a potential impact on the Wilge River and that a bridge would need to be upgraded. Please elaborate.</p>	<p>The impact would occur if Alternative 1 of the external access roads were to be constructed. This is the preferred alternative. The bridge would need to be widened and specialists would consider this and recommend specific construction methods and mitigating measures.</p>

Mr Ken Gordon WESSA	Have you considered the possibility of the Jaana Dam being constructed (as part of the Thukela Water Project)? This would have a direct impact on your impacts regarding water.	The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) is one of our key stakeholders in this project so we have been in close consultation with them since project inception. Also, we have currently been conducting the water use licensing process and application for General Authorisations in close consultation with the Provincial and National Departments of DWAF.
Mr Cas Human Landowner, Van Reenen	The Swinburne/Kiesbeen Road poses safety problems with a dangerous intersection. How will you ensure that contractor's trucks will use allocated roads and not the Van Reenen Road? Contractors will take the shortest route possible to save time and cost.	Eskom will instruct contractors within binding contract documents as to which routes they can use during construction. These conditions will be part of the contract and the stipulations could be written into an Environmental Management Plan (EMP). Eskom will monitor these conditions and an Environmental Control Officer will be appointed to monitor the EMP. Also, a Resident Engineer will be on site. Landowners are welcome to consult with any of these officials during construction. In our discussions with the N3TC, there are other safety issues associated with the intersection of the Swinburne Road (S790) with the N3 and it is important that all these issues are considered.
<b>10 (a) EIA Process (technical)</b>		
Mr G Galloway Skeurklip Conservancy	People of the Free State prefer Alternatives 3 and 4, however, the Draft Scoping Report findings highlight that Alternatives 1 and 2 are preferred. Alternatives 1 and 2 are very selfish options because there will be no benefit to anyone except Eskom. I propose you have a meeting with the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism and the Free State Conservation Department to ascertain their standpoint on Alternatives 1 and 2. The future of Harrismith has not been taken into consideration in this EIA.	Unfortunately, the outcomes of any EIA may not necessarily satisfy everyone who participates or is affected. Independent specialists and environmental consultants are appointed to study the alternatives to ascertain the best option overall.
Pastor K Strubon Van Reenen Resident	Has the preferred alternative already been selected and final decisions made? An economic benefit is essential for South Africa. Eskom will not lose out if Alternatives 1 and 2 are selected, only the communities that are directly affected.	No. The Draft Scoping Report makes certain recommendations regarding the preliminary preferred two alternatives. However, the purpose of this meeting is to obtain your comment on the Draft Scoping Report.
Mrs L Kleynhans Berg Bohaai	The preferred alternatives that have been put forward in the Draft Scoping Report are the least beneficial to the Harrismith community and the most beneficial to Eskom (in terms of cost). Alternative 3 is preferred by the community of Harrismith because of socio-economic and tourism benefits. The wetlands in the area will become more accessible and there will be no road built on the escarpment. After the construction phase, will neither the upper nor the lower reservoir sites be accessible to the public?	Noted. The local farmers will have access to these areas. The area will form part of a conservancy (in accordance with the Record of Decision obtained for the scheme) and we are obliged to limit traffic in these areas.
Mr H Badenhorst Maluti a Phofung Local Municipality	At the first Swinburne Focus Group Meeting, the attendees outlined the specific reasons as to why the majority preferred Alternative 3. It was mentioned that this alternative would be discussed with various authorities. However, it seems as though this has been 'waved through'.	Please note that we have had several discussions with SANRAL, the N3TC and the regional roads departments regarding the four alternatives. Their main concern lies with Alternative 4 because of safety aspects of an intersection. This has definitely not been 'waved through' and your comments were taken into consideration.
Mr F Poggenpoel Swinburne Farmers Association	The length of time to drive between reservoir sites is surely only a contributing factor during the construction phase. As stated previously, only one or two cars will drive between the sites during operation and, thus, should not be a serious consideration for Eskom's preference.	Please note that the N3TC also has concerns regarding Alternative 4 because of safety aspects. Also, the general operating costs increase with increasing distance apart, i.e. Alternatives 3 and 4.

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Mr H Badenhorst Maluti a Phofung Local Municipality	Snow is a concerning factor with roads on the escarpment and should be considered.	This was taken into consideration during the EIA. It must be noted that Eskom deals with similar weather conditions at the Drakensberg Scheme along Olifant's Hoek Pass. Driving in adverse weather conditions is tough, however, they could occur along any of the alternatives identified.
Mr G Galloway Skeurklip Conservancy	The Background Information Document and Draft Scoping Report differ in the internal site access roads distances quoted are swapped around.	Thank you for pointing this out. The error lies within the Draft Scoping Report and amendments will be made for the final report.
Mr F Poggenpoel Swinburne Farmers Association	Alternatives 3 and 4 are better options for the environment. The only downfalls appear to be that they are more costly for Eskom. With the upgrade of the N3 in the future, operating costs for Eskom will decrease. It is important to note that we live in the area and will have to deal with the inconvenience caused during construction and operation. The alternative selected should suit us, as well as Eskom. Our list of reasons as to why we prefer Alternative 3 should be dealt with by Eskom.	Eskom has responded to your preference in the Comment and Response Report in the Draft Scoping Report. Please note too that Eskom is constructing a power station that will improve the economy of South Africa, as everybody needs electricity. It is the EIA Consultant's job to determine the best alternative for the project.
Mrs L Kleynhans Berg Bohaai	At the first Swinburne Focus Group Meeting, I suggested that Eskom consult with the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) to discuss funding for the project to assist Eskom. Has this been done? Also, will the specialist study reports be available in the Final Scoping Report?	See correspondence below between Eskom and the DBSA (under Section 10(a)). No. The specialist studies will only be undertaken during the impact assessment phase and will, thus, be available for review with the Draft Environmental Impact Report later this year.
Mr A Sompersadh Ladysmith/Emnambithi Local Municipality	The municipality is aware that Alternative 1 and 2 are being considered. From the Local Authority point of view we would like to suggest that the S790 from Swinburne to Kiesbeen as well as the S61 from Kiesbeen to the D48 (gravel roads) be tarred instead of gravelled. The reason for the suggestion is that this could be an alternative route should any problems occur on the Van Reenen's Pass (N3) and could open up further development from a local economic point of view along the route. Further consultation should take place with the Department of Transport as well as SANRAL to consider tarring that stretch of road which could then result in more visitors using this more scenic route and also visiting the town of Ladysmith.	Eskom will only utilise and maintain S790 during the construction period only, and will therefore not be in the position to tar this road. After the construction period is completed the responsibility of maintenance of the road will revert back to the Provincial roads authorities.
Mr FS Maloi Hamilberg School	I urgently request that you consider Alternatives 3 and 4 as the best options for upgrading roads in our eastern Free State area, which lies adjacent to the Braamhoek project. I am the Principal of the Hamilberg Primary School which is located about 10 km north-east of the upper dam of the Braamhoek project. Our school provides education for pupils whose parents work as farm labourers in the eastern Free State. The area is very poor with unemployment and very few job opportunities. Our school lacks resources and we operate under great hardship without running water and with no electricity. Transport is a great problem and it is difficult for me to travel to see my family who live in Harrismith. Roads in the area are shocking and this places an additional burden on the school, its children and their parents. On behalf of the Hamilberg School, its pupils and parents, I request that you give serious consideration to the upgrade of roads as per your Alternative 3 and 4, published in the EIA documents. These routes provide the greatest benefits in terms of access to Eskom, the communities and the school children of the eastern Free State and KZN and have the least environmental impacts.	Comments noted and Alternative 3 will be taken forward for consideration in the EIA phase. Alternative 4 is, however, not feasible in terms of cost, as well as travel distance and time.

CONSTRUCTION AND UPGRADE OF ACCESS ROADS  
FOR THE ESKOM BRAAMHOEK PUMPED STORAGE SCHEME

Mr DW Bristow Skeurklip Conservancy	Refer to Page 3. Alternative 2 De Beers Escarpment. Refer to Page 4. Alternative 3 De Beers-Skeurklip.	Comments and concerns are noted. The potential impacts of Alternatives 1 – 3 will be assessed further in the EIA phase. Alternative 4 is, however, not feasible in terms of cost, as well as travel distance and time. Eskom has had discussions with the DBSA regarding possible partnerships. The DBSA is willing to work together with any institution/developmental structure that proposes to undertake developmental initiatives, so long as the development venture will be able to repay the loan (from DBSA). However, judgement of feasibility of such a venture would be between the DBSA and the developer(s).
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Mr JW Bristow  
Skeurklip Conservancy

As a land user, employer, geologist and interested and affected party, I support the development of the planned Braamhoek Pumped Storage scheme on the edge of the Drakensberg Escarpment between the eastern Free State and north-western KZN.

In spite of the good efforts made in recent months by ACER, the Braamhoek Partnership and others to engage local stakeholders in a thorough public consultation process, given the initial history of this project and in particular the poor record of public consultation with parties in the eastern Free State, I remain concerned about the processes being followed in the planning and implementation of this project.

Further to the above, recently received documents dated 2 April 2005 are of particular concern and I request that the process of community consultation, Environmental Impact Assessments, planning and implementation be conducted in a rigorous and transparent manner and that decisions outlined in one set of documents are not summarily dismissed in subsequent documents. Further to your documents of 18 February 2005, 22 April 2005 and your Background Information Document dated November 2004, I wish to request and note the following:

1. That you give serious consideration to the upgrade of roads as per your Alternative 3 and Alternative 4 published in your EIA documents.
2. Routes 3 and 4 provide the greatest benefits in terms of access to both Eskom and communities of the eastern Free State and KZN and have the least environmental impacts.
3. Proposed Alternatives 3 and 4 will provide Eskom with its transport and access requirements and in addition will offer the greatest potential access and economic benefits to the disadvantaged communities, including black labourers and rural schools, that reside in the economically depressed areas of the eastern Free State and north western KZN.
4. Alternatives 1 and 2 provide most benefit to KZN and it would appear that there is an overall bias to this Province at the expense of the eastern Free State in the planning and implementation of the project.
5. Building a new road along the ecologically sensitive Escarpment route as proposed in the Alternative 1 and 2 will cause severe environmental impacts on this area. In particular, it will lead to environmental damage, soil erosion, loss of plant, animal and birdlife, and cause visual and air pollution.
6. Environmental studies by Eskom have already identified soil erosion as a problem in and around the Braamhoek dam sites and project area, and given the nature of soils found along the escarpment, building of a tarred road, excavation borrow -pits, and constructing drainages will cause further erosion.
7. In documents prior to 22 April (se.g. document dated 18 February 2005) it was stated that "the preferred road alternative(s) will only be selected at the end of the scoping exercise, where one or more will be studied in the impact assessment phase". However in your document of April 2005 you now state that "the two access routes which have been identified to be carried forward for investigation in the EIA Phase are Alternative 1 (Braamhoek) and Alternative2 (De Beers Escarpment)". I oppose the premature selection of these two routes and request that the original process as outlined be followed accordingly.
8. In addition to the above I recommend that Eskom engage other developmental agencies to assist in the holistic development of infrastructure in this area and thereby meet their stated intention of assisting and uplifting the greater communities that reside in the general vicinity of the Braamhoek Project and who will be impacted upon by the project.

Mrs L Kleynhans  
Berg Bohaaai

We acknowledge, agree and underwrite the need for, and advantage of the planned Braamhoek Pumped Storage Scheme for the whole of Southern Africa. We fully support the additional peaking electricity generation capacity that the Braamhoek Storage Scheme will create. However, on the aspect of access roads, and the non-involvement of the Maluti-a-Phofung Municipality and the Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality, we would like to strongly express our disappointment. The area, in our case the Free State area and upper escarpment, under discussion in the Draft Scoping Report is an internationally unique, ecologically diverse and highly sensitive area, which we feel requires extreme caution in the development of the proposed pumped storage scheme, in order to ensure the absolute minimum disturbance of the environment.

The views and wishes of the Free State part of the affected community must be respected and fairly considered. Positive spin-offs must be maximised and negative spin-offs minimised. We want a win-win sustainable situation for the people and the environment.

In your document (proceedings of 1<sup>st</sup> Swinburne Focus Group Meeting) dated 18 February 2005 and entitled Construction and Upgrade of Access Roads: Environmental Impact Assessment, you have stated under Section 4 (Project Background) "The preferred road alternative(s) will only be selected at the end of the scoping exercise, where one or more will be studied in the impact assessment phase." However, in your document dated April 2005 and entitled Draft Scoping Report: Access Roads for the Braamhoek Pumped Storage Scheme: Executive Summary (Draft for Public Comment) you state the following on page 2 with reference to the four alternative internal access roads: "The two access road routes which have been identified to be carried forward for investigation in the EIA Phase are Alternative 1 (Braamhoek) and Alternative 2 (De Beers Escarpment). The choice of these two routes is based on predicted environmental impacts and economical considerations of access road upgrade and construction, as well as access between the Lower and Upper Reservoirs during operation." We wish to strongly oppose the premature selection of the two routes.

Mrs L. Kleynhans  
Berg Bohaal  
(continued)

**Recommendations**

1. We cannot agree with the Executive Summary of the Draft Scoping Report and demand that the process as outlined be adhered to, and Alternative 3 (De Beers-Skeurklip) Fig.4, (the only possible choice taking into consideration the issues raised) be re-instated as an alternative access route for the following reasons:
  - The minimal environmental disturbance to the sensitive escarpment area and heritage resources. Alternatives 1 and 2 propose new roads on the escarpment which we oppose in the strongest terms.
  - The minimal disturbance of the general environment as existing roads will be used. It is imperative that disturbance through road-building and borrow-pits be kept to an absolute minimum in this sensitive area.
  - The socio-economic benefits to the Maluti-a-Phofung and broader Free State communities through access during the construction phase.
  - Tourism benefits through access to conservancies (an existing 8000 ha pristine conservancy), wetlands, overnight accommodation, hiking trails, and the escarpment ecology after construction. The possibility exists for the future upgrade and linkage of the Verkykerskop and Kiesbeen roads to form a unique tourism route. Alternatives 1 and 2 bring no socio-economic benefit to the Free State and Maluti-a-Phofung communities.
  - Benefit to N3 traffic through the provision of a viable alternative route during closures of the Van Reenen's Pass road because of accidents or heavy snowfalls, and during construction of the future N3-De Beers Pass through route.
  - The increased operational costs to Eskom after construction could be supplemented by offering managed tours of the scheme as is done at the Drakensberg Pump Station at Oliviershoek.
  - The possibility of a shared cost of the longer route (Alternative 3) must be investigated.
2. The Maluti-a-Phofung Municipality and the Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality must be fully acknowledged and informed of this process. As major stakeholders it is critical that all socio-economic, environmental and heritage impacts be fully conveyed and discussed with them, by whatever means necessary.
3. The Development Bank of SA, a major stakeholder and funder of the MaP/DBSA Tourism Sector Plan, currently being researched, must be fully informed of the process in order that the proposed project be integrated into future strategic tourism planning.
4. The planning of access roads be delayed until the scoping process has been completed as per your document dated 18 February 2005.
5. During the specialist report phase local knowledge (e.g. Botany) be included into these studies, and processes put into place for rescue of plant material, cultural artefacts etc. by the local community.
6. That safety and security impacts form part of the scoping studies.
7. That all impacts allied to the proposed project be seriously considered and not only the operational costs to Eskom (the bigger picture).
8. Socio-economic impact studies must include tourism development impacts and impacts on the commercial farming sector and community.
9. The Maluti-a-Phofung Municipality and community must be acknowledged and consulted in discussions with N3TC regarding access roads and future planning of the road network.

Alternative 3 will be taken forward for consideration in the EIA phase.

A road exists for part of the way on the escarpment. Specialist ecological and heritage resources studies will be undertaken to evaluate the alternative taken forward for consideration in the EIA phase. A preliminary heritage resources study was undertaken as part of the Scoping phase. The proposed escarpment road was rated as having a medium to high sensitivity in terms of heritage resources. The specialist heritage resource specialist did, however, indicate that the potential negative impacts could be mitigated against and that heritage sensitivity "should not be a factor in deciding which route option should be chosen". Further heritage resources studies would form part of the EIA and these studies would advise the decision-makers. The other comments raised are noted.

Maluti-a-Phofung Municipality and the Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality have been invited to all the meetings included in the consultation process. It is up to them to take up the opportunity. The DBSA has been contacted and is fully informed of the proposed project and the EIA process.

The specialists chosen have intimate knowledge of the study area. All the other comments raised are noted.

Mr H Atkinson  
Private

I would like to select Alternative 1 as the preferred option.

Noted.

Mr G Galloway  
Skeurklip Conservancy

**Introduction**

We support the need for the planned Braamhoek Pumped Storage Scheme for the whole of South Africa. In this respect we note that:

1. Eskom and the Braamhoek Partnership have made a clearly stated commitment to the greater community that are impacted upon by this project, including farming communities, local schools and the under-privileged.
2. In various documents produced by Eskom, its Environmental Consultants and Communication and Consultation Agency it has been stated that various roads in the project surroundings will be identified for upgrading and that the "preferred road alternative(s) will only be selected at the end of the scoping exercise, where one or more will be studied in the impact assessment phase".
3. Adequate road and communication infrastructure are the most important resources required in respect of developing the unique potential of the eastern Free State and north-west KZN.

**Background**

The area, the eastern Free State and upper escarpment under discussion in the Draft Scoping Report, is a unique ecologically diverse and highly sensitive area. The area requires extreme care in respect of the development of the proposed pumped storage scheme to ensure that:

1. Minimum disturbance of the environment occurs.
2. Negative impacts are minimised and optimum benefits are achieved for the Braamhoek Project (Eskom) and the greater community of the eastern Free State and north-west KZN which are impacted by this project.

**Access Roads**

In documents dated prior to, and 18 February 2005 titled "Construction and Upgrade of Access Roads: Environmental Impact Assessment" it has been stated under Section 4 (Project Background): "The preferred alternative(s) will only be selected at the end of the scoping exercise, where one or more will be studied in the impact assessment phase". However, in a recent document dated April 2005 and titled "Draft Scoping Report Access Roads for the Braamhoek Pumped Storage Scheme: Executive Summary" (Draft for Public Comment) you state the following on page 2 with reference to the four alternative internal access roads: "The two access road routes which have been identified to be carried forward for investigation in the EIA Phase are Alternative 1 (Braamhoek) and Alternative 2 (De Beers escarpment). The choice of these two routes is based on predicted environmental impacts and economical considerations of access road upgrade and construction as well as access between the Lower and Upper Reservoirs during operation".

Mr G Galloway  
Skeurklip Conservancy  
(continued)

**Observations with Respect to Proposed Road Routes:**

In respect of the recent statement concerning the carrying forward of Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 we wish to note that:

1. Environmental Impacts of the proposal do not take into account the negative impacts of building new roads along the highly sensitive eastern Free State (Drakensberg) escarpment.
  2. Building a new road, opening new borrow pits, dealing with drainage to cope with high rainfall (storm activity) that the edge of escarpment experiences, are cause for concern in respect of erosion and damage to sensitive ecosystems. It should be noted that studies done by Eskom have already identified soil erosion as being a concern in the project area.
  3. New roads as proposed for the edge of the escarpment will increase pollution levels in the area.
  4. Upgrading (and where possible shortening) of existing routes would result in fewer environmental impacts and provide considerable benefit in respect of socio-economic impacts for the area.
  5. Upgrading of existing routes (as per Alternatives 3 and 4 in documents published by Eskom and ACER Africa) would allow sustainable economic benefit, particularly via properly planned ecotourism, of this unique but sensitive environmental area.
  6. Road Alternatives 1 and 2 overlook both the broader and critical socio-economic considerations of the area and the positive impact that the Braamhoek Project could have on the area.
  7. Other than possibly benefiting a select few, Alternatives 1 and 2 will do little to bring benefits to the current main economic driver viz. agriculture and under-resourced communities of the area.
  8. Alternatives 1 and 2 will have no positive spin-offs on under-resourced local schools at Nelsons Kop, Hamilberg and Hlomisa.
  9. Alternatives 1 and 2 will have little positive impact on the socio-economic status of this under-developed and economically depressed area of the eastern Free State.
- The impression gained from the Draft Scoping Report, is that there is a strong bias toward the KwaZulu-Natal side of the project. The Free State area should receive its fair share of the development benefits that this scheme can create especially in job opportunities and future socio-economic spin-offs.

**Recommendations**

We do not agree with the Executive Summary Draft and request that the process as outlined previously be adhered to. We accordingly request that Alternative 3 (De Beers-Skeurklip – Fig 4) which is our preferred choice, taking into consideration the issues raised above, be reinstated as an alternative access route.

**Our reasons for recommending the above (Alternative 3) are as follows:**

1. There would be minimal environmental disturbance to the sensitive escarpment area and heritage resources. Alternatives 1 and 2 propose new roads on the escarpment, which we oppose.
2. There would be minimal disturbance of the general environment by using existing roads. Disturbance through road building and borrow -pits should be kept to a minimum in this sensitive area.
3. Far greater socio-economic benefits would accrue to the eastern Free State including the Skeurklip Conservancy, Maluti-a-Phofung and broader Free State communities through utilisation of Road Alternative 3.
4. Tourism benefits would flow to the area through access to conservancies (an existing 8 000 ha pristine conservancy), wetlands, overnight accommodation, hiking trails, and the escarpment ecology after construction.
5. There is a real possibility of linking in future upgrades with the Verkykerskop, Kiesbeen and De Beers roads to form a unique tourism route.
6. Alternatives 1 and 2 provide minimal socio-economic benefit to the eastern Free State and Maluti-a-Phofung communities, and KZN communities at the foot of the escarpment.

This sensitivity has been taken into account. Much of the potential negative impacts of road construction/ upgrade on the escarpment (T – S) can be mitigated against by careful planning of the final alignment. It is recognised that all the aspects listed need to be considered in the EIA. Specialist input (pollution, ecological, visual, heritage resources, river crossings, drainage, geology, erosion etc) will be obtained in order to determine final road alignments. In this way potential negative impacts on the environment will be minimised.

Potential borrow pits have been selected with environmental considerations in mind. Where possible existing pits (previously not rehabilitated) will be utilised by Eskom. Mining Permit applications, including public consultation and a full environmental Management Plan, have been submitted to the Department of Minerals and Energy Affairs.

It is recognised that the use of existing roads would have minimal potential negative impacts on the receiving biophysical environment. Other considerations need, however, to be taken into account.

Alternative 3 will be taken forward for consideration in the EIA phase.

Mr G Galloway  
Skeurklip Conservancy  
(continued)

**We further request that:**

1. The Skeurklip Conservancy and other key interested and affected parties (all of which have considerable knowledge of the area) including the Maluti-a-Phofung Municipality and the Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality, be consulted and fully informed and included in this important process. As key stakeholders we request that all socio-economic, environmental and heritage impacts be fully discussed with all stakeholders.
2. The Development Bank of SA, a major stakeholder and funder of the Map/DBSA Tourism Sector Plan, currently being researched, should be fully included in the process in order that the proposed project be integrated into future strategic tourism planning.
3. The planning of access roads be delayed until the scoping process has been completed as per your document dated 19 February 2005.
4. During the specialist report phase local knowledge (e.g. botany, zoology, archaeology) be included into these studies, and processes to support the rescue of plant material, cultural artefacts etc. by the local community be set in place.
5. That safety and security impacts form part of the scoping studies – building new public roads through existing active farming units could for example exacerbate stock theft in the area.
6. All impacts and benefits allied to the proposed project be seriously considered and not only the operational costs to Eskom.
7. The full range of Socio-economic impact studies be considered, including tourism development impacts and impacts on the commercial farming sector, community, and schools.

**Conclusions**

To reiterate, the Skeurklip Conservancy understands and supports the need for the Braamhoek Pumped Storage Scheme. In respect of upgrading roads we request that Alternatives that will bring benefits to the greater project area be adequately researched and that a holistic approach, with fully integrated planning, be pursued as a matter of urgency in respect of the planning and implementation of this project. Upgrading (and improvements) to existing routes should be the preferable option in respect of access to the area. Roads and communications are amongst the most important resources required in terms of addressing the socio-economic requirements of this area and developing the unique potential of the eastern Free State and north-west KZN. Consequently we request that Alternative 3 (De Beers-Skeurklip – fig 4) be re-instated as an alternative access route. This project has the ability to bring significant social benefit to this under-resourced, under-funded and under-developed area, thus creating a true win-win situation. We reiterate that Alternative 3 would bring huge benefit to the entire area and community, while not having a serious negative impact of the project as a whole.

It is accepted that there may possibly be increased operational costs to Eskom in the event that Alternative 3 is developed. In this respect it is recommended that other partners should be approached to share in the additional costs (and subsequent benefits) that may accrue in respect of developing Alternative 3. The views and experiences of the Skeurklip Conservancy and other Interested and Affected Parties of the eastern Free State part of the affected community must be fully considered. Positive spin-offs must be maximised and a win-win and sustainable situation for Eskom and the entire community and environment affected by the Braamhoek Project, should be a prime objective. It is essential that the Project objectively considers and addresses the needs of the entire community of the eastern Free State and north-west KZN, rather than servicing a limited part of the community who in most respects already have benefits that the greater community have been deprived of in the past.

The Skeurklip Conservancy, Maluti-a-Phofung Municipality and Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality have been invited to participate in the consultation process for the EIA. It is their choice to participate or not.

The DBSA has been consulted. The DBSA is willing to work together with any institution/developmental structure that proposes to undertake developmental initiatives, so long as the development venture will be able to repay the loan (from DBSA). However, judgement of feasibility of such a venture would be between the DBSA and the developer(s).

Comment noted. The specialists proposed for the eIA phase have considerable knowledge of the study area.

Comment noted.

Comment noted.

Comment noted.

Mr GW Galloway  
Skeurklip Conservancy

Mr Galloway required the following information for commentary purposes:

1. The construction costs of each alternative internal access road.
2. When will the tender go out to build and construct the chosen internal access road?
3. What will the construction costs be from point E to point P and from point P to point S? Will this internal access road from point E to S be a private or public road?
4. What will the construction costs be from point T to point P and then from point P to point S? Will this internal access road from point T to point S be a private or public road? What will the construction costs be from point I to J and from J to T?
5. How often will Eskom use this internal access road which links the two dams?
6. What will the construction costs be from point T to point R and from point R to point B? Will this internal access road be a private or public road?
7. When and where will the meeting between Eskom, ACER and Free State/Natal Nature Conservation take place?

1. These are broad estimates of cost:  
Alternative 1: R 200 million  
Alternative 2: Just over R 200 million  
Alternative 3: R 300 million  
Alternative 4: R 250 million
2. The contract will be put out to tender in late 2005.
3. These figures have not been determined yet as a road alignment has not been finalised. Both roads will be public roads.
4. These figures have not been determined yet as a road alignment has not been finalised. The road will be partially private.
5. A few times a day.
6. These figures have not been determined yet as a road alignment has not been finalised. Both roads will be public roads.
7. The Free State Nature Conservation Department has been sent a copy of the Draft Scoping Report. To date, no comments have been submitted.

Pastor K Strubon  
Van Reenen Resident

Page 19 of the Draft Scoping Report Item 4.1.2 Alternative 2. Provide direct access from N3. According to the Report, this access route alternative was not considered a viable option chiefly because of the assumption that it would require a new road corridor and will have all the associated negative impacts viz. disturbance of fauna and flora, materials etc. This assumption however is wrong. Since an existing road exists between the N3 at Van Reenen and the S61 Kiesbeen, the De Beers Pass Road. This external access route alternative was therefore not considered based on the totally wrong information. This places a huge question on the validity or accuracy with respect to the rest of the document, particularly in the assessment of the various road alternatives (Section 4 of the Report).

Of all the existing external and internal access roads in this Report the S793 between Van Reenen and the S61 is the most travelled road. It serves a Guest Farm, a Country Lodge, a school and at least 200 people who live directly adjacent to this road. It furthermore provides a much shorter distance of existing road to be upgraded to gain access to the escarpment internal road, starting at the top of D48 in comparison with the Swinburne-Kiesbeen Road. Also no bridge across the Wilge River is required. The intersection of the N3 at Van Reenen is situated within a speed restriction zone of 80 km/h at a relatively flat and straight section of the N3 which is considered as much safer than the Swinburne-Kiesbeen intersection.

Based on the above it is clear that the roads EIA Draft Scoping Report has not dealt with all the issues in selecting an external access road. This will also obviously affect the internal access road alternatives. The Braamhoek Consultants JV is therefore requested to amend their report and re-assess the access road alternatives making use of all factual information. We are most willing to provide additional information or be of assistance in any matter should it be required.

Additional Information to be considered:

1. Page 12 of your report
  - < 3. Project Alt.
  - < 3.1 External Access Roads.
  - < Paragraph 3 is a contradiction.
2. The local stock yards are situated at Van Reenen with a subway under the N3 for access.
3. The local police station is situated at Van Reenen.
4. The local filling station is on the S793 therefore crossing and recrossing the N3 for fuel is greatly simplified and much safer.
5. There is a railway siding at Van Reenen should this be required this is also on the S793 side which is not the case at the Swinburne-Kiesbeen access road.

Comments noted.

CONSTRUCTION AND UPGRADE OF ACCESS ROADS  
FOR THE ESKOM BRAAMHOEK PUMPED STORAGE SCHEME

Mr G Wessels Van Reenen Resident	<p>I live on the S793 mentioned in Alternative 2 (par 4.1.2) (External Access Roads). I read the Draft Scoping Report on the proposed upgrade of the roads for the Braamhoek Scheme. The facts mentioned in part 4.1.2. is completely untrue.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At first there is no new road to be built, the S793 from Van Reenen to Schaapdrift already exists.</li> <li>2. This road is shorter than the Kiesbeen Road (S790) and also does not involve the upgrade of the very narrow bridge over the Wilge River at Schaapdrift.</li> <li>3. The pollution factor mentioned will be a problem on any of the other Alternatives too.</li> <li>4. An upgraded road on S793 would have a profound impact on the socio-economic situation of the area. The S793 is the most widely used road of all the alternatives especially by the Mpophomo School and the staff of the Oaklands and Oben Guest Farms which are situated on the S793.</li> <li>5. There are also more than 80 pensioners and their dependants living next to the S793 who collect their pensions monthly in Van Reenen using the S793.</li> </ol>	Comments noted.
Mr and Mrs L Harris Van Reenen Residents	<p>Alternative 2 would have an immeasurable positive influence on our business and our village. The entire district centres and revolves around Van Reenen as the pensioners get paid out here and the others that get Government Grants also receive their remuneration in the village. The S793 road is without a doubt the most used road in the entire district (excluding obviously the N3) and the upgrading or possible tarring of the road would change the lives of the community. It is difficult to conceive how any other route could be considered taking into account distances to be maintained and the fact that it would not be necessary to put a bridge across the Wilge River.</p> <p>Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact us.</p>	Comments noted.
Mr T Bokwe Eskom Generation	<p>Eskom is in the process of developing a power station in Braamhoek, and roads form a prerequisite infrastructure for this development. The roads have to be constructed by 2006, with a Record of Decision (RoD/authorisation from DEAT) obtained in the beginning of 2006. Recently (05 May 05), a meeting was held with the Swinburne Farmers Union, and the point of departure is the preference of the roads to be constructed. The choice, from Eskom's side, is informed by specialist investigations leading to a holistic 'picture' of environmental issues associated with the project, this picture is painted in a Scoping Report. Also of importance for Eskom is that Eskom's choice of which alternatives to be investigated in the EIA is also informed by the precautionary principles as far as emergency situations may arise. The farmers, on the other hand, demand a road that will be convenient to their farming operations. This is where, as far as the farmers are concerned, Eskom needs to work together with the DBSA as the DBSA is funding a tourism research project in the area, and may have funds for 'extra roads' the farmers want. The issue is whether the DBSA can provide the necessary funding for the 'extra roads' from its current tourism project so that the roads constructions are not slowed down. While Eskom initiates this communication with the DBSA, feedback on this matter will be forwarded to the appropriate municipality for them to pursue any action items that may be necessary.</p>	<p><b>Ms Victoria J Clarke, Development Bank of SA</b> I agree wholeheartedly that it makes sense for infrastructure like roads to serve the needs of communities and to grow economic sectors like agriculture and tourism. I have communicated with Johan Grundlingh (who will most likely be the project manager on this from DBSA's side) briefly and we are both very interested in working with Eskom, MAP and the community on this. Perhaps the next stage is to set up a meeting to discuss exactly what is envisaged and what are the shortfalls so that we know what the gaps are. I am going to pass this onto Johan now as I will assist on the tourism side wherever he needs me. We will revert to you soon.</p>
Mr GP Coetzee Middelpunt Wetland Trust	<p>In our opinion, Figure 3 (Alternative 3) the De Beers Skeurklip option would be first choice. It would serve our monitoring at the upper dam site and provide good access for the public to the entire area.</p>	Noted.
Mr GC Nel Klaarfontein	<p>Please take urgent notice that profile holes have formed on the Kiesbeen Road from Swinburne to Collin's Pass. It is very dangerous to drive on this road because the profile holes have settled and a vehicle can easily get overturned. The traffic on the road has also increased lately with many GP-vehicles (from Gauteng). We request that the road be tarred in the future since it is the only road that tourists and workers will be able to use from the Free State. This road falls outside the mist and snow area, and has an even gradient for heavy vehicles. Also, there is much accommodation for the public along this road and in Swinburne.</p>	Comments noted.

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<p>Mr TCS Mapp Harrismith Farmers</p>	<p>I attended both Focus Group Meetings held at Swinburne Farmers Hall. At the first meeting, we were told that the Kiesbeen Road would not be used. It was pointed out that this is the shortest route to Braamhoek for the steel and cement from Gauteng. We were told that transport contractors would be contracted to use another route. At the second meeting, we were told that the Kiesbeen will only be maintained until the end of the construction period. We asked what the advantage would be for the community and were told that the scheme was being built for the benefit of South Africa. Secondly, it was pointed out that this road has a bus service running four days a week, and that much traffic also uses the road. It was again stated that the road will only be maintained during the construction period.</p> <p>I got stuck in a 'mud patch' the other night. I heard that these holes were caused by Eskom doing tests on rock formations. These holes have now become deeper and more dangerous. Is this what we can expect from Eskom in years to come during and after construction?</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>
<p>Mr B Gibbons WESSA</p>	<p>Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 are the best options. I don't like alternative 3 or Alternative 4 because they go too close to areas such as Nelsonskop where Bald Ibises and Crowned Cranes are often foraging. The birds will be chased away from the farm. The road will then approach the Bedford Farm from the wrong angle for the Wattled Cranes that breed on Wilge Rinen farm. This will cause a disturbance.</p> <p>Alternative 2 will follow the routes/gravel roads that are in existence, so will be the best from an environmental point of view. It will be better to approach the dam from the Ladysmith direction from a convenience point of view as this will be easier for the birders to visit the bird reserve from the KZN side (from towns like Ladysmith) and builders. Also, the area is not as sensitive as the grasslands and wetlands road on the way to Bedford from Nelsonskop.</p> <p>Finally, it will best to only have one section that is tarred, because the disturbance (from construction vehicles) will be concentrated on one part of the area – and Alternatives 1 and 2 make sure that all the disturbance will be around dams only. I select Alternative 2.</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>
<p>Sir B Hervey Oaklands Country</p>	<p>I fully support the selection of the Swinburne-Kiesbeen route for access to the Braamhoek Scheme:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The S793, which is our road to Van Reenen, will not be carrying heavy traffic either in terms of density or load. This will preserve our peaceful environment.</li> <li>2. There will be minimised disruption to access to our establishment during the construction phase.</li> </ol> <p>On the negative side, the current state of this road is of great concern to all of us who live on it. Not only is it in a very poor state of repair, but it is also a hazard to road users, particularly when wet. Bearing in mind that we are already providing accommodation to the contractors visiting the Braamhoek site, we are concerned that unless the road is properly maintained, but damage to vehicles and the risk of accidents remains very high.</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>
<p><b>10 (b) EIA Process (public participation)</b></p>		
<p>Mr H Badenhorst Maluti a Phofung Municipality</p>	<p>Please hold a focus group meeting with the Maluti a Phofung Municipality to discuss the project.</p>	<p>All local municipalities have been contacted, sent reports, invited to public meetings and asked about focus group meetings. We have had no response from the Maluti a Phofung Municipality to date. All correspondence was addressed to Mr T Masejane: Director of Development and Planning. We will follow up with Mr TM Manyone: Municipal Manager.</p>
<p>Mr G Galloway Skeurklip Conservancy</p>	<p>Please have the next public meeting in the Harrismith area. All public meetings are held in Ladysmith.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>

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Mrs G Johnson Little Church Tea Garden & Gift Centre	There is no one from Van Reenen on the project database and we did not know about the Draft Scoping Report meetings.	Please give your details to ACER so that you can be registered for future correspondence. Please note that the EIA and availability of the Draft Scoping Report was advertised in 8 newspapers (national, regional and local).
Ms Debbie McKirdy ACER	Ms Mentz: Free State Department of Roads  You are hereby invited to attend a meeting to discuss the findings of the Draft Scoping Report for the above-mentioned project as follows: Date: 6 May 2005, Time: 09h30-12h00 and Venue: Ladysmith Royal Hotel. If you are unable to attend, the Environmental Impact Assessment Project Team and representatives of Eskom can meet with you separately to discuss the project and Draft Scoping Report. I would appreciate feedback at your earliest convenience with confirmation of your preference. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any queries in this regard. (The Draft Scoping Report was submitted to the Free State Department of Roads)	Ms Mentz was unavailable to attend the public meeting. Awaiting confirmation on the need for a meeting to discuss the Draft Scoping Report.
Ms Debbie McKirdy ACER	Mr S Selepe: Municipal Manager of the Thabo Mofutsunyane District Municipality  You are hereby invited to attend a meeting to discuss the findings of the Draft Scoping Report for the above-mentioned project as follows: Date: 6 May 2005, Time: 09h30-12h00 and Venue: Ladysmith Royal Hotel. If you are unable to attend, the Environmental Impact Assessment Project Team and representatives of Eskom can meet with you separately to discuss the project and Draft Scoping Report. I would appreciate feedback at your earliest convenience with confirmation of your preference. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any queries in this regard. cc Mr L Mogatle, Mr Sefantsi	No response to date. Awaiting confirmation on the need for a meeting to discuss the Draft Scoping Report.
Ms Debbie McKirdy ACER	Mr Masejane: Development and Planning of the Maluti a Phof ung Local Municipality  A meeting has been arranged to discuss the findings of the Draft Scoping Report for the above-mentioned project as follows: Date: 6 May 2005, Time: 09h30-12h00 and Venue: Ladysmith Royal Hotel. Please could you confirm your availability to attend this important meeting. If you are unable to attend, the project team will be available on 5 May 2005 to meet with you separately to discuss the project. Please could you advise if this is necessary. I would appreciate your feedback at your earliest convenience.	No response to date. Awaiting confirmation on the need for a meeting to discuss the Draft Scoping Report.

**11. Braamhoek Pumped Storage Scheme**

Ladysmith/Emnambithi Local Municipality Focus Group Meeting Discussion	How many permanent employees are expected at the Braamhoek Pumped Storage Scheme (BPSS)? Where will permanent employees for the BPSS be accommodated?	Approximately 35 permanent jobs will be created after construction. No special accommodation arrangements will be made for people working on the BPSS, as they will be expected to find their own housing or accommodation.
Ladysmith/Emnambithi Local Municipality Focus Group Meeting Discussion	Eskom needs to deal with issues associated with relocation of people for the pumped storage scheme well in advance and in close consultation with the Emnambithi/Ladysmith Municipality. The Development Committees are keen to understand how Eskom is planning to undertake the relocation process should it be necessary. The Emnambithi/Ladysmith Local Municipality recommended that Councillors Buthlezi and Gasas be part of the team that will deal with the relocation of graves.	Noted. Eskom will employ social consultants who understand the language of the area, the way people live, etc. No decisions have been made regarding relocation, however Eskom is looking at the best solution possible.
Ladysmith/Emnambithi Local Municipality Focus Group Meeting Discussion	Most people living in the Zaaifontein area have a large number of cattle. Will Eskom consider alternative arrangements in terms of accommodating the capacity of cattle farming in the Zaaifontein area since the area will be narrowed due to the proposed development? What is going to happen?	Zaaifontein will not be significantly affected by the development of the BPSS, and Eskom will consider leasing the land for grazing after construction.

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Mr Beston Silungwe Propnet	Please outline the timeframes for the entire project.	It is anticipated that construction of the roads will commence during 2006, construction of the scheme will commence in 2007 and construction of the power lines will commence in 2009. It is anticipated that commissioning will occur in 2012.
<b>12. Eskom Distribution Queries</b>		
No issues raised.		
<b>13. Other queries and comments</b>		
Councillor ZS Nene Abantungwa-kholwa Traditional Authority	There will be no problem to work in our area be it the access roads or transmission lines.	Noted.