

BRAAMHOEK PUMPED STORAGE SCHEME

**CONSTRUCTION AND UPGRADE OF ACCESS
ROADS : ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
ASSESSMENT**

**MINUTES OF MEETING BETWEEN LADYSMITH/EMNAMBITHI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY,
ESKOM GENERATION, BRAAMHOEK CONSULTANTS JOING VENTURE AND AC ER
(AFRICA)**

**LADYSMITH/EMNAMBITHI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, LISTER CLARANCE BUILDING
LADYSMITH**

**18 FEBRUARY 2005
08H00 – 09h30**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS	3
2. ATTENDANCE	3
3. OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING	3
4. PROJECT BACKGROUND	3
5. THE CONSTRUCTION AND UPGRADE OF ACCESS ROADS	4
5.1 Description	4
5.2 Discussion	5
6. GENERAL INFORMATION	7
7. CONCLUSION	7

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr Dirk Vermeulen, Municipal Manager, welcomed all present and thanked them for attending the meeting. He asked that everyone introduce himself/herself. Mr Vermeulen indicated that the municipality's interest in the project is to ensure that socio-economic benefits for the region can be maximised. He explained that the local economy must be taken into account during the study. Mr Vermeulen commented that a similar meeting had been held for the Transmission Power Line and Integration Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

2. ATTENDANCE

Attendance was as follows:

NAME	POSITION	ORGANISATION
Ms Deidre Herbst	Environmental Manager	Eskom: Generation
Mr Tony Stott	Senior Stakeholder Manager	Eskom: Generation
Ms Jaana-Maria Ball	Environmental Consultant	Braamhoek Consultants Joint Venture
Mr Gary Vok	Civil Engineer	Braamhoek Consultants Joint Venture
Ms Debbie McKirdy	Public Participation Consultant	ACER (Africa)
Mr Dirk Vermeulen	Municipal Manager	Ladysmith/Emnambithi Municipality
Mr Bertie Le Roux	Planning and Development	Ladysmith/Emnambithi Municipality
Mr Mike Lindsay		Ladysmith Chamber of Commerce
Mr James Luthuli	Member	Van Reenen Business Development
Mrs Thandi Ndlovu	Member	Mnambithi Chamber of Commerce
Mr Sipho Zwane	Councillor	Ladysmith/Emnambithi Municipality
Mr Vincent Madlala	Deputy Mayor	Ladysmith/Emnambithi Municipality

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

The primary objectives of the meeting were to:

- Inform the Ladysmith/Emnambithi Local Municipality of the proposed project.
- Obtain baseline information and *status quo* of the area regarding the proposed project.
- Identify issues (positive and negative) that require investigation.
- Provide an opportunity to interact directly with the project proponent and project team.

4. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Ms Deidre Herbst and Mr Tony Stott explained the following:

- The Braamhoek Pumped Storage Scheme (PSS) is situated in the Drakensberg on the provincial border between the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal. Environmental authorisation for the Braamhoek PSS has been awarded.
- Eskom Generation is a division of Eskom with the responsibility of building and operating the Braamhoek PSS and is also responsible for the construction and upgrade of access roads EIA. Eskom Generation deals with the generation of electricity and is responsible for power generation stations.

- Eskom Transmission builds high voltage power lines and only deals with the National Network that connects to the National Grid.
- The construction and upgrade of access roads EIA and the construction of transmission power lines EIA will be required for the construction and operation of the Braamhoek PSS.
- The Braamhoek Consultants Joint Venture (BCJV) is leading the construction and upgrade of access roads EIA. ACER (Africa) has been appointed to conduct the public consultation exercise for both EIAs (for optimisation and synergy).
- The preferred road alternatives will only be selected at the end of the Scoping exercise, where one or more will be studied in the impact assessment phase.
- The preferred transmission power line route will be selected at the end of Scoping.

5. THE CONSTRUCTION AND UPGRADE OF ACCESS ROADS

5.1 Description

Ms Jaana-Maria Ball provided an overview of the construction and upgrade of access roads for the Braamhoek PSS.

In the presentation (Appendix A) the following was discussed:

- Background to the project.
- Project locality.
- The project has three kinds of roads envisaged:
 - ▶ External roads – access from existing regional roads.
 - ▶ Internal site roads – access within upper and lower sites.
 - ▶ Internal roads – roads linking upper and lower reservoirs (four alternatives identified).
- Potential issues identified (construction and operation, short-term and long-term).

5.2 Discussion

This section summarises issues, concerns, comments and questions that were raised and discussed at the meeting:

Concerns and Issues	Responses provided by Eskom Generation and the Project Team
<p>Mr Dirk Vermeulen. Please explain the rest of the scoping process and when the preferred alternative will be selected.</p>	<p>The Draft Scoping Report is currently being finalised and will be made available to the public shortly. All alternatives will be assessed and one or two will be carried forward into the impact assessment phase for specialist investigation. It is anticipated that the final choice will be made towards the end of 2005, once all criteria have been considered, including public consultation and specialist studies. Please note that I&APs will be afforded sufficient time to comment on all reports. Following the EIA (should a positive ROD be obtained), detailed design will commence in 2006 and construction will commence at the end of 2006 or the start of 2007.</p>
<p>Mr Dirk Vermeulen. If construction of the Braamhoek PSS commences without the upgraded roads, the area will experience various negative impacts. How will construction activities be synthesised?</p>	<p>The Geotechnical Investigations are due to start within the next week. A tunnel will be dug which will eventually serve as the access tunnel to the scheme. Major construction will commence at the lower reservoir site first, for which access is no problem as the roads exist and in a relatively good state. Also, this access route is shared by all alternatives under consideration. Once construction at the upper site commences, it is anticipated that the roads would have been constructed and upgraded.</p>
<p>Mr Dirk Vermeulen. Who will be responsible for road maintenance? It is imperative that our community become embedded into the process. Free State labour cannot be imported to work in these areas. It is important that these issues are discussed with the City Engineer (Mr A Sompersadh).</p>	<p>The issue of maintenance is currently being discussed with the various roads departments, SANRAL and the N3TC. Eskom will endeavour to utilise local labour wherever possible and will liaise with the City Engineer.</p>
<p>Cllr Siphso Zwane. Will you involve emerging contractors in the project?</p>	<p>Stewart Scott is known to work with local contractors and will appoint various contractors for specific tasks (unbundling of contracts). Estimates have been calculated that there will be 20 months of construction with approximately 3 000 labourers. This equates to 60 000 man months. The main opportunities for emerging contractors, thus, fall within the construction phase.</p>

Concerns and Issues

Mr Mike Lindsay. Is the unbundling of contracts policy within Stewart Scott and Eskom? This is a good idea as long as the contracts are strictly controlled.

Responses provided by Eskom Generation and the Project Team

There will be a main contractor appointed with responsibility/legal obligation to a contract document. The idea is still under investigation and methods of contract appointment are still being discussed with the various role-players. Furthermore, there are various elements of local resources and skills within the local area which can be utilised for the project. Eskom encourages contracts with the bigger companies, but also encourages joint ventures with the smaller companies. Eskom's commercial division will be available in the near future (date to be confirmed) where contractors can learn how to register on the tender list and the process of pairing. Eskom will have an open day for this purpose at some stage during the EIA. Eskom will provide physical assistance with registration.

6. GENERAL INFORMATION

Ms Deidre Herbst highlighted a few points of interest pertaining to the project:

- Eskom purchased various farms in the vicinity of the project site. The farms purchased include Chatsworth, Wilge, Bedford (2), Braamhoek and Zaaifontein.
- Approximately 170 people reside on the farms purchased who will need to be resettled. A Social Impact Assessment is currently being conducted in consultation with the KwaZulu-Natal and Free State Departments of Land Affairs. The majority of people, including those on the Free State portion, are Zulus. Ms Chi Mabatha is involved who is a well-known specialist in resettlement.
- Eskom is responsible, in terms of the Braamhoek PSS Record of Decision, for the conservation of sensitive areas within the project site, including the conservation of the endangered White Winged Flufftail. A conservancy will be formed for this purpose. It is, thus, necessary to relocate people away from the conservation area.
- The Ladysmith/Emnambithi Local Municipality will be kept informed of this process.

Mr Jaana-Maria Ball explained that there will be one week of focus group meetings (4-8 April 2005) where the project team will be available to discuss the Draft Scoping Report. Another round of public meetings will be held in November/December 2005.

7. CONCLUSION

Mr Dirk Vermeulen concluded that:

- A schedule of project timeframes should be forwarded to the municipality.
- Mr Bertie Le Roux is the contact person in all matters regarding the project.
- A meeting should be scheduled with the Ladysmith/Emnambithi Local Municipality during the week 4-8 April 2005 to discuss progress.
- ACER (Africa) will distribute the minutes of the meeting to all attendees for verification.

Ms Deidre Herbst thanked Mr Vermeulen for the opportunity to discuss the project. Mr Vermeulen thanked the Eskom representatives and EIA Project Team members for their contribution in making the meeting a success and closed the meeting.