

APPENDIX 4
REVIEW OF EXTENDED STUDY REPORT

Review

of the

Zeus-Mercury 765kV

Transmission Power Line Project

Vredefort Dome Extended Study



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Brief

The brief received from Eskom was to review the Zeus-Mercury 765kV Transmission Power Line Project Vredefort Dome Extended Study in a very short time and concentrate on the following aspects:

- The way the facts are presented;
- Conflicting statements;
- Missing information; and
- Logical presentation of the arguments.

The review must be approached from the viewpoint of somebody in government that has to read the report and advise the Minister. Suggestions for the improvement of the report must also be given where appropriate. Comments, observations and suggestions are mixed in the report. The order of the comments is more or less according to the order in which it appears in the report. Since the report is not a formal EIA, the usual EIA review format cannot be used. A practical approach has therefore been followed. The brief does not include the detailed review of either the report or the specialist reports.

Comments by the reviewer

1. It is a voluminous report and when you read it for the first time, you are a bit lost and not sure what the aim and status of the report is. You are confronted with an analysis of the different routes for a part of the power line but not sure why it is needed and what it will be used for. It is necessary to read the original EIA report and the ROD to understand why the report has been produced.

It is suggested that the following procedure be followed:

- Start with a short description of the previous study – why it was needed (economic importance) and main recommendations. (Attach the executive summary of the report as an appendix).

- Present the decision by DEAT – approval of route and specifying western alignment. (Attach the ROD as an appendix – copy appendix 12.1 and make it an appendix of the main report).
 - Give reasons why the present study has been undertaken in stead of just appealing against the decision and asking DEAT for the exact reasons. (Attach the document with the reasons as an appendix as in the report).
2. It seems that the decision by DEAT was taken solely on the influence of the project on the World Heritage site. It would be beneficial to include more information on the Vredefort Dome WHS.

It is suggested that a brief discussion on the WHS is included. A map of the site and of the prescribed 6km buffer zone should be included. (Use the official map from the UNESCO site (attached from <http://unesco.org/en/list/1162>). It should be made very clear that the entire project falls OUTSIDE the buffer zone (With the exception of alternative 1 and about 3km of the eastern alignment near Prinsloosrus). {I am aware that a new buffer zone has been proposed but it has not been accepted yet – it does not change the principle although it encloses more of some of the eastern alignments}. An argument can then be made that the entire existing line already disturbs the environment that is anyway outside the buffer zone and that the heritage site should not be the overarching factor for the project. The social impacts are therefore more important (also since it is protected in the Constitution) than the pure visual impacts.

3. Page 3 of Appendix 2 does not make sense – it is the page with “*Chief Director: Transfrontier Conservation and Protected Areas*” in the middle. Who commented on the concerns?
- DEAT or SAHRA? – Why will they say that DEAT erred by suggesting the WA? If it is DEAT or SAHRA use this statement against them.
 - One of the consultants? – If so, it does not belong here and must be

removed. It can be used in the arguments in the main report.

4. The statement that social and heritage impacts are equally important cannot be supported. The social impacts are overriding and the arguments on page 7 of the social impact study can be used to stress this.
5. The study is mentioned as a completely new study. This is incorrect. It is a follow-up study to investigate certain aspects of the ROD received from DEAT and the concerns voiced in the appeals against the ROD. The title of the study should be changed to reflect this and it must be stressed that it involves only a small portion of the original route. If it was a new study, it must be submitted under the 2006 NEMA regulations and that will change everything. Do not assume that DEAT will make the connection by default.
6. Explain in a bit more detail why the ecologist uses a different evaluation system (p21) that which is used in the rest of the report.
7. Tables 1-4 in the report need attention. In tables 1-3 the different alignments appears as rows while in table 4 it is in columns. It is suggested that columns be used for all the tables (as in table 4). Table 4 needs a label and contains arithmetic errors (in CA and WA1) columns. Indicate that the table used in the executive summary is table 3 from the main report. (In table 3, I would use a value of 2 for Heritage in stead of 3 – based on the executive summary in the heritage report.)
8. Paragraph 3 of section 6 (page numbers are missing on many pages) refers to “*many*” I&APs supporting the central alignment. Rather use real numbers or percentages calculated from table 6 in the social assessment report.
9. Section 7 refers to a draft report that must be available to everybody for comments but the study program on page 8 states that the minutes of the meeting will be sent to the I&APs for comment. The different parts of the

report have been written by different consultants and are contradictory. It must be sorted out. The Minister in his letter only said that adequate public participation must be done but nothing has been prescribed. The two consultants must agree on the process and describe that in the report using the same terminology. The questions that needs to be answered are:

- Has the final report been made available to all I&APs?
- Is it necessary to circulate the report or have all concerns been sorted out at the public meeting?
- Have the specialist reports been available to the I&APs?

10. All specialist reports should have an executive summary with conclusions at the beginning of the report. Nobody will search for this on page 68 of a 112-page report (Soils, Vegetation and Mammals report). The Visual Assessment Report does not have an executive summary at all. (It should be obtained and included in the report). I suggest that all the executive summaries be copied from wherever they appear in the specialist reports and placed in an appendix of the main report where they are easily accessible. Nobody reviewing the report is going to read all the specialist reports in detail. They are included for referral purposes.

11. The visual impact is regarded as of prime importance and the R53 route is the main access route to the Vredefort Dome from Potchefstroom. All the proposed power line alignments cross this road. It may be advantageous to take a series of pictures of the views towards the Dome straight ahead on the road of:

- The view 500m before you reach the point where the powerlines will cross the R53;
- The same view with the powerlines and infrastructure superimposed on the picture; and
- The view just after you crossed under the lines (90 seconds later at

100km/h).

This will illustrate the brief impact of the line as presented to the visitor. This is just an informal suggestion that the team may consider.

12. In the copy of the report that I used, several pages (mainly containing tables – in the specialist reports) were bound on the wrong side. Care should be taken that this does not happen with the final report. I did not check the electronic copy on the internet to see if it is correct there.

