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Proposed Thyspunt Transmission Lines Integration Project (TTLIP)

DRAFT MINUTES OF A FOCUS GROUP MEETING

POSSIBLY AFFECTED LANDOWNERS AT THE PROPOSED NEW Tx SUBSTATION SITE – FITCHES CORNER

**Held on
Thursday, 15 October 2009**

Homestead of Mr J Rademeyer, Fitches Corner



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FOCUS GROUP MEETING: FITCHES CORNER LANDOWNERS

Venue: Homestead of Mr J Rademeyer, Fitches Corner
Date: Thursday, 15 October 2009
Time: 09h00

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Dave Blair thanked the attendees for attending the Focus Group Meeting and requested that each person introduce themselves:

Landowners:

Mr Thys Pietersen
Mrs Nan Pietersen
Mr Johan Louw
Mr Johan Rademeyer
Mr John Lapersonne
Mr Jopie Koertzen
Mr Louis van Heerden

Mr Patrick Lee

Mr Sias van der Westhuizen

Eskom:

Ms Joyce Mashiteng: Project Manager
Mr Thamsanqa Ngcobo: Transmission Planner
Ms Lerato Mokgwatheng: Senior Environmental Adviser

SIVEST:

Dave Blair: Project Manager
Nicolene Venter: Public Participation

Apologies:

Mr Douglas Briscoe

2 PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

The purpose of the Focus Group Meeting was to:

- Provide a summary of the EIA process and project status to date
- The proposed new Port Elizabeth Transmission Substation study area
- Information regarding the proposed back-to-back Distribution Substation (Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality) and the associated Distribution lines

3 PROJECT BACKGROUND

Dave Blair gave a brief overview regarding the proposed Thyspunt Transmission Lines Integration Project (TTLIP), what an Environmental Impact Assessment entails and the current TTLIP and EIA status.

It was mentioned during the presentation that it is important for the attendees to note that the investigation of alternatives is a key aspect of an EIA, and it is through the consultation process that the original Transmission (Tx) Substation site was proposed south east of Bethelsdorp but due to major

developments planned by the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality (NMBMM) and alternative site was identified in the Blue Horizon Bay area. Once again, through the consultation process planned and approved developments made this site not feasible and the newly identified site was at Fitches Corner.

4 DISCUSSION AND DECISION SESSION

- 4.1. Thys Pietersen said that his understanding of an EIA is that first a scoping phase needs to be done and enquired what does it mean.

Dave Blair covered this question during the presentation, whereby it was explained that a scoping phase is when information (desk-top) and issues are gathered to determine what needs to be assessed in the impact phase.

- 4.2. Patrick Lee enquired whether it is a possibility to construct one set of towers that could carry all the cables.

Dave Blair responded that it is currently proposed to have single towers for each one of the 400kV Tx power lines which means that three (3) 400kV Tx power lines will run in the proposed northern corridor, and should it run parallel to one another a registered servitude of 165m would be required. Two (2) 400kV Tx power lines are being proposed for the southern corridor and should these run parallel a registered servitude of 110m would be required.

- 4.3. Johan Rademeyer stated that from the Farmers' Association side they've submitted a proposal that the proposed substation and the associated power lines be moved closer to town in the area of Bethelsdorp – to the area where the power is needed. He raised the question as to why this meeting is being held as the assumption is made that their suggestion has been ignored. The impact of having the substation at Fitches Corner would result in a spider web of power lines crisscrossing not only his property, but that of the adjacent landowners.

Dave Blair made reference to his presentation where it was mentioned that when the EIA started, the proposed new Port Elizabeth (PE) Tx Substation was located south-east of Bethelsdorp and the reasoning why it was not a feasible option. In response to the comment that it is assumed that their suggestion has been ignored, it was responded that suggestions and recommendations are received from numerous I&APs and Stakeholders and they are all assessed through the EIA process. The issue regarding the proposed new PE Substation site is also being done in consultation with the NMBMM as they need their Dx Substation to be constructed adjacent to the proposed Tx Substation. It was mentioned that the project team will be meeting with the NMBMM in the afternoon to discuss the proposed new PE Tx Substation site.

It was reiterated that according to the EIA Regulations, alternatives have to be feasible in terms of technology, financial and environmental aspects.

This meeting is pre-empting the impact phase that is envisaged to kick-off shortly and SiVEST will engage them as potentially affected landowners and the NMBMM to identify an environmentally suitable site. It was confirmed that they will be kept informed regarding any progress made in this regard.

- 4.4. Thamsanqa Ngcobo enquired from the attendees where would they propose a suitable location for the proposed Tx Substation.

Johan Rademeyer suggested that a suitable site be identified in the Hankey or Loerie area and that all five (5) Tx power lines to be accommodated in the northern corridor. The NMBMM's Dx power lines could run from there down to Port Elizabeth.

Thamsanqa Ngcobo said that running the five proposed nuclear power lines in one corridor would be of a national concern and it will jeopardize the system security in terms of constant electricity supply. He informed the attendees that the most important task for Transmission is to protect the nuclear plant in terms of security – meaning that should one line be down the other one still has to be operational.

- 4.5. Sias van der Westhuizen enquired the logic behind having Tx power lines over 180km to supply the Coega area.

Dave Blair replied that the point raised is a key one that has been raised by numerous I&APs and informed the attendees that this aspect forms part of Eskom Generation strategic planning which has been part of Eskom's strategic planning for some time.

Thamsanqa Ngcobo informed the attendees that he strongly recommend that they register as an I&AP with Arcus GIBB, the EIA consultants for the Nuclear-1 Project, and submit this enquiry to them as they would be the best people to provide an informed response, especially in terms of the site selection process followed for the proposed nuclear plant.

- 4.6. Johan Rademeyer commented that the Thyspunt site for the nuclear plant has been decided a long time ago but things have changed since then e.g. the Coega Development and the question is raised again as to why not place the nuclear plant in that area that has already been industrialized.

Dave Blair responded that the question regarding the Thyspunt site for the proposed nuclear power station plant is one of the most important questions raised by I&APs and SiVEST raised the same question. It is important to understand that the way SiVEST deals with this question is that it is actually not part of this EIA process and the Thyspunt project. The way that SiVEST has raised the question with Eskom is through the “no go” alternative which needs to be evaluated in terms of the EIA Regulations. The “no go” alternative is *what happens if nothing happens here* which means if the nuclear power station is build somewhere where the Transmission power lines are not required, there is not Transmission power lines EIA. Those who read the draft and final Scoping Reports would have notice this point being highlighted in the reports. The site for the nuclear power station goes back to Eskom's strategic planning and the strategic planning falls way behind the TTLIP timeframe as the strategic planning was for the nuclear power station was years ago to address the nationwide power requirements for the country.

- 4.7. Patrick Lee asked whether the proposed new PE Tx Substation will be similar in size as the existing Grassridge Substation.

Thamsanqa Ngcobo replied that the footprint of Grassridge is larger than what is being proposed for the new PE Tx Substation and it would be $\pm 60\%$ smaller, but it might be enlarged in 20 years. He informed the attendees that Eskom's Dedisa Substation can be used as the typical size.

Nicolene Venter informed the attendees that the information provided in the Background Information Document states the “footprint” size of the proposed new PE Tx Substation as 320m x 230m.

- 4.8. Patrick Lee expressed his frustration that a specific site has not yet been identified and that there is a study area of 1km, as detailed comments cannot be provided if the landowners do not know how it will impact them directly. He also made reference to information not being available as to where the various power lines will cross their properties.

Dave Blair acknowledged the frustration expressed and informed the attendees that a site has been identified that seems to be ideal in terms of its current biodiversity state but not all environmental and technical factors have been assessed. In terms of the suggestion made at the meeting to look at an alternative site, SiVEST will have to move forward with that suggestion and assess whether there could be another alternative that might be acceptable to the NMBMM. As was stated previously, the proposed new PE Substation needs to take the NMBMM’s proposed new Dx Substation location also into consideration.

- 4.9. Jopie Koertzen enquired as to what will happen to the existing railway line and the Old Cape Road.

Dave Blair responded that there would be no need to relocate any existing infrastructures. He said that the importance of the Apple Express as a tourist attraction will also be taken into consideration during the impact phase. In general it is preferred to keep all infrastructures in one corridor to lessen negative impacts, but this is not always possible.

- 4.10. Johan Louw enquired whether the Tx power lines will be moved to a new corridor should the Tx Substation site be moved.

Dave Blair replied that it may or may not depending on the EIA process and the issues raised.

- 4.11. Johan Louw expressed his frustration in terms of being in “limbo” as no concise decision has been taken regarding the proposed Tx Substation site.

Dave Blair replied that SiVEST does have a proposal to be tabled at the NMBMM meeting the afternoon and that the location of this proposed Tx Substation is a real challenge to the team. He informed the attendees that they will be kept inform of any progress made regarding this matter.

- 4.12. Thys Pietersen enquired whether they will be able to utilize the land underneath the power lines.

Dave Blair replied that farming activities e.g. crops, grazing, etc can carry on as normal underneath power lines although there could be some restrictions where irrigation (centre pivots) are used. The attendees were also informed that no permanent structure would be allowed within the registered servitude.

- 4.13. Johan Rademeyer commented that the anchor lines of these towers place a huge restriction when working with implements. He informed the project team and the landowners present that a wider turning point is required around the towers’ footprint.

Dave Blair replied that the environmental team could make a recommendation in terms of the tower positions by recommending that it be placed on the boundary of the property or even change the tower type.

- 4.14. Johan Rademeyer enquired whether there could be a trade-off between affected landowners and Eskom in terms of them being provided with electricity in the place of servitude payment.

Post-meeting note:

Eskom consists of 3 main stream divisions namely Generation, Transmission and Distribution and the Division that services rural customers is Distribution.

Land Acquisition for Transmission power line servitude is conducted on an independently assessed market related compensation per ha of property required. It is therefore not possible, administratively, to convert market related property prices to the capital cost of providing a rural supply of electricity however - should the landowner concerned wish to utilise the compensation offered as an offset to the cost of acquiring an electricity supply from our sister Division Distribution - then it is a personal choice.

Mobile phone companies have created an expectation by providing landowners with cell phone services in return for land but unfortunately with the various Eskom divisions this practice is simply not administratively possible

- 4.15. Johan Rademeyer commented that they will have to consider the visual impact these Tx power lines will have.

Dave Blair informed the attendees that visual impacts are one of the numbers of environmental impacts that would be assessed in detail.

- 4.16. Sias van der Westhuizen enquired as to what the EMF impact would be.

Dave Blair informed the attendees that Eskom had an independent research done regarding EMF and a copy of the report is available on Eskom's website and it formed part of SiVEST's the Scoping Report.

Tamsanqa Ngcobo said that Eskom has to comply to the Occupational Health and Safety Act and one of the prevention in terms of EMFs is the registered servitude.

- 4.17. John Lapersonne asked when and how long the construction of the Tx Substation would take.

Dave Blair replied that it is envisaged that the EIA process for the Tx power lines will be completed by March / April 2010 and an Environmental Authorisation be granted around July / August 2010, then Eskom could start construction in 2010. These time frames are also linked with the EIA process being undertaken for the Nuclear-1 Project.

Tamsanqa Ngcobo informed the attendees that should an Environmental Authorisation be issued, there would be a time lag to accommodate the servitude acquisition phase. Should all processes run according to the schedule, it is envisaged that the ground clearing at the substation will start around 2014 to have the substation operational by 2016.

- 4.18. Johan Louw commented that his house and dairy might be directly impacted by the proposed Tx Substation and this could imply that he will be losing his income.

Dave Blair replied that SiVEST needs to avoid pre-determining the site and request Johan Louw to submit his concern in writing to SiVEST and if possible to provide detail regarding the location of his house and dairy infrastructure.

Joyce Mashiteng informed the attendees that infrastructure such as were mentioned will be taken into consideration during the servitude negotiation process.

- 4.19. Johan Rademeyer enquired why these studies are called EIA and the environment is assessed first and the impact on a farm land, landowners, agriculture, etc. second.

Dave Blair informed the attendees that according to the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) the environment is explained holistically which includes social and biodiversity, and these two are not separated, and they are equally important.

5 CLOSURE AND THE WAY FORWARD

Before the meeting was closed, the attendees were requested to mark their property(ies) on the map and provide the team with as much detail information as possible e.g. access roads, infrastructure, etc. The information can also be forwarded to SiVEST after the meeting.

Dave Blair thanked all for their valuable comments and informed them that the way forward is:

- Distribution of the draft minutes to the attendees. It was pointed out that there is an internal process that needs to be followed for reviewing the minutes and these will be distributed as early as possible. Attendees will be required to verify the draft minutes, and should they believe that a comment has not been captured correctly, to rephrase the comment and submit it in writing to SiVEST.
- EIA process will kick-off once DEA inform SiVEST that the final Scoping Report has been accepted and the Plan of Study for EIA has been approved. It is anticipated that SiVEST will receive this letter within the following few weeks.
- Once SiVEST receives the above-mentioned letter, and EIA Newsletter will be drafted and distributed to all registered I&APs informing them:
 - The commencement of the impact phase
 - The EIA process going forward
 - The consultation process to be followed

The meeting was closed at 11h00.