

Environmental Impact Assessment for the access roads for the Braamhoek Pumped Storage Scheme

Focus Group Meeting with the Emnambithi/Ladysmith Municipality, at the Council's Chambers in the Town Hall Complex

7 November 2005¹

14:30

ATTENDANCE from the proponent and consultant's side:²

ESKOM representatives

Ms. Deidre Herbst	Manager: Environmental Management
Mr. Tobile Bokwe	Senior Environmental Advisor
Ms. Ntombi Malinga	Senior Advisor to Stakeholder Manager

Consultants

Dr. David de Waal	Afrosearch (Facilitator)
Mr. Benny de Lange Consulting (EIA Consultant)	Africon: Environment & Sustainability
Ms. Mathilda du Preez Consultant)	Afrosearch (Public Participation

Apologies

Mr. Thomas van Viegen	Project Coordinator – Africon
Mr. Tim Gaskell	Project Manager - Eskom

1. Welcome

The chairman, Mr. Niemand, welcomed everybody and gave attendees and consultants the opportunity to introduce themselves.

2. Introduction

Dr. David de Waal gave a brief background of the environmental impact assessment process and the Public Participation Process (PPP) that have been followed for the access roads to the Pumped Storage Scheme. He asked Ms. Deidre Herbst to provide the attendees with a more detailed description.

¹ Note: This is not a verbatim reflection of the meeting, but an attempt to reflect the discussion session in a clear and concise manner.

² Please see the attendance register for the details of all the attendees

As a background, Ms. Herbst reminded the attendees about process followed by the Braamhoek Consultants Joint Venture (BCJV) in the environmental impact studies of the project. She further reminded of the Plan of Study for Scoping (PoSS) that was approved by the authorities in December 2004, following an extensive public participation process of which most attendees formed part. Subsequent to this PoSS, the process produced a Draft Scoping Report that was made available for public comment. The scoping phase was close to completion when a concern about the independence of the environmental consultants was deemed risky for the project. Eskom obtained advice from the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), who suggested that alternative consultants be appointed in order to avoid the risk. The contract with BCJV was cancelled and Africon Environment & Sustainability Consulting was appointed to continue with the work that had been started. Ms. Herbst also explained that changing of environmental consultants caused a delay in the access roads EIA.

Dr. de Waal explained that the public participation process would continue and all issues and concerns raised to the previous consultants would be taken into consideration on the way forward. He said that a draft environmental impact report would be made available for public comment and that all I&APs would be notified of the Record of Decision (RoD). He said that an appeal period would be allowed to all I&APs after the RoD has been issued.

Dr. de Waal gave a short description of the issues that emanated from the previous process in order to illustrate that continuity in addressing issues is maintained.

3. Discussion

- 3.1 Councillor Reddy said that the access road to the van Reenen area should be considered and that the infrastructure needs of van Reenen should be taken into consideration. He asked what the status of the agreement with Eskom regarding commercial development is. Ms. Herbst said that the commercial department from Eskom would hold discussions with the Ladysmith Chamber of Business. At the previous meeting a request had been made to have such a meeting, however, concern was expressed that it may be premature to have a meeting too soon as it could create false expectations for suppliers.

3.2 Councillor Reddy reminded the meeting that an initial meeting stipulated a framework for further discussion and a memorandum of understanding between the Municipality and Eskom which does not seem to have been honoured. There is extreme dissatisfaction regarding the employment of 10 Code-14 drivers and 2 farmers as part of construction. He said that both the municipality and the chamber of commerce are an integral part of this development and that they would appreciate the necessary feedback. Ms. Herbst responded that the current construction is very specialised and that some drilling is being done by a small number of people with regard to the exploration tunnel. She said that she is not aware of any drivers that had been employed, and that Eskom would provide feedback on this matter in the minutes.

She said that an RoD for the construction of the Pumped Storage Scheme has been issued and that construction of the exploration tunnel had begun on site. The pumped storage scheme is a separate matter from the access roads EIA. She said that a Record of Decision for the access road is only expected at the end of the first quarter of 2006, after which construction would commence.

3.3 Mr. Bertie le Roux asked whether a 3-day session would still be held where local contractors could register as service providers. Ms. Herbst said that it was decided at the previous meeting that such a session would be held and that it seems, from the current discussion, that it was expected to happen in the near future.

3.4 Councillor Reddy said that the Emnambithi/Ladysmith Municipality would like to play a strategic role in the development and that expectation and anticipation was created at the first meeting when it was agreed to have this registration session. Ms. Herbst apologised and stated that miscommunication probably raised expectations about when the meeting would be held. She reiterated that Eskom is still committed to having such a session.

3.5 Dr. de Waal asked whether there are specific issues that need to be addressed as part of the issues under consideration. An attendee said that consultation should take place with the farming community, the Besters Farmers Association, and that the Municipality should be kept informed. He stated the

assessments on the impact on the area including water resources cultural heritage and graves, as well as social issues should be done. He said that the EIA process should be handled in terms of the national guidelines.

Ms. Herbst agreed that the Besters Farmers Association would be consulted with again. Consultation with the Department of Land Affairs would also continue regarding relocation of tenants and residents in the area. She said that councillors would be kept informed; and the chairman suggested this communication to be through Mr Bertie le Roux.

3.6 Mr. de Lange indicated that the EIA process that has been followed up to date would continue. He stated that an extended scoping approach would be followed and that an Extended Scoping Report would be made available for public comment from 12 December 2005 until mid-January 2006. He stated that the issues that were raised to the previous consultants would still be taken into consideration and would be addressed in the environmental impact studies.

3.7 Councillor Reddy stated that, with respect, Africon is new to the process and that a lot of promises have been made by Eskom that need to be discussed and addressed. He said that several issues such as the direction of the power lines and the alternatives for roads should be made available in order for the development and planning committee to take that into consideration. Ms Herbst responded that the routes for the power lines were covered in the Transmission Environmental Impact Report.

Ms. Herbst said that for the access roads to the site two alternatives were proposed in the draft scoping report, however, a third, suggested by the Swinburne farmers Association, has been included into the extended scoping studies. She said that it is Eskom's mandate to build infrastructure such as these roads to provide access to an Eskom site, however, it was not in Eskom's mandate to build roads for other activities which fell outside the scope of this project.

3.8 Councillor Reddy said that De Beers pass is the preferred option and that talks with the Development Bank of Southern Africa regarding tourism in the area, a trans-Drakensberg wetland tourism scheme and job creation in the area in underway. Ms.

Herbst said that Eskom has had meetings with the DBSA regarding those issues and that they would be considered as part of the bigger picture of the proposed alternatives 1 and 2. She said that it is important that the whole picture be considered and other planning be taken into consideration.

Ms. Herbst said that tourism would be promoted in the area – specifically focussing on the conservation area of wetlands on the upper site of the scheme. She stated that no decisions have been made regarding the development of a conservancy required in terms of the Braamhoek Pumped Storage Scheme ROD. Baseline studies were being completed. She said that a workshop with relevant stakeholders, including local, provincial and national government representatives would be held early in 2006.

3.9 Mr. Bertie le Roux said that the DBSA plan is due on the 6th of December 2005. Ms. Herbst asked whether there are more than one projects in the area, involving tourism and the DBSA. Mr. Bertie le Roux indicated that he did not know about any others.

3.10 Ms. Herbst said that a cultural heritage study has been conducted and that no graves that would be disturbed have been identified. She noted, however, that an archaeologist would be on site during construction. She said that there is a cave in the area which has archaeological value and possibly some interesting artefacts. A Councillor asked whether Dr. Campher, an archaeologist in the area, may be included in the proceedings and that the municipality be allowed the mandate to remove any artefacts from the caves.

Ms Herbst responded that this request would be considered. A meeting would need to be arranged with Dr Camphor and the archaeologist carrying out the work for Eskom.

3.11 Mr. De Lange said that, regarding the process, national and provincial authorities agreed on the way forward. Africon, the new environmental consultant, in conjunction with Afrosearch, the new public participation consultant, would further the issues already raised. The identified alternatives would also be assessed. He said that the draft Extended Scoping Report would be made available for public comment and submitted to the authorities thereafter.

- 3.12 Mr. van Eck commented on the maintenance of the roads, and said that local contractors should be employed. He said that there is a vast local resource of skills and that these could be accessed in consultation with the Chamber of Business. He said that business in the area should be competitive and that local job creation is an important factor to be considered. He enquired on the number of houses that would need to be provided for the employees of the pumped storage scheme, because factors such as that should be taken into consideration when the Integrated Development Plan is developed. He reiterated that the Emnambithi/Ladysmith Municipality should be seen as a strategic partner.
- 3.13 Ms. Herbst advised that some of the questions asked be addressed in a separate forum, issues such as strategic development in the region and the registering of local skills and facilities. She said that although several of the issues may overlap with the access roads EIA, they should be discussed separately.
- 3.14 Ms. Ntombikanina Malinga from Eskom highlighted that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the change from the traditional EIA process, to inform the forum who the consultants are that they would be dealing with in future and that the meeting was not intended to serve as a platform of discussion on all previous issues.
- 3.15 Mr. Xaba said that there exists a deliberate need for effective communication between the Eskom consultants, Eskom and the Chamber of Business. The public participation should be extensive in order to facilitate sufficient discussion between parties and to avoid the risk of appeals after the RoD has been issued. He said that all stakeholders, including the municipality and the Chamber of Business should agree on the way forward.
- 3.16 Ms. Malinga said that the EIA stipulate a very specific discussion pertaining to the project and that broader consultation on issues not related to the access roads should take place outside the discussions on the EIA. She re-iterated the need for better discussion between Eskom and the Chamber of Business.

- 3.17 Councillor Reddy said that a press report in the farmers weekly on the proposed scheme created expectation. He said that it should be kept in mind that the municipality is a partner in development and should be treated as such.
- 3.18 Councillor Reddy said that minutes of the meeting should always be sent to the municipal manager, in order to keep him on board. He said that meetings should be held more often and that their engineer would like to take part in the process.
- 3.19 Ms. Herbst said that a meeting to discuss commercial related issues between Eskom and the municipality is necessary and would be arranged.

4. Closure

The meeting was closed at 15:30



Nr.	Title and name	Organisation	Postal Address	Contact details
1	Ms. Shakela Seupersad	Tiger Transport		Tel: Fax: Cell: 082 213 6721 E-mail:
2	Mr. B. le Roux	Assistant Manager Emnambithi/ Ladysmith Municipality	P.O.Box 3978 Ladysmith 3370	Tel: 036 637 2091 Fax: 036 637 2092 Cell: 082 809 4587 E-mail: bertiel@lantic.net
3	T.R. Ndlovu	Mnambithi Business Chamber		Tel: 036 631 7011 Fax: 036 631 7011 Cell: 072 981 4638 E-mail:
4	Ms. Xaba	Mnambithi Business Chamber		Tel: 036 636 2187 Fax: Cell: 083 572 9766 E-mail:
5	W. Mbata	Mnambithi Business Chamber		Tel: 036 631 3667 Fax:036 448 2068 Cell: 083 474 7170 E-mail:
6	J Wood	Ladysmith Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI)		Tel: 036 631 0541 Fax:036 637 447 Cell: 083 634 4625 E-mail: lcci@futuner.co.za
				Tel: 036 631 0526 Fax:036 631 1602

				E-mail: mile@zobazex.com
8	J.M. Wood	Ladysmith Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI)		Tel:
				Fax:
				Cell: 083 635 3439
				E-mail:
9	R. Niemand	Councilor Ladysmith/Enambithi Municipality		Tel: 036 361 1198
				Fax: 036 361 1198
				Cell: 082 497 8743
				E-mail: rienus@xsinet.co.za
10	M.V. Madlala	Councilor Ladysmith/Enambithi Municipality		Tel:
				Fax: 036 631 3743
				Cell: 082 497 8731
				E-mail:
11	N.T. Buthelezi	Councilor Ladysmith/Enambithi Municipality		Tel:
				Fax:
				Cell: 082 497 8739
				E-mail:
12	G.P. Gumede	Councilor Ladysmith/Enambithi Municipality		Tel:
				Fax:
				Cell:082 8 2388
				E-mail:
13	Deidre Herbst	Eskom		Tel:
				Fax:
				Cell:083 660 1147
				E-mail:
14	P Mlotshwa	Mnambithi Business Chamber		Tel:
				Fax:
				Cell:073 040 2115

				E-mail:
15	R.G. Reddy	Councilor Ladysmith/Enambithi Municipality		Tel: 036 637 3632
				Fax: 036 637 2011
				Cell: 082 497 8728
				E-mail: windsors@mweb.co.za
16	D.J. Opperman	Ladysmith/Enambithi Municipality		Tel:
				Fax:
				Cell: 082 490 8720
				E-mail: Iced@intekom.co.za
17	P.M. Emslie	Treasurer		Tel:
				Fax:
				Cell: 082 490 8716
				E-mail: pate@lantic.net
18	A.D. van Eck	Acting Municipal Manager		Tel: 036 637 6138
				Fax: 036 361 1400
				Cell: 083 628 6624
				E-mail:
19	M. du Preez	Afrosearch		Tel: 012 362 2908
				Fax: 012 362 2463
				Cell:
				E-mail:
20	Benny de Lange	Africon		Tel: 012 362 2908
				Fax: 012 362 2463
				Cell:
				E-mail: Braamhoek@afrosearch.co.za
21	Dr. de Waal	Afrosearch		Tel: 012 362 2908

				Fax:012 362 2463
				Cell:
				E-mail: Braamhoek@afrosearch.co.za
22	Ms. D.C.P. Mazibuko	Mayor Emnambithi Municipality		Tel: 036 631 4920
				Fax: 036 631 4920
				Cell: 082 696 1381
				E-mail:
23	Ntombikanina Malinga	Eskom		Tel: 011 800 2249
				Fax:
				Cell: 082 929 7996
				E-mail: malingn@eskom.co.za
24	Tobile Bokwe	Eskom		Tel: 011 800 2303
				Fax: 011 800 5140
				Cell: 082 828 1777
				E-mail: bokwett@eskom.co.za