

## **Minutes of a public meeting held in Middelburg on 2003-02-24 at 10:00 at the Mhluzi Hall**

Present:

Ms Paulette Jacobs	EIMS meeting facilitator
Ms M v.d. Merwe	EIMS meeting secretary
Mr C Mathoma	EIMS public participation team member
Ms Lynette Mafumo	Eskom project manager
Ms Carol Streaton	Eskom public participation
Mr Anand Naidoo	Eskom
Mr Nhlanhla Mbuli	Eskom
Mr Raj Naicker	Eskom
Mr Pieter Steenkamp	Eskom negotiator (Lands and Rights)
Mr Jan de Klerk	Eskom observer
Mr Mandla Sibanyoni	Eskom Transmission
Ms Sonja Liebenberg	Eskom Transmission
Mr Lot Sibiya	Eskom Transmission
Mr Ryk Diepraam	Farmer
Ms Elsabe Dawson	Middelburg Chamber Information Officer

Apology:

Mr Adriaan Rall	Tourism Specialist
-----------------	--------------------

### 1 Welcome and Introduction

People were requested to complete the attendance register.

Ms Jacobs welcomed everybody and thanked them for taking the time and making the effort to attend the meeting. She introduced herself and stated her position as representative of Environmental Impact Management Services (EIMS), the independent environmental consultant appointed by Eskom to handle the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. She explained her role in this meeting as being the facilitator, ensuring issues and concerns raised are adequately noted and addressed.

## 2 Objectives

Ms Jacobs noted the objectives of the meeting and that its format would be as follows:

- The meeting is seen as an information sharing session: Eskom wants to inform and make the community aware of activities in their area, provide background to their activities and give an overview of the project.
- Legal requirement: In order to comply with legislation, a public participation process is required. The EIA process followed thus far will be described briefly.
- Project background and overview: A brief description of the project will be given to provide information on what the public can expect as part of the project, the need for the project etc.
- Discussion session: The attendees will be encouraged to discuss issues, raise concerns and ask questions. To an extent these will be addressed during the meeting where possible but also noted for consideration further in the process.
- Future: All will be informed of their further involvement in the process and will receive regular feedback.

## 3 The Process

Ms Jacobs stated that for the process of establishing a transmission line and substation, Eskom requires environmental authorisation according to Regulation 1182 under The Environment Conservation Act (Act 89 of 1989).

The process is currently in the scoping phase. Eskom is the applicant and EIMS the independent consultant. The regulatory authority through which the application is handled is the National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT).

Eskom is looking for an option that is economically and technically feasible but does not compromise the environment or the rights of the people of South Africa.

For the public participation aspect of the project, the following activities have been undertaken to provide the public with the opportunity to become involved and a part of the process:

- Advertisements have been placed in local newspapers i.e. Middelburg Observer, Daller of Groblersdal, Lydenburg News and Steelburger of Steelpoort.
- Radio networks were contacted with a press release: 5 FM, Jacaranda, GMFM, Radio Sonder Grense and Burgerband radio (through the TLU).

- Notices requesting the public's input have been placed at strategic points in towns alongside the study area.
- An internet site has been established and community interviews and meetings will be held.

#### 4 Project Background

The low cost of coal makes it economical for Eskom to transmit power through high voltage lines over long distances. Spare generation capacity is currently available in the system supplied by the coal-fired power stations in Mpumalanga.

Due to the substantial development in the Steelpoort area, electricity demands have increased. Consequently the capacity of the network is being over utilised and may collapse should the issue not be addressed as a matter of urgency. Maintenance becomes difficult since with one line out of service, the network can not cope with the load. Eskom is thus planning to reinforce the power supply to the area which will:

- stabilise the voltage in the area;
- provide capacity for future load growth;
- improve network capacity by increasing the voltage collapse limit; and
- improve the reliability of supply to Janus substation since the source is different.

The options for the optimisation of the existing infrastructure have been studied and it has been concluded that the construction of a new line is required and this is the only option that will address the problem adequately in the long term.

Location: The area falls in the Middelburg, Groblersdal, Belfast & Lydenburg magisterial districts of Mpumalanga and the Nebo and Sekhukhuneland districts of the Limpopo Province.

Attendees were invited to refer to the maps displayed in the hall. It was noted that the proposed routes were not fixed and can change or vary since these were selected based on technical and economical considerations only.

Schedule: The new transmission line will only become operational once the load growth and demand exceed the supply. The necessary servitudes however are to be secured timeously.

#### *Specialist Studies*

Reference was made to the specialist studies with regards to birds, vegetation and archeology. The concerns were highlighted.

- Problems associated with birds and power lines, red data species, collisions and destruction of habitat. The bird specialist preferred the western route.
- The sensitivity of the Sekhukhuneland area with regards to vegetation (rare, endemic and threatened plant species), cultural significance for the Pedi people (iron and stone age, battlefield, religious importance etc).
- Areas of natural beauty and associated tourist interest.

5

*Discussions*

Interested and affected parties were encouraged to ask questions and discuss issues.

<i>NAME</i>	<i>ISSUE</i>	<i>RESPONSE</i>
Mr Diepraam	Has hiking trails and horse riding on his farm as a tourist activity. The most scenic activity is taking tourists out towards the horizon early morning and late afternoon to see the sunrise and sunset, towers and cables would spoil the view. Clients do not want to see man-made structures.	Noted and will be addressed by Tourism Specialist as part of the project.
	Suggests that the route goes through the valley.	Mr Steenkamp: No definite route has been decided upon and it must be kept in mind that the valley farmers were also interested and affected parties.
	Concern with regards to the lines resulting in the cows drying up.	Ms Streaton: No scientific evidence of this exists. The effect would be similar to that of a television set. EMF's are closely monitored by Eskom.
	What price will be offered should the line cross his property.	Mr Steenkamp: Independent valuers will be used. He explained the valuation and negotiation process. Where mostly only the value of the servitude is paid to landowners, Mr Diepraam was assured that should it affect his business, this will also be considered in the compensation calculation.
	Expressed his concern with only him representing the farmers of the area at the meeting.	
Ms Mafumo and Ms Streaton	Enquired from Mr Diepraam what should have been done differently to attract more farmers to the meeting.	<p><i>Venue:</i> He suggested the Midway Hotel, Waenhuiskrans School Hall or the hall of the local agricultural union should have been used. (Note: This hall was obtained from the Middelburg Council and this was the hall they thought would be best suitable since the city hall was demolished and they did not have many halls that could accommodate a larger amount of people as was expected.)</p> <p><i>Newspaper advertisement:</i> Though he reads the newspaper mentioned, he did not see the advertisement. A full page advertisement would possibly have attracted more interest and resulted in more farmers attending. (Note: Newspaper advertisement was done as per EIA guideline).</p> <p><i>EIMS swithboard operator:</i> The</p>

		<p>person contacting him was not very knowledgeable and based on the information provided by this person he refused information to be forwarded to him. Maybe this happened to others as well. Ms Jacobs indicated that some people have also complained that the person could not speak Afrikaans but that Mr Diepraam was the only to refuse the information to be forwarded to him.</p>
--	--	--

Mr Diepraam promised to get in touch with the farmers in his area.

**Minutes of public meeting held in Groblersdal on 2003-02-24 at 15:00 at the District Agricultural Union Hall.**

Present:

<i>Ms P Jacobs</i>	<i>EIMS meeting facilitator</i>
Ms M v.d. Merwe	EIMS meeting secretary
Mr C Mathoma	EIMS public participation team member
Ms ML Mafumo	Eskom project manager
Ms C Streaton	Eskom public participation
Mr Nhlanhla Mbuli	Eskom
Mr Raj Naicker	Eskom
Mr P Steenkamp	Eskom negotiator
Mr Adriaan Rall	Tourism specialist

Meeting was dismissed at 15:45 because of no public interest.

Notes:

Though the venue for the meeting in Middelburg was raised as a concern and a suggestion was made that the meeting should possibly have been held in the District Agricultural Union Hall for more farmers to attend, no farmers attended at this hall.

Ms P Jacobs and Ms C Streaton did however address this District Agricultural Union (Groblersdal) during their monthly meeting in November and this could be the reason for no attendance from this area's farmers.

The Irrigation board, DWAF and Department of Agriculture were also spoken to previously in this regard.

**Minutes of a public meeting held in Steelpoort on 2003-02-25 at 10:00 at the Winterveld Recreation Hall.**

Present:

Ms Paulette Jacobs	EIMS meeting facilitator
Ms M v.d. Merwe	EIMS meeting secretary
Mr C Mathoma	EIMS public participation team member
Ms Lynette Mafumo	Eskom project manager
Ms Carol Streaton	Eskom public participation
Mr Johan Roux	TLU Chairman of Eastern Transvaal District
Mr Richard Nyenes	Xstrata
Mr FB Cotton	Xstrata Vanteck
Mr F Rosslee	Xstrata -Thorncliff
Mr DJ Knoesen	Xstrata
Mr J Linde	Samancor

1 Welcome and Introduction

People were requested to complete the attendance register.

Ms Jacobs welcomed everybody and thanked them for taking the time and making the effort to attend the meeting. She introduced herself and stated her position as representative of Environmental Impact Management Services (EIMS), the independent environmental consultant appointed by Eskom to handle the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. She explained her role in this meeting as being the facilitator, ensuring issues and concerns raised are adequately noted and addressed.

2 Objectives

Ms Jacobs noted the objectives of the meeting and that its format would be as follows:

- The meeting is seen as an information sharing session: Eskom wants to inform and make the community aware of activities in their area, provide background to their activities and give an overview of the project.
- Legal requirement: In order to comply with legislation, a public participation process is required. The EIA process followed thus far will be described briefly.

- Project background and overview: A brief description of the project will be given to provide information on what the public can expect as part of the project, the need for the project etc.
- Discussion session: The attendees will be encouraged to discuss issues, raise concerns and ask questions. To an extent these will be addressed during the meeting where possible but also noted for consideration further in the process.
- Future: All will be informed of their further involvement in the process and will receive regular feedback.

### 3 The Process

Ms Jacobs stated that for the process of establishing a transmission line and substation, Eskom requires environmental authorisation according to Regulation 1182 under The Environment Conservation Act (Act 89 of 1989).

The process is currently in the scoping phase. Eskom is the applicant and EIMS the independent consultant. The regulatory authority through which the application is handled is the National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT).

Eskom is looking for an option that is economically and technically feasible but does not compromise the environment or the rights of the people of South Africa.

For the public participation aspect of the project, the following activities have been undertaken to provide the public with the opportunity to become involved and a part of the process:

- Advertisements have been placed in local newspapers i.e. Middelburg Observer, Daller of Groblersdal, Lydenburg News and Steelburger of Steelpoort.
- Radio networks were contacted with a press release: 5 FM, Jacaranda, GMFM, Radio Sonder Grense and Burgerband radio (through the TLU).
- Notices requesting the public's input have been placed at strategic points in towns alongside the study area.
- An internet site has been established and community interviews and meetings will be held.

### 4 Project Background

The low cost of coal makes it economical for Eskom to transmit power through high voltage lines over long distances. Spare generation capacity is currently available in the system supplied by the coal-fired power stations in Mpumalanga.

Due to the substantial development in the Steelpoort area, electricity demands have increased. Consequently the capacity of the network is being over utilised and may collapse should the issue

not be addressed as a matter of urgency. Maintenance becomes difficult since with one line out of service, the network can not cope with the load. Eskom is thus planning to reinforce the power supply to the area which will:

- stabilise the voltage in the area;
- provide capacity for future load growth;
- improve network capacity by increasing the voltage collapse limit; and
- improve the reliability of supply to Janus substation since the source is different.

The options for the optimisation of the existing infrastructure have been studied and it has been concluded that the construction of a new line is required and this is the only option that will address the problem adequately in the long term.

Location: The area falls in the Middelburg, Groblersdal, Belfast & Lydenburg magisterial districts of Mpumalanga and the Nebo and Sekhukhuneland districts of the Limpopo Province.

Attendees were invited to refer to the maps displayed in the hall. It was noted that the proposed routes were not fixed and can change or vary since these were selected based on technical and economical considerations only.

Schedule: The new transmission line will only become operational once the load growth and demand exceed the supply. The necessary servitudes however are to be secured timeously.

#### *Specialist Studies*

Reference was made to the specialist studies with regards to birds, vegetation and archeology. The concerns were highlighted.

- Problems associated with birds and power lines, red data species, collisions and destruction of habitat. The bird specialist preferred the western route.
- The sensitivity of the Sekhukhuneland area with regards to vegetation (rare, endemic and threatened plant species), cultural significance for the Pedi people (iron and stone age, battlefield, religious importance etc).
- Areas of natural beauty and associated tourist interest.

5

#### *Technical Presentation*

Ms Streaton conducted a slide presentation providing information on construction and line building activities. It included the following:

- Actions in the veld
- Bush clearing
- Access roads and contractor camps during construction
- Building roads where necessary
- Use existing roads and infrastructure

- Drainage
- Cross rope suspension explained
- Self-supporting tower
- Bends - design stages
- Footprint and machinery explained
- Areas requiring digging by hand, supplies is delivered by helicopter etc (mountains)
- Protection of excavations for safety
- Towers are 35m tall, servitudes 55m wide
- Firebreaks
- Gates to strict standards
- Handling of sensitive vegetation (indigenous trees are left if no threat)
- Stringing program explained
- Local labour cannot be used
- Crop spraying and irrigation are marked.
- Bird guards explained
- Erosion control explained
- Substation construction explained (storm water drainage, oil holding dams etc)

## 6 Discussion

NAME	ISSUE	RESPONSE
Mr Rosslee	Who is paying for this project, where will the funds come from and how will it affect the already paying clients?	Ms Streaton: It is a matter of supply and demand. Eskom only builds lines where there is a demand and clients are to pay. Eskom pays for the transmission line and the user pays for the electricity.
Mr Linde	What about the nature reserve on the eastern route. The existing line already goes through this nature reserve but an additional 50m area will be impacted.	Ms Streaton: Eskom does put lines through nature reserves if it is still the best option to take. Activity underneath can still continue as normal. Specialists will investigate.
Mr Rosslee	What about bird electrocution?	Electrocution is not a problem with large lines such as these since the distances are too great. The collision problem is of greater concern. The birds see the conductors but not the earth lines. Eskom has addressed this to an extent with the measures taken.
Mr Cotton	A new open cast mine is being planned.	Mr Cotton indicated the location on the map. This will be investigated.
Mr Rosslee	What control will there be regarding the contractors entering farms and moving around on the property?	Ms Streaton: A Eskom negotiator will visit you and when you sign the documents, ensure that you include that the contractors responsible for maintenance request permission from you to enter your property at all times. Stipulate where they may go. You may accompany the line and servitude managers. Get their cellular numbers and if you are not happy complain to them. If

		they do not abide by the rules, ask them to leave.
--	--	--

Mr Johan Roux thanked Ms Jacobs for the information provided and pointed out that we cannot stand in the way of progress. He would pass on the given information to the farmers in his district at their next meeting. He also agreed to allow Ms Jacobs 10 minutes at the start of the meeting to give a brief overview and bring the project to the attention of TLU members.