

# **EIA REPORT: TOURISM**

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR THE  
PROPOSED WIND ENERGY FACILITY AND  
ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE AT A SITE IN THE  
WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

This report was prepared by Dr Mike Fabricius, an international tourism consultant whose clients include the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), national governments and private corporations. Dr Fabricius has more than 15 years management experience in the tourism sector and his qualifications include a PhD and an MBL. Prior to establishing The Journey tourism consultancy practice in 2004 he served, among others, as Director of Domestic Tourism of South African Tourism, Chief Director: Tourism in the national Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism and CEO of the Western Cape Tourism Board, where he was responsible for coordinating tourism management and marketing across the Western Cape Province.

Dr Fabricius is not related or connected to any of the entities involved in the construction, land ownership or other potential key aspects of the proposed development and the opinions expressed here are solely those of the author.

## 2 SUMMARY OF THE SCOPING STUDY FINDINGS

The following section provides a summary of the findings and conclusions of the scoping phase of the tourism study. The scoping study addressed the potential impacts of the WEF on a) the overall tourism strategic direction and planning of the area, b) tourism market demand and c) positive tourism developments in the area.

### 2.1 *Potential impacts on the strategic tourism direction of the area*

- None of the *national tourism planning initiatives* has identified the West Coast as a priority tourism development area and it is not foreseen that the proposed wind energy facility at a site west of Koekenaap will have any substantial effects on the execution of national tourism frameworks.
- Based on the provincial government's *Integrated Tourism Development Framework (ITDF)* the growing importance of van Rhynsdorp as a tourism gateway could lead to an increase in tourism activity and infrastructure in the Vredendal area. However, there is no indication that the study area is being targeted for future expansion and it is not expected that the development of the wind energy facility will have any notable implications for the ITDF programme.
- The study area is not being targeted as a focal point under the *Cape to Namibia Route (N7)* initiative. However, the construction of a major wind energy facility may well become a tourism drawcard along the route, which, if promoted could lead to an increase in travellers veering off the main road and travelling via Vredendal and Lutzville to visit the facility.
- The proposals contained in the *West Coast Tourism Spatial Framework* involve areas south of the Olifants River mouth, with none of the proposals including the areas to the north of this river, where the proposed site is located. While the proposed wind energy structures may be visible from certain points along the proposed Lamberts Bay-Vredendal route the level of visual impact is expected to be limited. Again, there is a possibility that the tourist route proposed in the framework may be extended to accommodate special interest visitors who wish to extend their visit to Vredendal to pay a visit to the site.

- According to the *West Coast Tourism Strategy* the area south of the Olifants River mouth on the coast and the Cederberg Wilderness inland has significant growth potential as a tourism, ecotourism and heritage route, while the study area north of the Olifants River mouth is not particularly rich in any of the products targeted in the strategy. The study area is not expected to become a key tourism area within the foreseeable future. The product development proposals contained in the West Coast Tourism Strategy do not include products to the north of the Olifants River and in the vicinity of the site.

## **2.2 Potential impacts on tourism market demand**

- Available tourism market trends indicate that the northern part of the West Coast receives between 5% and 10% of visitors to the Western Cape and that these are largely concentrated in the area to the south of the Olifants River mouth and Vredendal. There does not appear to be a marked trend of tourism growth in the area and the market size in the immediate vicinity of the study area is very limited.
- Concerning the domestic family market, the Upper West Coast (north of Lamberts Bay) attractions are mainly the Olifants River Wine areas, the Cederberg Wilderness and the coastal towns south of the Olifants River mouth, i.e. from Strandfontein southwards. Except for certain niche markets (e.g. the specialist 4x4 market, off-road motorcycling and a small segment of hikers), few tourists visit the immediate vicinity of the site.
- The West Coast wildflowers are a major attraction for the mature citizens market, who are not bound by school holidays, and are able to visit the area during the flowering season, between August and October. The study area is on the fringe of the Knersvlakte Biome, which is rich in unique succulent species and could be of particular interest to this market segment. However, based on the specialist report pertaining to the impact of the proposed facility on the vegetation of the area there is no indication that the wildflower or botanical quality of the study area is superior to other areas or sites and the area does not attract substantial numbers of flower or botanical enthusiasts.
- While international travellers along the N7 “Cape to Namibia” route may be able to view the facility from certain particular spots along the N7 route, the large majority of these travellers are not expected to travel beyond Vredendal when branching away from the main route given the choice of alternative branch-routings along the main route. Once the wind energy facility has been completed, it may become a drawcard for enticing a segment of visitors specifically interested in renewable energy to travel via Lutzville.

## **2.3 Potential positive tourism impacts**

- The proposed Wind Energy Facility could become a tourist attraction for the area, should it be accompanied by high quality interpretation facilities. Incorporating a high quality Renewable Energy Interpretation Centre as part of the overall project development is strongly recommended. Such a facility could play a positive role in highlighting Eskom’s leadership role and forward thinking in the area of renewable energy generation, while at the same time leaving a tourism legacy and providing a much needed major tourist attraction to the benefit of the area.
- Other potential positive impacts and mitigation measures relate to managing the site as a “floral preference area”; rehabilitating and improving key coastal

sites in the vicinity of the site; supporting the development of a hiking trail from the Olifants River Mouth to the site and beyond and supporting the local authority and volunteer groups in securing and improving the status of the Olifants River Mouth as a key potential attraction point.

### **3 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT: TOURISM**

Following the scoping report the following impacts of the WEF and associated infrastructure and power lines and are assessed in more detail.

- Impacts on tourism activity and usage in the area.
- Impacts on tourism-related nature and scenery of the area.
- Positive impacts on tourism economy of the area.

#### **3.1 Impacts on tourism activity**

The scoping report has illustrated that the study area is not expected to become a tourism development node. The area is outside of the West Coast tourism coastal development zones, which are located South of the Olifants River Mouth. The coastline in the vicinity off the proposed site has been severely damaged by mining activities. There are no significant beaches in the area and the topography is undulating with the shoreline mainly consisting of rocky outcrops and cliffs.

##### **3.1.1 Nature**

There are a number of striking coastal landforms along the coast such as Robeiland, Die Toring and Cliff Point, Gert du Toit se Baai and Brand se Baai, which are scenically attractive, are convergence areas for birdlife and seals and also provide privacy and shelter for campers and anglers. While the area is remote and not used as a general recreation or tourism area, some locals use these sites for camping and angling purposes mainly during peak holiday periods (end of year festive period, Easter, etc.).

The visual impact assessment reports as follows on these areas: "Specific points of interest or scenic attractions (situated along the coast) affected by the WEF include Duiwegat, Die Toring and Gert du Toit se Baai. These areas are expected to experience a high visual impact due to their relative close proximity to the facility. Observers traveling to, or in the vicinity of these areas, are bound to have short distance views of the facility. Robeiland (10km from the facility) is expected to have a medium to low visual impact due to its relatively long distance from the WEF. Brand se Baai will not be visually influenced by the WEF".

The area is also used to a limited extent for organised hiking but this activity is very limited and occurs along the coastal zone. While the turbines will be highly visible to hikers the scenery inland from the coast is not the main attraction for hikers and the emphasis is on the coastal fringe, e.g. seabirds, landforms and fauna. The noise assessment indicates that the turbines will exert no audible noise in the immediate vicinity of the site. However, the remoteness of the area is an attraction for hikers and the construction of such technical structures may detract from the attractiveness of "escaping to nature".

### 3.1.2 Significance

Factor	Extent	Duration	Magnitude	Probability	Significance
<b>Tourism Activity and Usage</b>	Mainly of a local nature	The effect on local usage will be long term	The development may have a slight impact on current tourism usage patterns	There is a distinct possibility that these impacts will occur	Low
<b>Score</b>	1	4	4	3	27

### 3.1.3 Status

Overall, the development will have a limited negative effect on tourism activity in the area, as described above.

This view is supported by the findings of the visual impact assessment report that states "The author is of the opinion that the construction and operation of the facility would not, from a visual point of view, limit or negatively influence this coastal region's future tourism development potential. The WEF may even become an attraction in this otherwise vast and desolate region"

### 3.1.4 Mitigation

*Degree to which the impact can be reversed;* the impact cannot be reversed since it is caused by the visual and physical nature of the construction.

*Degree to which the impact may cause irreplaceable loss of resources* is very low as the area is not envisaged to become a tourism development zone in the future. The opportunity cost to tourism is possibly lower for this area, which is currently influenced by other pressures such as extensive mining. Tourism potential for this area is considered to be low. Any current tourism activities will be able to continue, and expand if necessary, with the wind energy facility established on the site.

*The degree to which the impact can be mitigated is considered to be high.* The overall experience of the broader area can potentially be enhanced through the contribution of Eskom to improvements for the area (especially if improvements have the intention to benefit the tourism-industry), largely offsetting potential negative impacts from a visual intrusion perspective. Eskom's Development Foundation is currently investigating opportunities for assisting the WCDM and the Matzikama Local Municipality in terms of realising some of the initiatives as specified in the District and Region's Integrated Development Plans.

## 3.2 Impacts on the tourism-related nature and scenery

While the study area is not known as an area of outstanding natural and scenic value and visitors are not expected to visit the area specifically for its scenic qualities, the broader region and the N7 Cape-to-Namibia route are promoted as a scenic nature area due to the variety of landscapes and the expansive, undeveloped countryside along the route.

### 3.2.1 Nature

There are three nodes in the area of scenic and/or nature significance that could potential be impacted by the the WEF, namely:

- The Olifants River Mouth, which is currently a low-usage area but could grow in value and importance as a birding, camping and recreational tourism area. Since the WEF location is approximately 15 km north of the Olifants River Mouth the structures will not be visible from the mouth and the WEF is not expected to have a significant effect on the scenery around the mouth . The visual impact assessment report states that: “The sunken nature of the Olifants River and the elevated topography of the area surrounding the Olifants River mouth (north of the river) shield the river from the proposed WEF. The Klein Goerap River, located approximately 35km northwest of the facility, will also not be influenced by the WEF. No significant visual impact is envisaged from these areas (see Annexure 3)”.
- The Olifants River Valley, Vredendal and surrounds, with most tourist activity concentrated in Vredendal and few visitors travelling to Lutzville and Koekenaap. Travellers mainly visit the area for business purposes, as a touring stop-over along the N7 Route and/or to purchase wines and other fresh produce of the area. Nature and scenery are added benefits and not prime motivators for visiting the immediate surrounds of the study area. The WEF and associated structures will not be visible from Vredendal but will be visible from certain elevations around Koekenaap and Lutzville (see Annexure 3). However, the site is 10-12 km from the current town fringe and the tourism effect is expected to be negligible.
- The key concern relates to potential impacts on the Juno-wind farm powerline structures on views from the main roads and towns in the area. The routing of the Juno-Wind Farm Distribution Line will be particularly important and from a tourism perspective the urban areas and main travel routes should be avoided. Alternative 1 is preferred since it crosses the R363 at a right angle and then routes away from the road to link up with the existing Juno-Koekenaap Distribution Line. This routing avoids a parallel routing along the road, valley and urban areas with travellers being able to see the structures all along the route, as will most probably be the case with Alternative 2 (see Annexure 2).

### 3.2.2 Significance

Factor	Extent	Duration	Magnitude	Probability	Significance
Scenery	Mainly of a local and regional nature	The effect on local usage will be permanent	The development may have a slight impact on tourism scenic quality in the area	It is highly probable that these impacts will occur	Medium
Score	2	5	4	4	44

### 3.2.3 Status

Overall, the development will have a low to medium negative effect of the tourism scenery of the area, as described above.

### 3.2.4 Mitigation

*Degree to which the impact can be reversed;* the impact cannot be reversed since it is caused by the visual nature of the construction.

*Degree to which the impact may cause irreplaceable loss of resources* is low; as the scenic intrusion at key tourism locations is limited it is not expected to deter visitors from visiting the area.

*The degree to which the impact can be mitigated is low;* there is very little that can be done to soften the visual effects of these huge structures. Having located the preferred site approximately 15 km north of the Olifants River Mouth and at a significant distance from towns and areas of tourism activity the potential visual tourism effects have already been reduced.

The key potential mitigating action relates to routing the Juno-wind farm transmission line away from the tourism routes and urban areas as per Alternative 1. In addition loss of scenic qualities can be compensated for by developing high quality visitor interpretation facilities at the site.

### 3.3 Positive impacts on the tourism economy of the area

While medium to longer term negative impacts on tourism activity and scenic qualities of the area are expected to be of a medium to low scale, the development could also have positive economic spin-offs for the area. These relate mainly to the WEF becoming a tourism drawcard due to the substantial scale of the development and the general awareness global warming, the importance of renewable energy and the need for Eskom to keep up with the growing electricity demand.

#### 3.3.1 Nature

As indicated in the scoping report the WEF could become a much needed tourism drawcard for the area with potential target markets being i) special interest visitors such as academics, environmentalists, etc, who are interested in alternative sources of energy; ii) families with children and school groups who may visit the area for educational purposes and iii) general touring visitors along the N7 and in the West Coast area (e.g. flower tours) who may veer off the N7 to visit the area and surrounds out of interest, to see the magnitude of the development and to gain general knowledge about wind energy and other alternative sources of energy.

The nature and extent of such visitation will depend largely on the interpretation facilities developed at the site and the ability of the authorities and tourism bodies to package the site as part of a touring route that covers the Olifants River Mouth, the local settlements of Papendorp and Ebenaezer, the Olifants River Valley and the WEF.

- Should only a basic visitor centre with limited or no interpretation facilities be constructed the tourism value will be limited. Visitor numbers are expected to be small and the site will most probably not play a significant tourism role. Few visitors are expected to make a special effort to visit the facility, since wind energy facilities do not offer complicated constructions or visible technological features such as e.g. hydro-electric schemes.
- Should a more substantial visitor interpretation facility be developed, offering visitors the opportunity of high quality information on global energy issues and renewable energy sources coupled with the visual effect of the windfarm the

attractiveness of the area may be significantly enhanced and the WEF could become a tourism magnet for the area. Linked to the proposed site enhancements proposed in section 3.1 the value of the area could be improved significantly. It will then be possible to package the site in conjunction with other attractions in the area to create a tourism circuit and retain some visitors in the area for at least one overnight stay. For example, if the site were able to attract an additional 5,000 visitors per annum, with 50% of visitors being day-visitors and spending R100 per visitor in the area and a further 50% of visitors staying over and spending R500 per visitor in the area, the total direct additional spend will amount to R1,5 million per annum. These figures are regarded as conservative and depending on the quality of interpretation visitation could increase significantly.

- A high quality interpretation facility should not only be a local tourism attraction but could enhance the attractiveness of the West Coast region and the N7 Route, thereby improving the marketability of the region and route.

### 3.3.2 Significance

Factor	Extent	Duration	Magnitude	Probability	Significance Weighting
Scenery	Of a local and regional nature	The effect on local usage will be medium term, since new technologies will probably overtake the novelty value of the site within 10-15 year	The development may have a moderate effect on the tourism, since current tourism processes will continue but in an improved way	It is probable that these impacts will occur, depending on the quality of interpretation	Medium
Score	3	3	6	3	36

### 3.3.3 Status

Overall, the positive economic impacts of the development will be of a medium status, as described above.

### 3.3.4 Mitigation

*Degree to which the impact can be reversed;* the positive tourism impacts will not be reversed but it could be reduced significantly should Eskom decide not to provide a high quality interpretation facility.

*Degree to which the impact may cause irreplaceable loss of resources* is positive as it will add to the economic resource base of the area rather than causing losses.

*The degree to which the impact can be mitigated is positive by:*

- i) establishing a high quality interpretation facility;
- ii) providing technical and/or financial support to the local tourism authorities for packaging the area as a tour circuit and preparing promotional materials in this regard and
- iii) improving tourism facilities at unique and special locations along the coastline the tourism potential of the area could be enhanced significantly.

#### **4 CONCLUSIONS**

The tourism component of the EIA focused on three potential tourism impacts of the WEF, two of which are potentially negative namely i) reduced tourism activity and ii) loss of tourism related nature scenery and one that could be positive namely iii) tourism economic benefits of the development.

- Concerning a possible reduction in tourism activity the significance of the potential impact was evaluated as low, since potential impacts are mainly of a local nature and the magnitude of the impact is considered as small.
- Concerning a potential loss of nature and scenic qualities the significance is evaluated as of a medium status, since although impacts are expected to be slight and mainly of a local nature, they will be permanent and the probability of some visual and scenic disturbance is high. Proposals for mitigation largely relate to the routing of the Juno-wind farm Distribution Line, with a preference for Alternative 1 that crosses the R363 rather than running parallel to it.
- Concerning the potential positive economic impacts of the development a medium level of significance could be achieved if Eskom were to develop a high quality renewable energy interpretation centre at the site. This will provide the local area and the region with a tourism magnet attraction, making it possible to package the WEF with other cultural and natural experiences as a tourism circuit. The development of such a centre is recommended.
- Should the possibility of future expansion of wind energy facilities in the area become a reality, the cumulative impact of such developments would be required to be considered at that time. The coastline further to north of the proposed site, towards and beyond the Northern Cape boundary has areas which have not been impacted to a similar extent by mining activities. Any future expansion should be subject to additional tourism impact assessments and these should consider both the impacts of the specific proposals and the cumulative tourism impacts of multiple wind energy facilities along this section of coastline. Due consideration should then also be given to the possible expansion of the currently proposed facility (if authorised) as a first option in order to reduce the potential for wind energy turbines to be scattered along the coastline.

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**Annexure 3: Visual Impact Index of the proposed WEF** (refer Visual Impact Assessment report compiled by MetroGIS)

