

MINUTES

PROPOSED WIND ENERGY FACILITY AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE AT A SITE IN THE WESTERN CAPE

MEETING WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND TOURISM (DEAT) AND THE WESTERN CAPE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND DEVELOPMENT PLANNING (DEA&DP)

HELD AT 1 DORP STREET, CAPE TOWN ON 4 JUNE 2007 at 10h30

AUTHORITY CONSULTATION MEETING No.2

PRESENT

An attendance register is attached in Appendix A.

Apologies received

Deidre Herbst - Eskom

Nico Gewers - Eskom

1. WELCOME AND PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

Paul Hardcastle welcomed all to the meeting and thanked all for their attendance. It was agreed that the purpose of the meeting was to provide feedback on the outcomes of the Regional Methodology followed by the Consultants, and discuss the findings and a way forward. It was agreed that the meeting would be kept informal.

Everyone was provided an opportunity to introduce themselves.

2. FEEDBACK: RESULTS OF REGIONAL METHODOLOGY PROCESS

Karen Jodas tabled a discussion document which provides the approach and methodology followed by the Consultants in undertaking the Regional Assessment for site selection for a proposed wind energy facility on the West Coast. She advised that this document would form the basis of the report which would

support the assessment findings and be submitted to DEAT and DEA&DP for their support/approval.

It was confirmed that following discussions with DEA&DP and DEAT in April 2007, a Regional Methodology assessment (in line with the methodology as outlined by DEA&DP) was undertaken. It was elected by Eskom to initiate and undertake this siting process outside of the EIA process for the Wind Energy Facility (i.e. prior to the continuation of the EIA application, as lodged).

This Regional Assessment/site identification process was undertaken for an expanded study area (i.e. a larger area than that considered by the 2006 Eskom SEA) - the boundaries for this expanded study area are the provincial boundary in the north, the N7 in the east, the coastline in the west, and the area in the vicinity of the Olifants River in the south.

In undertaking the Regional Assessment for the West Coast area, four main steps were followed:

1. Review of the Methodology proposed by DEA&DP's guideline document to thoroughly understand the methodology
2. Consultation with key Stakeholders in the area through meetings to obtain on-the-ground information and data
3. Defining the study area
4. Undertaking the Regional Assessment, based on the Regional Methodology proposed by DEA&DP's guideline document

Lourens du Plessis provided an overview of the Regional Methodology followed and the outcomes of the mapping exercise. The regional assessment is based on the methodology outlined in Report 5: Proposed Regional Methodology. He indicated that the criteria detailed within the DEA&DP Regional Methodology document were, however, adapted for the study area, but that a motivation for changes made to the methodology and/or criteria used has been documented in the tabled report and can be discussed.

Lourens du Plessis reported on the mapping data presented.

» Map 1: Environmental criteria – protected areas

- * The Knersvlakte Biosphere Reserve core area is reflected. This is the area where infrastructure development should be limited, as indicated by CapeNature and the Knersvlakte Biosphere Reserve Steering Committee.
- * The Lutzville Provincial Nature Reserve is mapped.
- * Rivers, wetlands, estuaries and potential bird habitats are mapped.

» Map 2: Topographical aspects

- * Positive and negative areas for development are mapped.

- * Areas lower than 150 m amsl are mapped as positive areas.
- * Areas higher than 150 m amsl are mapped as negative areas.
- * Slopes steeper than 1:4 are also mapped as negative areas.

Paul Hardcastle advised that these values may be considered arbitrary, and that he considers elevation above normal topography as having relevance, that is, to understand what features are relevant in the local environment.

Lourens du Plessis advised that there are overlaps with data in other layers, and that topography and landform has been mapped specifically within another layer. So this concern is addressed.

Ian Smit advised that turbine manufacturers also have restrictions in terms of slope for guarantee purposes as slopes create turbulence in the wind. Eskom's preference is to be in flat areas.

- » There is no Map 3 (planning criteria – urban & industrial areas), as the predominant land uses in the study area (mining and agriculture) exclude major industrial areas that contributed as positive criteria in the DEA&DP study.

Paul Hardcastle indicated his support that the mining areas had not been indicated as "industrial" areas, as mining activities are considered finite (short or medium term). He advised that the consideration of industrial areas is for smaller wind energy facilities which do not require extensive portions of land.

- » Map 4: Coastal zone

- * Considering the current and historic mining activities along the coastline, as well as areas of some 'scenic value' within the study area, a 1 km buffer zone from the high water mark is provided for the majority of the length of coast, except for the area in the vicinity of the Olifants River mouth and estuary. This 1 km buffer zone is as per the buffer provided for "rural areas" in the Integrated Coastal Management Bill.

Paul Hardcastle raised a concern that limiting the buffer to 1 km results in the opportunity cost of tourism and scenic value of the coastline being lost. He indicated that it is acknowledged that the coastline has suffered disturbance. However, this should not distract from the fact that the mined areas can be rehabilitated. It is the future potential and intended after use which the Department would not want to see compromised.

Paul Hardcastle advised that he would be more comfortable with a buffer of 4km to remove large scale development from the proximity of the coastline, thereby not compromising the future potential for the coast.

Raudhiyah Sahabodien enquired why no transformed areas were shown along the coastline, if this area is considered to be disturbed at this time. Lourens du Plessis confirmed that the transformation is typically restricted to the area in the immediate vicinity of the coastline, and cannot be appropriately mapped at the scale of the maps. Paul Hardcastle confirmed this.

- » Map 5: Infrastructure (airfields and national roads)
 - * Airfield at TransHex mapped.
 - * National Route N7 mapped

- » Map 6: Vertically disturbed landscapes (positive criteria)
 - * Mapped railway line to Bittersfontein.
 - * Mapped Transmission lines – existing lines as well as future/proposed.

- » Map 7 in the DEA&DP study refers to the delineation of heritage and cultural assets, as well as scenic drives and cultural routes, as negative criteria. Consultation with heritage specialists as well as SAHRA did not identify any specific cultural or heritage sites within the study area. Possible sites of heritage value would be identified during a site specific EIA. Consultation with tourism specialists as well as the local municipality and tourism organisations in the area identified the Olifants River and estuary as an area of tourism importance. This area falls within the 2km buffer zone for the River (Map 1), and the 4km coastal exclusion zone for this area (Map 4). In addition, the N7 may (at certain times of the year) be considered to be a scenic route, specifically as it is a main route to the Namaqualand and Namibia. The N7 route is mapped with a 2km buffer on Map 5. Due to the overlap in mapping data, Map 7 is therefore not repeated as a separate layer.

- » Map 8a: Vegetation/land cover
 - * Mapped transformed and natural vegetation.
 - * The majority of vegetation in the study area is not considered to be pristine and has been grazed and disturbed by agriculture, mining, etc. to some extent.
 - * The national landcover data (2000) was used for vegetation cover.

- » Map 8b: Zone of visual influence
 - * Zone of visual influence mapped based on the exposure of the study area from major roads (N7 and Provincial roads).
 - * The resultant index identifies areas that are more frequently exposed to both the national and provincial roads (highly visible areas); areas exposed to either the national road or the provincial roads (visible areas) and areas that are not exposed to any of the major roads within the study area.
 - * The sphere of visual influence from the N7 was restricted to a 30km distance search radius (i.e. what can be considered reasonable to be seen with the naked eye) in order to realistically model the Zone of Visual Influence.
 - * The site-specific visual impact assessment to be undertaken within the EIA process will consider other parameters such as visual perception, distance from viewer, etc.

Paul Hardcastle confirmed that it is a sensible approach to link the zone of visual influence to the distance used for the cumulative assessment range (i.e. approx 25 km).

- » Map 8c: Topography/land form
 - * Topographical features mapped.
 - * The 20 m contours were used to identify hills, ridges, etc.

- » Map 8: Landscape character visual assessment
 - * Composite map of map 8a, 8b and 8c

- » Map 9: Composite map overlay of criteria-based and landscape assessment
 - * Preferred, negotiable and restricted areas identified

Suretha van Rooyen enquired if SANBI data/biodiversity data had been considered. Would this feed into the EIA. Paul Hardcastle advised that DEA&DP have been working on biodiversity hotspot data at a regional level.

3. SITING ALTERNATIVES

Lourens du Plessis provided an overview of the results of the composite map overlay of criteria-based and landscape assessment, as well as possible siting alternatives based on these criteria (i.e. seeking out the areas rated as 'highly preferred'; 'preferred' or negotiable'. Eskom's technical information and parameters are critical in this siting.

Paul Hardcastle enquired why Area 2 as indicated was 'outside of the area indicated as preferred'. He enquire if this was related to being as close to coastline as possible.

Ian Smit indicated that the sites must be in areas least affected by the effects of topography due to the slow-down effects on the wind.

Ian Smit indicated that Area 3 as indicated could be considered as an area for development, however this is very close to the existing communities of Strandfontein and Papendorp, and there is concern regarding this social issues arising (i.e. impact on existing sense of place for these existing communities).

Lourens du Plessis indicated that the next step at EIA level would be to consider observer proximity.

Paul Hardcastle advised that the 'borrowed landscape' concept must be considered in the visual assessment. He advised that cumulative impacts must be considered as early on as possible. He advised that if all 3 areas meet the

cumulative landscape criteria, these options could all be open for future consideration.

Paul Hardcastle enquired if there is a technical limit in terms of the number of turbines with the wind farm.

Ian Smit responded that for Eskom, the maximum capacity for one farm would be approx 200 MW, which is approximately 100 turbines.

Paul Hardcastle indicated that Eskom should proactively determine where to site the proposed facility, and use the results of the regional planning to decrease the future potential for cumulative impacts. The results from the regional assessment would point to where to develop. He advised that the strategic issues are to be considered now, and then the EIA would not be loaded with the need to consider alternatives.

Paul Hardcastle indicated the following should follow this regional assessment:

- * Include cut-off radius of 30km for assessing cumulative impacts
- * Increase 1 km buffer from coastline to show consideration of opportunity loss of future use of coastline
- * Show the implications of the site (in terms of viability) being 1km, 2km, 3km, 4km from the coastline
- * Understand that the site specific issues need to be considered in the EIA.

The way forward was agreed:

1. Submit Strategic Regional Assessment report to DEAT and DEA&DP
2. DEAT to indicate if the Department supports/accepts the outcomes
3. Proceed to a site –specific EIA process on one site.

It was commented that Eskom have commercial considerations in terms of land purchase and infrastructure requirements.

Ian Smit enquired whether 1 or 3 sites are required to be considered further. And if only one site is considered now, what are the implications for the future. Paul Hardcastle advised that Eskom should consider what makes the most sense in how to proceed.

4. WAY FORWARD

The following was agreed as the way forward:

- A report will be submitted to DEAT and DEA&DP in 2 weeks.
- DEAT and DEA&DP will consider the report and provide a response on how to proceed within a 2 week period

It was requested that Eskom carefully consider what is best from a technical perspective (i.e. consider all relevant technical criteria) and grade sites accordingly.

Paul Hardcastle advised that his key concern is the distance for development from the coastline. He advised that the visual absorption capacity and opportunity cost must be considered when considering distance from the coastline.

Kuben Nair enquired if DEA&DP and DEAT were satisfied that sufficient work had been done in terms of the DEA&DP methodology.

Paul Hardcastle advised that he believed that the guidelines developed by DEA&DP had been used in a responsible and informed manner, and that he is pleased with the approach taken. He requested that at the next meeting he have an opportunity to discuss the merits and/or problems of the methodology with Eskom and the consultants.

5. CLOSURE

Karen Jodas thanked all for their attendance and contribution to the meeting.

Minutes prepared by Karen Jodas, Savannah Environmental