

**MINUTES OF THE ESKOM NORTHERN KZN STRENGTHENING PROJECT EIA: SITE VISIT WITH AFFECTED FARMERS AT NORMANDIE SUBSTATION**

<b>Venue</b>	<b>Normandie Substation</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>23 November 2017</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>08h00</b>
<b>Chairperson</b>	<b>Hendrik Klopper</b>		<b>Minutes prepared by</b>	<b>Zwanga Ramadolela</b>	

<b>PRESENT</b>		<b>APOLOGIES</b>
<b>Name</b>		
Zwanga Ramadolela (ZR)	Terry Calmeyer (TC)	Arthur Smith (AS)
Hendrik Klopper (HK)	Pieter Keese (PK)	
Andre de Waal (ADW)	J.P du Toit (JPDT)	
AC. Hiestermann (ACH)		

<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome</b> Mr Hendrik Klopper welcomed everyone to the meeting and site visit.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Purpose of the Meeting</b> The purpose of the meeting and site visit was to provide a platform for the farmers to raise their concerns and provide commentary on Eskom's proposed Normandie-Iphiva 400 kV powerlines.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Presentation</b> TC gave a summary of the project which included the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The EIA team is assessing potentially viable 2 km wide corridors for the 400 kV powerlines which Eskom will thereafter negotiate a servitude right for the most practical corridor. The portion of the servitude that will be utilised will be 55 m wide, and approximately 65 m wide in forestry areas.</li> <li>A full EIA is being undertaken. The EIA has two (2) phases, namely, the Scoping Phase and then the Impact Assessment Phase. During the Scoping Phase, issues pertaining to the project are identified, and specialist studies relevant to the identified potential issues are undertaken to investigate alternatives and mitigation measures were necessary.</li> <li>The EIA is still in the Scoping Phase. The Draft Scoping Report was available for a 30-day public comment period, thereafter, comments were incorporated</li> </ul>	

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	<p>and the Final Scoping Report was submitted to the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The DEA is expected to advise by 5 December 2017 whether the Scoping Report has been approved, rejected or additional information is required.</li> <li>• A Specialists' Integration Meeting has been scheduled for 07 December 2017. At this meeting, each of the specialists will present on their findings and recommendations in line with their area of expertise.</li> <li>• Any further comments received from I&amp;APs before the Specialists' Integration Meeting can still be taken in the consideration of what will be recommended.</li> <li>• It was confirmed that the public participation activities, including onsite notices, newspaper advertisements and pamphlet drops to post boxes have taken place to date.</li> <li>• The consultation process is still ongoing. After the Specialists' Integration meeting (07 December 2017), the EIA team will compile a Draft EIA Report that will include the Environmental Assessment Practitioner's (EAPs) recommendations for the project. The specialist studies and Environmental Management Programme (EMPr) will be also be made available for a 30 days public comment period which is currently scheduled to be in March 2018.</li> <li>• Farmers and/or landowners will have the opportunity to comment on the draft EIA reports during this period. Any comments received prior to the drafting of the EIA report will also be taken into account.</li> </ul>		
4.	<p><b>Discussion and Questions Session</b></p> <p>a) Mr Keeve said that he is the official representative of TWK. He does not know who attended the meeting in Piet Retief on their behalf, but he did not receive any feedback. (He will check the minutes).</p> <p>b) ADW asked which route is preferred at the moment. <b>Response:</b> TC responded that it will only be possible to make a recommendation once the specialist studies have been completed.</p> <p>c) The concern is that even if an on-site notice was erected at the Normandie Substation, the affected people may not have understood it.</p> <p>d) PK asked where the Draft Scoping Report was made available for public comment? <b>Response:</b> TC indicated that hard copies of the draft scoping report were</p>		
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	<p>available at the public libraries in Piet Retief, Pongola, Mkhuze and Hluhluwe. The documents were also made available on the NAKO ILISO website.</p> <p>e) It was indicated that the farmers in the Piet Retief area would not have received the pamphlets as notification of the project because most of them do not have post boxes.</p> <p>f) HK stated that Mpumalanga has structures in place which facilitate communication with land owners in the area. He requested Eskom to recognize these structures and use them to as a communication channel with the farmer. He indicated that it is a major concern that even Mr Arthur Smith, who is a Representative of Eskom at Piet Retief did not know about the project.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> TC indicated that she has sent an email to the Public Participation Officer requesting that she uses these structures for future project communication. Mr Smith has also been included in all project correspondence.</p> <p>g) ADW asked whether a walk down of all the 2 km wide corridors is undertaken for the EIA.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> TC explained that the potentially affected corridors have been seen, although not the full 2 km length of the corridors, and not all alternatives. Approximately three (3) weeks was designated for site visits. During the EIA phase of the project, the EIA team recommends which corridor is the Best Practicable Environmental Option. After the DEA has issued an Environmental Authorisation for the corridor that has been choose, Eskom will negotiate and survey the actual servitude, and then design the powerline. Before construction commences, ecological and heritage specialists will undertake a walkthrough of the entire servitude and verify any site-specific impacts, specifically of the tower foundation footprints. It is still possible to implement minor amendments to the powerline at this stage, such as moving a particular tower to avoid an impact, such as a grave.</p> <p>h) ADW emphasized that both the Normandie-Iphiva 2 and Normandie-Iphiva 3 corridors traverse his property where he actually lives. He expressed dissatisfaction with the communication that has taken place to date, as he believes it would have been easy to identify his property and come to his house to engage with him. Mr de Waal further stated that the loss that they are going to experience will be massive, as their forestry, irrigation and grazing that will be affected. He stated that if cattle stay under powerlines for a long period, they become sterile.</p> <p>i) JPDT asked about noise pollution, health hazards and the visual impacts of</p>	

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	<p>living close to powerlines.</p> <p>j) PK asked whether there is an alternative substation to Normandie that Eskom can use to upgrade the Northern KZN grid.  <b>Response:</b> The area that will be fed from this project is Northern KZN including the Makhathini flats and the area north of Pongola. The new substation is going to be in the vicinity of Mkhuze Town and will also be linked to the Duma Substation in the south.</p> <p>k) ADW asked when will the final decision regarding the most practical corridor be taken.  <b>Response:</b> The Department of Environmental Affairs makes the final decision and they usually follow the EAP's recommendation. If there are no delays in the EIA process then the Environmental Authorisation should be issued in August 2018.</p> <p>l) HK indicated that the economic impacts on the study area will be the land use change, hence studies should be conducted to indicate what loss the farmers will be subjected to. Land use change is a long-term impact, hence future losses must also be taken into account. HK requested that Eskom considers renting or leasing the property and compensating farmers for the future loss.  <b>Response:</b> For powerline servitude, Eskom does not acquire the land, they acquire a servitude or right to use and access that land, and they compensate farmers for their loss.</p> <p>m) HK re-iterated that for forestry, and irrigated essential oil trees, the loss to the farmers should be calculated.  <b>Response:</b> TC confirmed that the EIA team includes an agricultural specialist study that specifically considers the impacts on farmers. The economist is focusing on the monetary value of the visual impact on the eco-tourism sector. The actual evaluation of the impacts on individual landowners only gets done during the negotiation phase and not during the EIA. Farmers should not expect value for their loss/compensation to come out of the EIA process.</p> <p>n) ADW asked whether Eskom is willing to put up a power station powered by timber. The farmers said that they will supply Eskom with the timber. If renewable energy is available closer to where the power supply is needed, it can be an option that can be investigated; Eskom would not need to put up powerlines. He also asked whether alternatives like solar and bio-fuel have been considered by Eskom as alternative means to generate electricity supply.  <b>Response:</b> TC confirmed that the issue of using bio-fuel as an alternative has been raised although not specifically wood.</p>	

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	<p>o) The farmers asked about the impact of powerlines on cell phone communication. Their experience is that the powerlines create a dead spot which is a safety risk for firefighting. It is also a safety and security risk for their security response teams that respond to any incidents on farms.</p> <p>p) PK asked what are the health risks of living close to the powerlines.  <b>Response:</b> TC indicated that considerable international research has been undertaken on the health impacts of powerlines and that Eskom adheres to international health and safety standards.</p> <p>q) HK enquired about the rehabilitation process after construction and the condition that a forestry area will be left in. He also suggested that rehabilitation costs must be included in the project budget.  <b>Response:</b> TC explained that each individual land owner will enter into an agreement with Eskom on the state of the servitude on their property after construction. The landowner should have a say on the rehabilitation of their land.</p> <p>r) ADW asked whether farmers will be allowed to plant trees that are 1.8 to 2 m high under the transmission powerlines and whether Eskom would establish such crops for them as part of the compensation package.  <b>Response:</b> TC advised the farmers to engage with Eskom regarding possible compensation packages as she is not well acquainted with the Eskom's compensation packages.</p> <p>s) HK asked whether a combine harvester could initiate a spark if one harvests under the powerlines.  <b>Response:</b> A response from Eskom will be sought.</p> <p>t) ADW explained that he already has a 400kV powerline across his property. Eskom switches off the powerline for a certain period of time for fire breaks to be burnt. If multiple powerlines are going to traverse his land then Mr de Waal explained that he would need additional support from Eskom.</p> <p>He recommended that Eskom provide contractors to assist with the burning of fire breaks. He also requested that Eskom be paid up members of the FPO. Eskom and Eskom's contractors also need to comply with the local FDI regulations. This includes having all the required firefighting equipment during the high fire risk seasons.</p> <p>u) The airfield that is used by small planes to fight fires is located in Piet Retief. It is dangerous to fight a fire in the vicinity of powerlines using planes. Therefore,</p>	

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	<p>for such areas, additional resources need to be acquired to manage any fires from the ground. Mr de Waal asked who would cover that additional cost.</p> <p>v) ACH confirmed that they also use the planes to spray their crops, which will not be possible in the vicinity of powerlines.</p> <p>w) PK advised that there are communities living on the farms that will also be impacted by the powerlines and should be consulted.  <b>Response:</b> TC explained that the EIA team has identified the potential impacts of the powerlines. The team of specialists will now undertake their comparative assessments. Eskom has a mandate to supply the area with electricity and needs to find the best way to achieve that.</p> <p>x) PK asked whether the communities living in the corridors have been notified of the project.  <b>Response:</b> TC reported that meetings with the traditional councils in the study area have taken place. TC will advise the PPP team leader of the communities living on the farms that can be contacted through the farmers.</p>	
5.	<p><b>Closure</b>                      HK thanked everyone for the site visit, which was adjourned at 09:00.</p>	