

Environmental Impact Assessment for the network strengthening and upgrade in the Patensie, Humansdorp and Kareedouw areas

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT

April 2012

PROJECT BACKGROUND/OVERVIEW

Notice is hereby given in terms of Regulation 54 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (GN No. R.543, 2010) under Chapter 5 of the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998), of the intent of Eskom to submit an application for environmental authorization to the National Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) for the planned network strengthening and upgrade in the Patensie, Humansdorp and Kareedouw areas, Eastern Cape.

In terms of the EIA Regulations, an application of this nature has to undergo Basic (Environmental) Assessment. Arcus GIBB Engineering and Science have been commissioned by Eskom, who are the project managers, to undertake the EIA.

PROJECT MOTIVATION

New 132 kV overhead transmission powerlines are proposed to strengthen and upgrade the grid supply in the Patensie, Humansdorp and Kareedouw area, Eastern Cape, in order to support the recent and planned growth and development in the area.

An upgrade of the existing electrical distribution network is therefore required to accommodate the new supply. This involves the construction of new 132 kV infrastructure, new substations as well as the decommissioning of certain facilities. The construction of new and upgrading of existing substations will further aid in strengthening of the local network. The total length of the proposed powerlines amounts to approximately 90 km.

PROJECT LOCATION AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The proposed sites are situated within the Patensie, Humansdorp and Kareedouw area (see map on page 4).

Project 1:

- Construction of approximately 26 km of overhead 132 kV powerline from the Melkhout Substation through to the Dieprivier Substation.
- Construction of a new Dieprivier Substation.
- Decommissioning of redundant infrastructure once new infrastructure has been commissioned.

- Construction of new or maintenance of existing minor roads.

Project 2:

- Construction of approximately 28 km of overhead 132 kV powerline from the Melkhout Substation through to the Patensie Substation.
- Construction of a new 2x20MVA 132/22 kV substation.
- Decommissioning of redundant infrastructure once new infrastructure has been commissioned.
- Construction of new or maintenance of existing minor roads.
- Potential need for minor bridge/s across a water course.

Project 3:

- Construction of approximately 35 km of overhead 132 kV powerline from the Dieprivier Substation through to the Kareedouw Substation.
- Decommissioning of existing powerlines made redundant by new lines.
- Construction of new sub-station at Dieprivier and decommission of existing sub-station.
- Extension of the existing Kareedouw sub-station.
- Construction of new or maintenance of existing minor roads.

THE NEED FOR AN EIA AND LISTED ACTIVITIES TRIGGERED

The National Environmental Management Act, No. 107 of 1998, prescribes that an EIA process must be followed to evaluate the impact of certain activities that are deemed to have a potentially negative effect on the environment. According to the provisions of the NEMA, all environmental investigations must comply with the minimum requirements of the act as set out in section 23(2) of NEMA. The minimum requirements include (1) the promotion of the integration of the principles of environmental management; (ii) identifying, predicting and evaluating the actual and potential impacts on the environment; (iii) due consideration of all impacts that could have an effect on the environment; (iv) adequate public participation; and (v) the identification of environmental management practices best suited for a particular environmental impact.

The EIA procedures are based on the principles of Integrated Environmental Management (IEM), which in short comprise pro-active planning, informed decision making, a transparent and participatory approach to

development, a broad understanding of the environment, and accountability for decisions and the information on which they are based. Section 24(2)(a) of the Act furthermore states that the Minister, or MEC, may identify activities which may not be commenced without prior authorisation from the Minister or MEC. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations promulgated in 2010 specify which activities, under NEMA, may not commence without prior environmental authorisation from the competent authority. These listed activities came into effect on 2 August 2010 and were promulgated in Government Notices 544 and 546 (those that trigger Basic Assessments) and 545 (those triggering EIAs). Specific requirements for conducting the EIA process were promulgated in Government Notice 543.

The proposed development comprises several possible and definite activities listed in terms of the EIA Regulations (2010), which should be covered in a single application for authorisation.

These listed activities are:

Government Notice 544, 10: *The construction of facilities or infrastructure for the transmission and distribution of electricity*

- (i) *outside urban areas or industrial complexes with a capacity of more than 33 but less than 275 kV*
- (ii) *inside urban areas or industrial complexes with a capacity of 275 kV or more*

Government Notice 544, 11: *(iii) the construction of a bridge within 32 m of a watercourse*

Government Notice 544, 18: *The infilling or depositing of any material of more than 5 cubic metres into, or the dredging, excavation, removal or moving of soil, sand, shells, shell grit, pebbles or rock from (i) a watercourse*

Government Notice 546, 12: *The clearance of an area of 300 m² or more of vegetation where 75% or more of the vegetative cover constitutes indigenous vegetation*

- a) *Within any critically endangered or endangered ecosystem listed in terms of section 52 of NEMBA or prior to the publication of such a list, within an area that has been identified as critically endangered in the National Spatial Biodiversity Assessment 2004;*
- b) *Within critical biodiversity areas identified in bioregional plans*

Government Notice 546, 13: *The clearance of an area of 1 hectare or more of vegetation where 75% or more of the vegetative cover constitutes indigenous vegetation*

THE EIA PROCESS

These projects will involve an application for environmental authorisation through a Basic Assessment (BA). The BA aims to identify the key project issues raised by the proponent, consultants and the public; consider project alternatives; and through public participation, ensure consensus is reached regarding the issues to be addressed in the BA. A Basic Assessment report (BAR) is produced, which is released to the public for comment. Prior to submission of the final BAR to the authorities the public is provided with another opportunity to further comment on the matter.

Once the draft BAR has been reviewed by the Interested and Affected Parties, the comments are collated and the report is amended as appropriate and finalised. The final BAR is then submitted to the DEA, together with the specialist reports, for consideration.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS AND HOW TO REGISTER AS AN I&AP

The EIA Regulations specify that a public participation process must be conducted as an integral part of the EIA. Section 54 of the EIA Regulations outlines the requirements for the notification of all potential interested and affected parties. These requirements typically include the following:

- Fixing a notice board at a conspicuous place at the side boundary and all alternative sites.
- Giving written notice to:
 - the landowners and occupiers of the sites and those within 100 m of the boundaries of the specific site and alternative sites or those directly influenced by the activity under consideration;
 - the municipal councillor of the affected wards;
 - the municipality which has jurisdiction in the area; and
 - any organ of state having jurisdiction in respect of any aspect of the activity.
- Placing an advertisement in a local or regional newspaper.

During the Public Participation Process, input from the Proponent, technical experts, government authorities and the general public will be gathered to result in a better understanding of the project for all involved. This will allow for more informed decision making throughout the process.

The key objective of the public participation is to provide I&APs with an opportunity to provide comment and input in the planning phase of the project. Issues of concern and suggestions raised by I&APs will be addressed and

responded to in the Issues and Response Report, which is included in the draft BAR. I&APs will also be given an opportunity to comment on the findings of the BAR, including the specialist reports.

DETAILS OF EAP CONDUCTING THE EIA

Arcus GIBB (Pty) Ltd. is a multi-disciplinary engineering and environmental consultancy company whose environmental division comprises a number of Environmental Assessment Practitioners.

The environmental division has undertaken over 100 Environmental Impact Assessments for development projects within South Africa.

Arcus GIBB has a comprehensive ISO 9001:2000 Quality Management System in place. As such, all documentation is professionally reviewed.

The project team includes:

Walter Fyvie, Project Leader

Walter is an Environmental Scientist with 10 years of experience and specialises in EIA coordination, environmental auditing and waste management. He specialises in Environmental Impact Assessments, Environmental Management Programmes, Environmental monitoring and auditing, and waste management.

Mathys Vosloo, Project Scientist

Mathys has an MSc in biology and ecosystem ecology and has a sound understanding of ecological issues and ecosystem functioning. A nature scientist with eight years of experience, Mathys specialises in aquatic and estuarine ecology, Environmental Impact Assessments, Environmental Management Programmes, and Strategic Environmental Assessments.

Kate Parkinson, Junior Environmental Scientist

Kate will be running the public participation process and maintaining contact with registered I&APs.

YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO GET INVOLVED

Should you wish to express your views regarding this proposed development, please feel free to register as an Interested & Affected Party (I&AP) by sending us your written comments. The names of all registered I&APs, together with the comments received will be incorporated into the Environmental Impact Assessment application and will be submitted to DEA.

Please submit your name, contact information (address, telephone number, e-mail address, postal address) and written comments indicating the project of interest to the contact person below before **Friday, 11 May 2012**. A written comments form is supplied at the end of this notice for your convenience. Please feel free to add comments on a separate page should the space provided on this notice not be enough. Alternatively provide a written submission by e-mail (preferred)

Contact

Kate Parkinson

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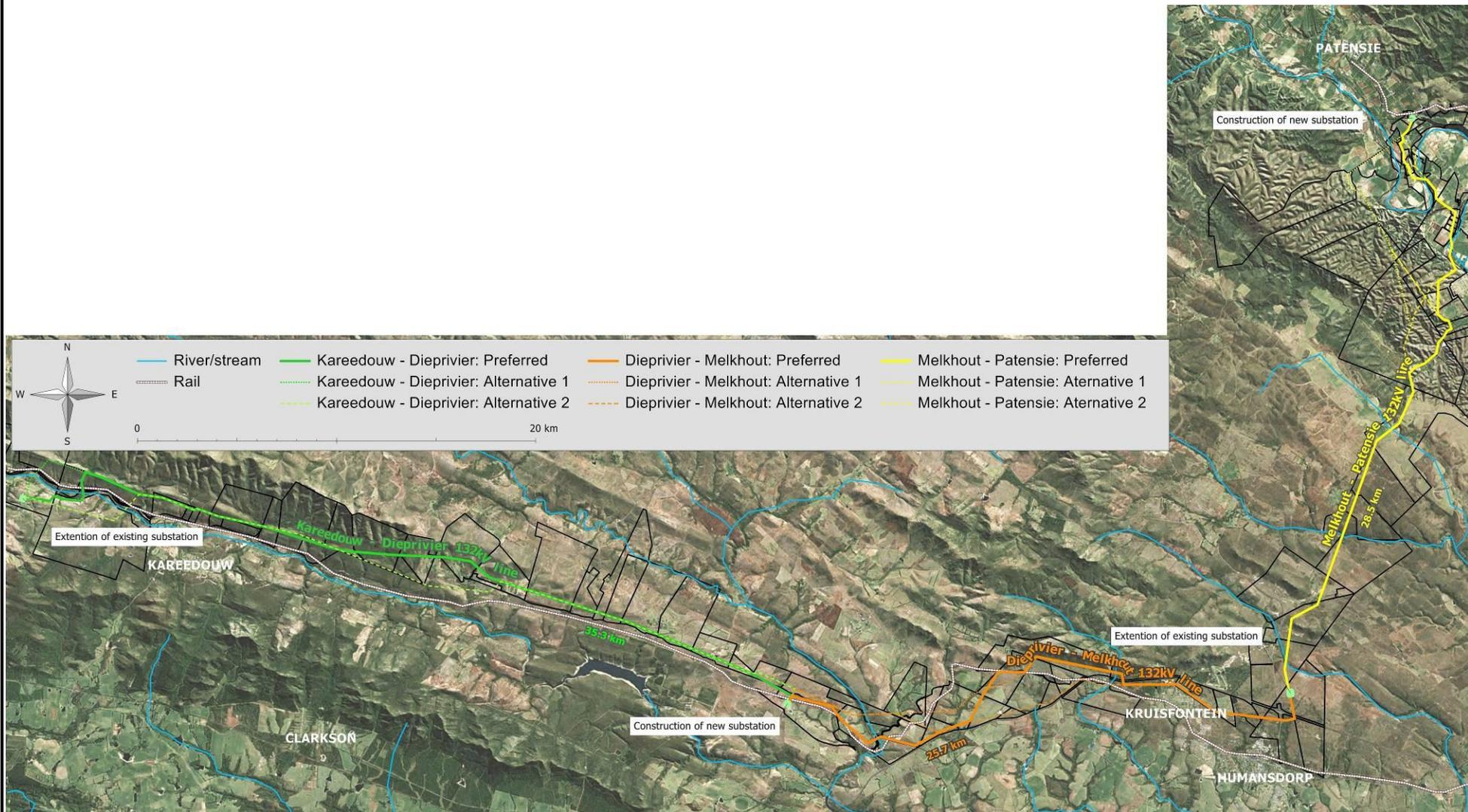


Figure1. The proposed sites for the planned network strengthening and upgrade in the Humansdorp area.

