



ENVIRONAMICS

Environmental Consultants

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT

Environmental Impact Assessment for the proposed Luckhoff Solar 1 Photovoltaic Solar Energy Facility near Luckhoff, Free State Province

1. Introduction

The activities entail the development of photovoltaic solar facility and associated infrastructure on the Farm Rorich's Hulp No. 505, Registration Division Fauresmith, situated within the Letsemeng Local Municipality area of jurisdiction. The town of Luckhoff is located approximately 3km south of the proposed development (refer to the attached locality maps).

The project entails the generation of up to 240MW electrical power through photovoltaic (PV) panels. The total footprint of the project will approximately be 480 hectares (including supporting infrastructure on site). The property on which the facility is to be constructed will be leased by Luckhoff Solar 1 (Pty) Ltd from the property owner, for the lifespan of the project (minimum of 20 years).

Depending on the economic conditions following the lapse of this period, the facility may either be decommissioned, or the power purchase agreement may be renegotiated and extended. The purpose of this background information document (BID) is to provide interested and affected parties (I&APs) with:

Information on the need for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA):

- An overview of the proposed solar power plant;
- An overview of the EIA process and specialist studies being conducted to explain the potential impacts associated with the proposed facilities; and;
- Details of how I&APs may become involved in the process, receive information, or raise issues, which may concern and/or interest them.

2. The need for an EIA

The EIA Regulations, 2014 (GN. R.326 as amended in 2017) published in terms of the National Environmental Management Act (Act No. 107 of 1998) determine that an environmental authorisation is required for certain listed activities, which might have detrimental impacts on the environment. The following activities have been identified with special reference to the proposed development and are listed in the EIA Regulations:

- Activity 11(i) (GN.R. 327): "The development of facilities or infrastructure for the transmission and distribution of electricity outside urban areas or industrial complexes with a capacity of more than 33 but less than 275 kilovolts."
- Activity 24 (ii) (GN.R. 327): "The development of a road (ii) with reserve wider than 13,5 meters, or where no reserve exists where the road is wider than 8 meters."
- Activity 28 (ii) (GN.R. 327): "Residential, mixed, retail, commercial, industrial or institutional developments where such land was used for agriculture or afforestation on or after 1998 and where such development (ii) will occur outside an urban area, where the total land to be developed is bigger than 1 hectare."
- Activity 1 (GN.R. 325): "The development of facilities or infrastructure for the generation of electricity from a renewable resource where the electricity output is 20 megawatts or more..."
- Activity 15 (GN.R. 325): "The clearance of an area of 20 hectares or more of indigenous vegetation."

- Activity 4 (GN.R. 324): “The development of a road wider than 4 metres with a reserve less than 13,5 metres.”
- Activity 10 (GN.R. 324): “The development and related operation of facilities or infrastructure for the storage, or storage and handling of a dangerous good, where such storage occurs in containers with a combined capacity of 30 but not exceeding 80 cubic metres.”
- Activity 12 (GN.R. 324): “The clearance of an area of 300 square metres or more of indigenous vegetation...”
- Activity 18 (GN.R. 324): “The widening of a road by more than 4 metres, or the lengthening of a road by more than 1 kilometre.”

Based on the activities triggered, the Application for Environmental Authorisation is subject to the completion of full Scoping and EIA (S&EIA) process as described in Regulations 21-23. The Scoping and EIA process involves the identification and assessment of environmental impacts through specialist studies, the recommendation of appropriate mitigation measures as well as public participation.

3. Project description

The activities entail the development of a PV solar power plant and associated infrastructure on the Farm Rorich’s Hulp No. 505, Registration Division Fauresmith, situated within the Letsemeng Local Municipality area of jurisdiction, Free State Province. The key components of the individual proposed projects are described below:

- PV Panel Array - To produce up to 24MW, the proposed facilities will require numerous linked cells placed behind a protective glass sheet to form a panel. Multiple panels will be required to form the solar PV arrays which will comprise the PV facility.
- Wiring to Inverters - Sections of the PV array will be wired to inverters. The inverter is a pulse width mode inverter that converts direct current (DC) electricity to alternating current (AC) electricity at grid frequency.
- Facility Connection Works – Energy generated by the PV array will be transmitted via underground medium voltage cables (i.e. up to 33kV) to the onsite Luchhoff Solar 1 substation (the facility substation) where it will be stepped-up to 132kV. Thereafter, the electricity will pass

to an Eskom collector / switching station located directly adjacent to the facility substation.

- Eskom Connection Works¹ - The Project Developer proposes the construction of a 132 kV powerline from the Eskom collector / switching station to a newly proposed 132 kV / 400 kV Main Transmission Substation (MTS). The MTS will be located adjacent to three existing Eskom 400 kV powerlines (Hydra/Perseus 2 & 3 and Beta/Hydra 1), approximately 4 km southeast of the facility. It is proposed that the three 400 kV powerlines will loop-in-loop-out (LILO) of the new MTS.
- Supporting Infrastructure – The following auxiliary buildings with basic services including water and electricity will be required on the sites:
 - Offices;
 - Warehouses and Workshops;
 - Control centre; and
 - Security control and gate house;
 - Temporary and permanent laydown areas.
- Battery storage – Battery Energy Storage Facilities with a maximum height of 8m and a maximum volume of 1,740 m³ of batteries and associated operational, safety and control infrastructure will be required, covering an area of ~4ha.
- Roads - Access will be obtained via the R48 and an existing gravel road located adjacent to the site. An internal site road network will also be required to provide access to the solar field and associated infrastructure.
- Fencing - For health, safety and security reasons, the facility will be required to be fenced off from the surrounding farm. Fencing with a height of 2.5 meters will be used.

¹ Connection works beyond the facility substation (“Eskom connection works”) is subject to a separate application process, although detail is included in the BID for context. The EA applications for the facility and the Eskom connection works are being undertaken in parallel as they are co-dependent, i.e. one will not be developed without the other

4. Specialist studies to be conducted

There are a number of environmental impacts, both positive and negative that are associated with photovoltaic solar energy facilities. Specialist studies will be conducted to identify and assess these potential impacts. Specialist studies will be guided by existing information, field observations and input from the public participation process. For these projects, the following specialist studies have been identified as relevant:

- Heritage Impact Assessment
- Ecological Fauna and Flora Habitat Survey
- Wetland Assessment
- Visual Impact Assessment
- Soil, Land Capability and Agricultural Potential Study
- Desktop Geotechnical study
- Social Impact Assessment
- Avifaunal Study
- Palaeontological Impact Assessment
- Traffic Impact Assessment

5. The EIA process and timeline for the projects

Public participation is an integral part of the EIA process and aims to involve Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) in the process by notifying them of the proposed project and encouraging them to voice their issues and concerns.

The process undertaken will be transparent and allow I&APs to comment on the project or raise concerns, which will be included and considered in the respective Scoping and EIA Reports. Table 1 indicates the key steps of the EIA process and the timelines for the project.

Table 1: Key steps of the EIA process

Activity	Prescribed timeframe	Timeframe
Public participation (BID)	30 Days	06 Oct. - 6 Nov. 2022
Conduct specialist studies	2 Months	Oct. – Nov. 2022
Submit application form and Draft Scoping Report	-	Nov. 2022
Public participation (Draft Scoping Report)	30 Days	Nov. 2022 – Jan. 2023
Submit Final Scoping Report	44 Days	Feb. 2023
Approval of Final Scoping Report	43 Days	March 2023

Submit Draft EIA Report	106 Days	Jun. 2023
Public Participation	30 Days	Jun. – Jul. 2023
Submit Final EIA Report	-	Aug. 2023
Decision	107 Days	Nov. 2023
Public participation (decision) & submission of appeals	20 Days	Nov. 2023

6. Your involvement

I&APs include individuals, communities or groups whose interest may be positively or negatively affected by the proposed development. You may get involved in the public participation process by:

- Registering as an I&AP.
- Submitting your issues, concerns and questions in writing on the attached comments and response form or sending an email to participation@environamics.co.za.
- Attending any public meetings which may be held during the course of the EIA process. As a registered I&AP you will automatically be invited to attend these meetings.
- Reviewing and commenting on the reports within the stipulated public review periods.

7. Comments and queries

All comments and queries may be directed to the following contact person:

Contact person: Ansoné Esterhuizen
Telephone: 076 714 1234 (Cell)
Electronic mail: participation@environamics.co.za