

**APPENDIX C3**  
**BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT**



MAY  
2022



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

DEVELOPMENT OF AN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND ASSOCIATED  
INFRASTRUCTURE, SOUTHWEST OF LUCKHOFF AND KOFFIEFONTEIN

FREE STATE PROVINCE



JN Venter Beleggings Trust proposes agricultural development and associated infrastructure on a site located Southwest of Luckhoff and Koffiefontein in the Free State Province. The development will take place on a project area of approximately 2690ha in extent across 10 interlinked properties within the Letsemeng Local Municipality of the Xhariep District Municipality.

The applicant proposes to cultivate crops (wheat, maize, soya and peanuts) and potential for agricultural development (crop cultivation) in the area is apparent as several commercial agricultural developments are already occupying the neighbouring properties. The soil and climate are suited to crops cultivation, and it is anticipated that the crops yield, and quality will be fit for export and domestic distribution.

An Environmental Authorisation (EA) from the Free State Department of Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DESTEA) in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations (GNR 326), 2014, as amended is required as part of this process.

#### AIM OF THIS BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT

This document aims to provide you, as an Interested and Affected Party (I&AP), with:

- » An overview of the proposed development which form part of the Free State development, and their associated grid connection solutions.
- » An overview of the Scoping and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes for the solar PV facilities, associated infrastructures, and specialist studies being undertaken to assess the proposed development
- » An overview of the Water Use Licence Application process.
- » Details of how you can become involved in the S&EIA processes, receive information, raise comments that may concern and/or interest you.

#### OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED PROJECTS

A developable area(2690ha) has been considered within this Scoping Report with the aim of determining the suitability from an environmental and social perspective and identifying areas that should be avoided in development planning. Within this identified development area, a development footprint or development layout will be defined for assessment in the EIA Phase. The proposed site size is larger than what will be used by the proposed development, and this gives optimal placement of infrastructure, ensuring avoidance of major identified environmental sensitivities or constraints identified through this Scoping and EIA process.

The potential for agricultural development (crop cultivation) is apparent as several commercial agricultural developments are already occupying the neighbouring properties. The soil and climate are suited to crops cultivation, and it is anticipated that the crops yield, and quality will be fit for export and domestic distribution.

#### COMPONENTS OF THE JN VENTER BELEGGINGS AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

The project area is proposed to accommodate agricultural development (cultivation), as well as most of the associated infrastructure, which is required for such development, and this will include:

1. Crop cultivation (including center pivot irrigation system);
2. Two Underground 315mm PVC fiberglass pipes with 1.4m diameter on 5.3Km pipeline route Irrigation pipeline network to take water from the dams to the various centre pivot areas for irrigation;
3. Two water storage dams with capacity of 2 million cubic meters each; A new pump stations;
4. A 9ha solar PV with alternatives and a 5MW overhead power line of 6.9km in length;
5. A Battery Energy Storage System covering surface area of 0.36ha.





## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In accordance with the EIA Regulations, 2017 (as amended) published in terms of Section 24(5) of the National Environmental Management Act (No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA), the applicant requires Environmental Authorisation (EA) from the Free State Department of Economic, Small Enterprise, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DESTEA). In terms of Section 24(5) of NEMA, the EIA Regulations 2017 (as amended) and Listing Notices (GNR 327, GNR 325, and GNR 324).

An EIA is an effective planning and decision-making tool. It allows for potential environmental consequences resulting from a proposed activity to be identified and appropriately managed during the construction, operation, and decommissioning phases of development. It also provides an opportunity for the project applicant to be forewarned of potential environmental issues and allows for the resolution of issue(s) identified and reported on as part of the EIA processes, as well as provides opportunity for dialogue with key stakeholders and Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs).

Savannah Environmental has been appointed as the independent environmental consultant responsible for managing the application for EA and undertaking the supporting EIA processes required to identify and assess potential environmental impacts associated with the projects detailed above, as well as propose appropriate mitigation and management measures to be contained within the Environmental Management Programmes (EMPrs).

## WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROPOSED PROJECTS?

The development area will be assessed by independent environmental specialists to identify the potential for environmental impacts. Specialist studies that are proposed as part of the EIA processes include the following:

- » Biodiversity Impact Assessment – includes ecology, fauna and flora and assesses the potential impact and the associated disturbance of vegetation on the biodiversity of the area (including critical biodiversity areas and broad-scale processes).
- » Heritage Impact Assessment (Archaeology and Palaeontology) – which includes archaeology and palaeontology and assesses the potential of disturbance to or destruction of heritage sites and fossils during the construction phase through excavation and ploughing activities.
- » Social Impact Assessment – which assesses the positive and negative social impacts associated with the construction and operation of the JN Venter Beleggings Trust Agricultural Development.

Site-specific studies will be undertaken to assess the potential impact of the proposed development, to delineate areas of sensitivity within the affected farm portions, assess impacts associated with the projects and make recommendations regarding avoidance, management, and mitigation of impacts. Studies will be informed by available information and detailed field investigations undertaken in accordance with the relevant guidelines and protocols. Once the constraining environmental factors have been determined, the layouts for the proposed development can be determined and presented in the EIA reporting.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The sharing of information forms the basis of the public participation process and offers I&APs the opportunity to become actively involved in the EIA processes. Comments and inputs from I&APs are encouraged to ensure that potential impacts are considered throughout the EIA processes. The public participation process aims to ensure that:

- » Information containing all relevant facts in respect of the application are made available to I&APs for review and inputs.
- » I&AP participation is facilitated in such a manner that they are provided with reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed projects.
- » Adequate review periods are provided for I&APs to comment on the findings of the Scoping and the EIA Reports.

In order to ensure effective participation, the public participation processes include the following:

- » Identifying I&APs, including affected and adjacent landowners and occupiers of land, and relevant Organs of State, and recording details within a database.
- » Notifying I&APs of the commencement of the EIA processes in the local printed media and distributing this Background Information Document (BID) to registered I&APs.
- » Providing access to registered parties to an online stakeholder engagement platform, which centralises project information and stakeholder input in a single digital / multi-media (WhatsApp) platform.
- » Providing an opportunity for I&APs to engage with the project team.
- » Placing site notices at the affected project development properties.
- » Placing an advertisement in a local newspaper and using a local radio station announcing the availability of the reports' review and comment period.
- » Notifying I&APs of the release of the Reports for review and comment, by which dates written comments must be received and inviting them to attend the public meetings to be held.
- » Virtual meetings with key stakeholders to be held.
- » Providing an opportunity to engage with the project team via appropriate virtual platform (MS Teams / Zoom, etc), multi-media (i.e., SMS / WhatsApp) (to reduce the risks associated with COVID-19) or telephone.



## YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS AN I&AP

In terms of the EIA Regulations, 2017, as amended,) and the DFFE Public Participation Guidelines, 2017, your attention is drawn to your responsibilities as an I&AP:

- » To participate in the EIA processes, you must register yourself on the I&AP database by completing the Registration and Comment Form included in the BID.
- » You are required to disclose any direct business, financial, personal, or other interest that you may have in the approval or refusal of the application.
- » You must ensure that any comments regarding the proposed projects are submitted within the stipulated timeframes.

## HOW TO BECOME INVOLVED

- » By responding by phone, fax, or e-mail to the invitation for your involvement.
- » By returning the reply form to the relevant contact person.
- » By engaging with the project team during the EIA processes.
- » By contacting the environmental consultant with technical queries or comments.
- » By reviewing and commenting on the reports within the stipulated review and comment periods.

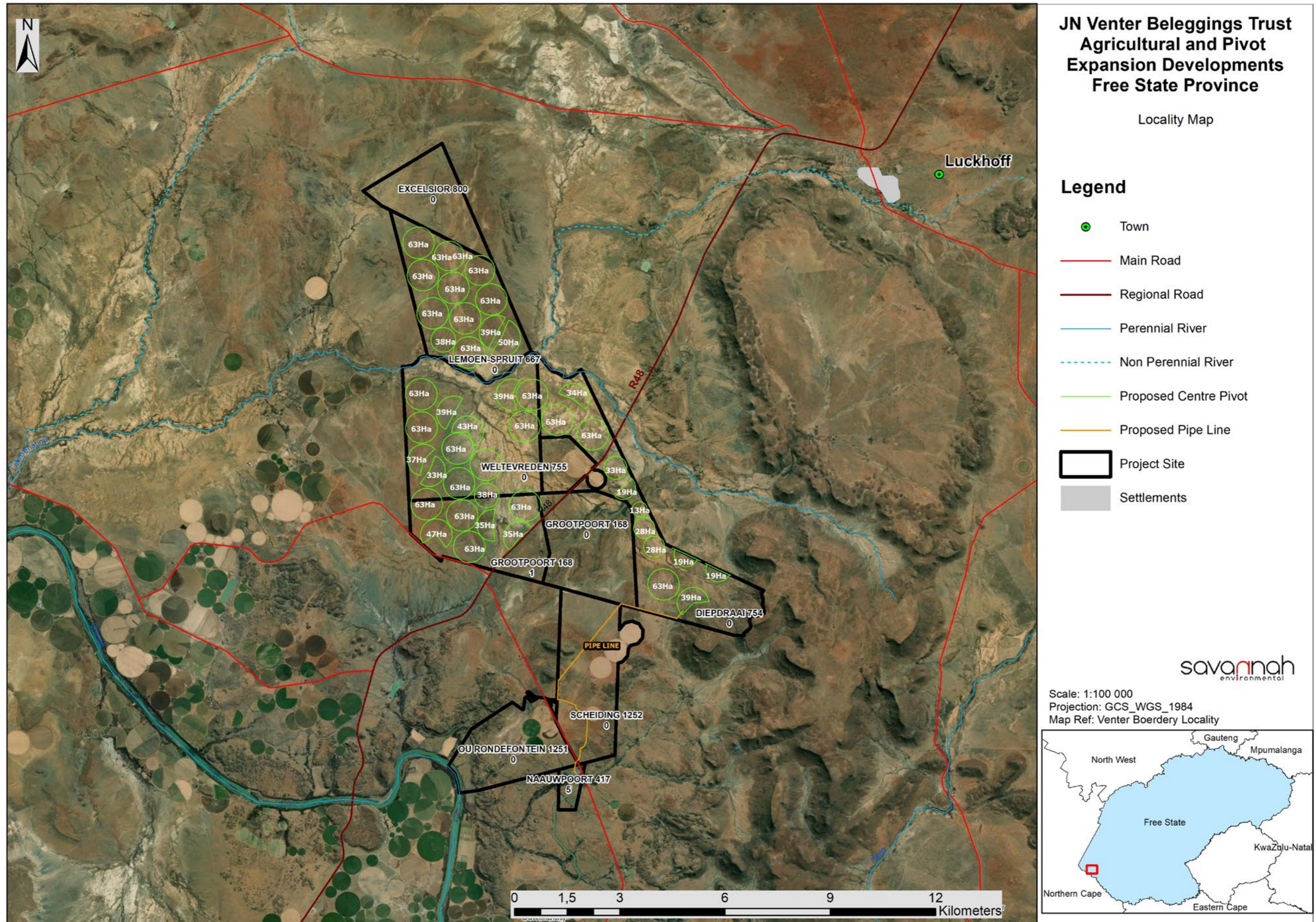
If you consider yourself and I&AP for the proposed projects, we urge you to make use of the opportunities created by the public participation process to provide comment, raise issues and concerns which affect and/or interest you, or request further information. Your input forms a key element of the EIA processes.

By completing and submitting the accompanying reply form, you automatically register yourself as an I&AP for the proposed projects, and are ensured that your comments, concerns, or queries raised regarding the projects will be noted. Please note that all comments received will be included in the project documentation, and this may include personal information.





Figure 1: Locality map







## COMMENTS AND QUERIES

Direct all comments, queries or responses to:

**Nondumiso Bulunga** at  
**Savannah Environmental (Pty) Ltd**

P.O. Box 148, Sunninghill, 2157

Tel: 011 656 3237

Mobile number: 060 978 8396 (including "please call me")

Fax: 086 684 0547

Email: [publicprocess@savannahsa.com](mailto:publicprocess@savannahsa.com)

To view project documentation, visit

[www.savannahsa.com/public-documents/energy-generation/](http://www.savannahsa.com/public-documents/energy-generation/)

