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“POWER LINE DEVELOPMENT AS PART OF THE WATERLOO SOLAR PARK NEAR VRYBURG, NORTH WEST PROVINCE” AND “THE PROPOSED EXPANSION OF THE WATERLOO SOLAR PARK NEAR VRYBURG, NORTH WEST PROVINCE”,

SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

STATEMENT LETTER

INTRODUCTION

Environamics was appointed by Bophirima Solar Energy (Pty) Ltd (hereafter Bophirima Solar) as the lead consultant to manage the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process for the establishment of the proposed 75 MW Waterloo Solar Energy Facility (SEF) and associated infrastructure, on a site located approximately 5 km to the southeast of the town of Vryburg in the North West Province of South Africa. Tony Barbour Environmental Consulting undertook the specialist Social Impact Assessment (SIA) as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process (Barbour and van der Merwe, 2012).

After the project received preferred bidder status with the Department of Energy it was realised that the portion was too small to evacuate the 64MW applied for and that the client was required to apply for an expansion which was subject to a Basic Assessment. On review of the Draft Basic Assessment Report (BAR) the relevant environmental authorities noted:

“Although the entire Farm Waterloo 992 was subjected to the specialist assessment, and a preferred route/layout was recommended by a specialist and subsequently authorised; the new preferred route has not been subjected to similar specialist input/assessment. As such, the final BAR must include impact statements from a number of relevant specialists on the preferred route layout (power line) and preferred expansion layout (PV expansion), including the Social Assessment specialist”.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Based on the authors experience and a review of the location and layout plans for the two new components of the project, the author is of the opinion that the proposed expansion and associated power line component will not have a material bearing on the key findings of the SIA undertaken for the original Waterloo SEF (Barbour and van der Merwe, 2012).

In this regard the findings of the SIA indicated that the development of the proposed Waterloo SEF will create employment and business opportunities for locals during both the construction and operational phase of the project. The establishment of a Community Trust will also benefit the local community. In addition, the proposed establishment of a number of renewable energy facilities in the NLM and NWP will create socio-economic opportunities, which, in turn, will result in a positive social benefit. The significance of this impact is rated as High Positive. The proposed development also represents an investment in clean, renewable energy infrastructure, which, given the challenges created by climate change, represents a positive social benefit for society as a whole.

The establishment of the proposed Waterloo SEF was therefore supported by the findings of the SIA. This finding remains valid for the proposed additional components namely:

- Power Line Development as part of the Waterloo Solar Park, and;
- Proposed Expansion of the Waterloo Solar Park.

No changes to the SIA Report (2012) are therefore required.

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