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19 May, 2016

African Clean Energy Developments (Pty) Ltd

Ref. GUNSTFONTEIN WEF VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT – RESPONSE TO SAHRA COMMENTS

Attention: James Cumming

Dear James

Brief background to Verlatenkloof Pass

The *Verlatenkloof* Pass is located about 30 km south of Sutherland in the Northern Cape. It winds down the Roggeveld Mountains via the Verlatenkloof. The pass is the 22nd highest altitude gaining pass in South Africa.

The pass was constructed by Thomas Bain (1830 – 1893), son of Andrew Geddes Bain who built Bainskloof near Wellington. AG Bain was a saddler and later a soldier in Graaff-Reinet in the Eastern Cape. He was a southern African explorer and a fossil hunter. He was also known as the 'father of South African geology' and supervised the building of eight mountain passes in the old Cape Colony of Queen Victoria's time. Thomas Bain took the reins from his father and went on to build 24 mountain passes, thereby opening up access between the Cape and the rest of Africa.

Thomas Bain spent 40 of his 63 years in service of various Cape infrastructure projects. He and his wife Johanna had 13 children during this time. He also became a noted botanist, archaeologist, Karoo water researcher, magistrate and artist, producing fine maps and tracing ancient San paintings he came across during his project work (<http://www.southafrica.net/>).

Until 1874 there was limited access to reach Sutherland and a pass was set and the work was started. The pass was completed a year later. A Scotsman by the name of William Hesketh was appointed to do the actual construction (<http://mountainpassessouthafrica.co.za/>). He undertook the work at his own expense, with an agreement that the government would reimburse him. Upon completion of the project the government could not pay him back and he was given the farm Klipbanksrivier instead. Halfway up the pass his name and the date (1975) are carved on a stone.

Heritage Impact Assessment

The Verlatenkloof pass is considered to be of medium high heritage significance due to the criteria below:

Criteria	Applicability
Is the site/ building associated with a historic person or group?	Yes, Thomas Bain
Is the site/ building associated with a historic, religious, economic, social, educational or political activity?	Economic Activity
Is the site/ building associated with a historic event?	Not a single event but shaped history of the Sutherland Matjiesfontein area.
Is the site/ building of archaeological significance?	Yes, older than a hundred years
Is the building (man-made structure) older than 60 years?	Yes it was constructed in 1874.

From a heritage point of view it must be noted that the Gunsfontein Wind Farm will have no direct physical impact on the Verlatenkloof pass as there is no physical loss of part or all of a heritage attribute. There are no changes to its setting, but there will be a change to the surroundings in which the pass is experienced. The anticipated impacts are primarily visual, and the anticipated impact relate to the sense of place.

As Cross (2001) notes "we probably have no single "sense of place;" instead, we bring to the places we live a whole set of cultural preconceptions that shape the way we respond to the place, and in some measure reshape the place to fit those preconceptions."

She further notes that this lack of a common definition or understanding of sense of place, results both from the fact that it has become a buzzword used to suit various purposes, and from the interdisciplinary nature of the concept. The sense of place is a term used liberally but often differently in humanistic, sociological, geographic, and educational discourse (e.g., Feld & Basso, 1996). Sense of place can have many different meanings—for example, aesthetic, ceremonial, economic, familial or historical to name a few. Sense of place can be summarised as a combination of characteristics that makes a place special and unique. Sense of place further involves the human experience in a landscape.

The presence of an large industrial facility such as a wind farm that consists of turbines that is a moving entity, albeit one that is hardly visible from the pass will have an impact on the sense of place and how travellers experience the landscape, but this impact is not centred on the pass.

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The overall impact on a heritage resource is a function of the importance of the attribute and the scale of change brought by the proposed development. Based on the photomontages provided by the visual specialist we are of the opinion that a reduction of the 3km buffer zone as proposed by SAHRA to 1.5km would not result in a higher impact on the heritage value of the pass, as the topography screens the turbines within the 3km buffer zone from the pass. Only a fleeting view of the wind farm will be experienced in the lower part of the pass where the closest turbine visible will be over 4.5km away and beyond 3km from the road.

To conclude the turbines within the 3km buffer zone will have a negligible visual impact on the pass from a heritage perspective.

We understand the developer is in discussions with SAHRA regarding the heritage impact of the wind farm in the context of the suggested 3km and relaxations of it. Although the windfarm will cause a change to the sense of place and cultural landscape we support a relaxation of the 3km buffer based on the following:

- Although it is a highly scenic area the wind farm is located in an area that is not subjected to major tourism enterprises.
- The cultural landscape and sense of place will be impacted on by various other wind farm facilities in the area and the receiving environment as well as the sense of place in the greater area has already been disturbed by these facilities, and in our opinion this reduces the impact of the Gunsfontein Wind Farm.
- Only a fleeting view of the wind farm will be experienced in the lower part of the pass where the closest turbine visible will be over 4.5k m away and beyond 3 km from the road.

We recommend however that this letter be read in conjunction with the analysis and response given by the visual specialist in minimising visual impacts.

Kindly contact me with any queries or concerns.

Sincerely

Jaco van der Walt

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