

Background Information Document (BID) for the proposed development of a Photovoltaic Power Plant

Important note: This development has already been authorised by the Department of Environmental Affairs in 2013 (EA No. 14/12/16/3/3/2/385 & NEAS Ref. DEA/NEAS/0001343/2012) and the Eastern Cape Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism in 2015 (EA No. EC 131/CHILN3/14/14-12 & NEAS Ref. ECP/E/A/0001165/2014). This application is to replace the original environmental authorisation that has lapsed.

The aim of this document

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

- An overview of the proposed development;
- An overview of the Environmental Impact

Assessment (EIA) process that will be followed to assess the potential environmental impacts of the proposed development;

- Information on how you can become involved in the EIA and public participation processes to receive information and raise environmental issues that concern and/or interest you.

The proposed project

AMDA Developments (Pty) Ltd proposes to develop a Photovoltaic (PV) Power Plant with an electricity generation capacity of 75 MW, as well as associated infrastructure such as roads and a power line. The development will cover an area of approximately 225 hectares on the farms Harmsfontein 335, Remainder of Brakke Kuilen 180 and Buffelspoort 336 near Middelburg in the

Eastern Cape. The site is situated at 31°32'03.54"S and 25°08'59.03"E, just south of the Rosmead Siding.

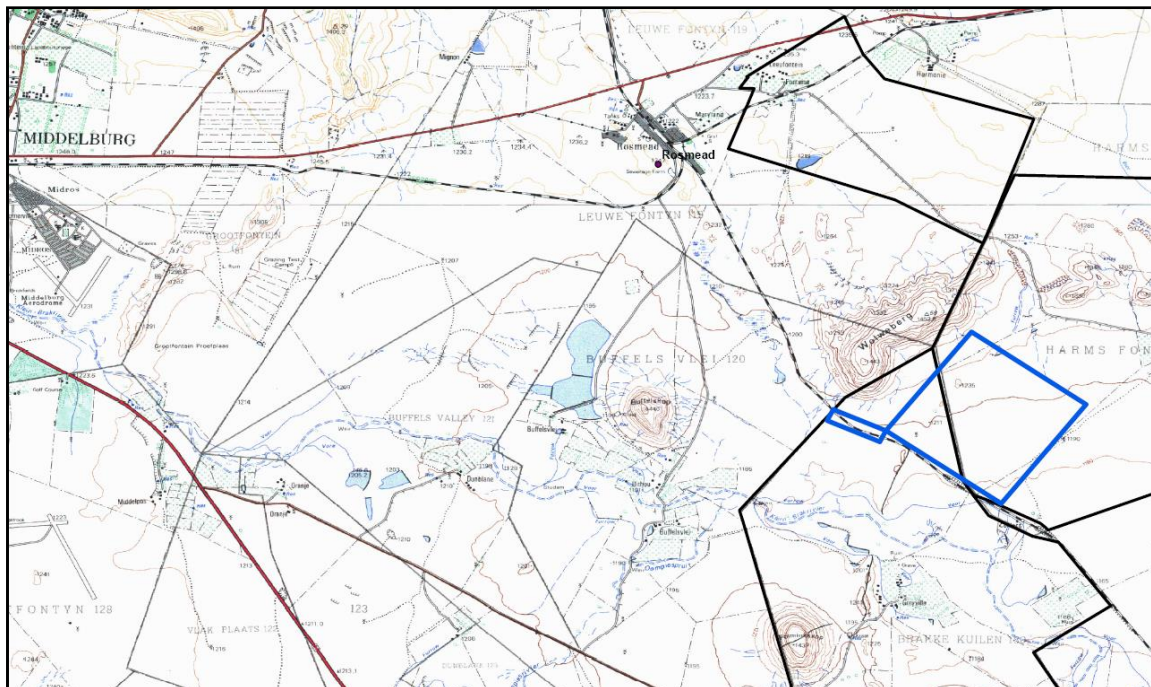
The purpose of the proposed solar energy facility is to add new capacity for generation of renewable energy to the national electricity mix, in line with government policy. The PV facility is designed to operate continuously with low maintenance for 20 years. The power will feed into the Eskom electricity grid via the existing Collett substation.

Photovoltaics involve the conversion of sunlight into direct current (DC) electricity through the use of thin layers of materials known as semi-conductors.

The proposed facility would comprise:

- Arrays of photovoltaic panels for the generation of electricity;
- Dedicated inverters to convert the electricity from DC to AC;
- Underground cabling between the photovoltaic panels and dedicated inverters;
- Overhead 132 kV power line connecting into the Eskom Collet substation;
- External access road along Rosmead-Cradock railway line;
- Internal access roads;
- Administrative/security buildings.

The aim of the design and lay-out of the facility will be to maximise electricity generation through exposure to solar radiation, while minimising infrastructure, operational and maintenance costs, as well as environmental & social impacts.



Environmental Impact Assessment Process

Due to the extent and nature of the project, the proponent is required to obtain an Environmental Authorisation (EA) prior to commencement of the development.

The Centre for Environmental Management (CEM) has been appointed to act as the independent Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) to conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and related processes and specialist studies in order to obtain the required environmental authorisation.

The process is being undertaken in terms of the National Environmental Management Act (No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA).

The EIA regulations promulgated in terms of NEMA prescribe the procedures that must be followed in the consideration, investigation, assessment, and reporting of activities that have been identified. These regulations aim to provide the competent authority with adequate information to make decisions that will ensure that activities which may have an unacceptable negative impact on the environment are not authorised, and activities that are authorised are undertaken in such a manner that the environmental impacts are managed to acceptable levels.

When an applicant proposes to undertake identified activities, applications for authorisation must be submitted to the competent authorities. All such applications must be supported by

reports that are compiled upon completion of the prescribed assessment procedures. After the competent authorities have made decisions on the applications, appeals may be lodged against the decisions, or parts of the decisions.

The aims of environmental assessments are to:

- establish the environmental sensitivity of the site;
- determine environmental impacts related to the project;
- identify alternatives to the current proposals;
- inform I&APs (e.g. neighbours & community groups) about the project and provide them the opportunity to identify environmental issues and alternatives;
- assess the proposals and the issues raised;
- identify opportunities to prevent and mitigate potential environmental impacts.

What process will be undertaken?

The EIA Regulations provide for two types of assessment processes i.e.:

- Basic Assessment;
- Scoping & Environmental Impact Assessment.

The proposed development includes the following listed activities:

- Activity 1, listed in GN R. 984 of 2014:

The development of facilities or infrastructure for the generation of electricity from a renewable resource where the electricity output is 20 megawatts or more, excluding where such development of facilities or infrastructure is for photovoltaic installations and occurs within an urban area.

- Activity 15, listed in GN R. 984 of 2014:

The clearance of an area of 20 hectares or more of indigenous vegetation, excluding where such clearance of indigenous vegetation is required for- (i) the undertaking of a linear activity; or (ii) maintenance purposes undertaken in accordance with a maintenance management plan.

- Activity 11, listed in GN.R. 983 of 2014:

The development 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 kilovolts

- Activity 12, listed in GN.R. 983 of 2014:

The development of (x) buildings exceeding 100 square metres in size; or (xii) infrastructure or structures with a physical footprint of 100 square metres or more; where such development occurs-(a) within a watercourse; (b) in front of a development setback; or (c) if no development setback exists, within 32 metres of a watercourse, measured from the edge of a watercourse; excluding (dd) where such development occurs within an urban area; or (ee) where such development occurs within existing roads or road reserves.

- Activity 19, listed in GN.R. 983 of 2014:

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 of more than 5 cubic metres from (i) a watercourse.

These listed activities may not commence without environmental authorisation after the investigation, assessment and communication of potential impacts have been undertaken that followed the **full EIA process**.

The full EIA process for this project involves the following steps:

- Engaging with the competent authority;
- Development of BID & newspaper advertisements & site notices;
- I&AP registration & circulation of BID to registered I&APs;
- Drafting of Scoping Report (SR);
- Circulation of draft SR to registered I&APs for review;
- Revision of SR, based on I&AP comments;
- Submission of final SR to authorities;
- Conducting of specialist studies;
- Drafting of Environmental Impact Report (EIR) & Environmental Management Programme (EMPr);
- Circulation of draft EIR & EMPr to registered I&APs for review;
- Revision of draft EIR & EMP, based on I&AP comments;
- Submission of final EIR & EMPr to competent authority for consideration & decision-making;
- Informing registered I&APs of the decision by competent authority (letter & newspaper ad).

What environmental issues have been already been identified?

- Agricultural productivity;
- Agricultural potential;
- Surface water impacts;
- Vegetation impacts;
- Soil impacts;
- Animal life impacts (including birds);
- Heritage impacts – archaeological & paleontological;
- Visual impacts;
- Security of farmers, farm workers, livestock & farm infrastructure;
- Other social impacts.

Why and how should you get involved?

One of the important parts of the environmental authorisation processes is public consultation and participation, which provides I&APs with the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the proposed development and to raise any environmental issues or concerns they may have. You are invited to register as an I&AP in the environmental assessment processes of the proposed project.

Please note that in order to be registered as an I&AP, you must request that your name be added to the registered I&AP list or provide written comments on the proposal or raise issues/concerns that you would like to be

addressed in the assessment (see attached form). Future correspondence will only be distributed to registered I&APs.

Details of the EAP:

Theunis Meyer

Telephone: 018 299 1467 Fax: 086 513 7996

E-mail: theunis.meyer@nwu.ac.za

Contact person for I&AP registration and correspondence:

Tshepiso Seobi

Centre for Environmental Management

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom, 2520

Telephone: 018 299 4299 Fax: 018 299 4266

E-mail: tshepiso.seobi@nwu.ac.za



Tracking PV solar panels near Kathu, Northern Cape

Proposed development of PV Power plant at Eskom Collet substation near Middelburg, Eastern Cape

Interested and Affected Party registration

Please e-mail form back to contact person (tshepiso.seobi@nwu.ac.za) or fax to 086 513 7996

Name and surname:		Language preference:	
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Physical Address:

Do you wish to receive future communication?

Yes

No

Communication preference?

Registered Letter

Fax

E-mail

Postal address:

Fax number:		E-mail address:	
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Please indicate:

- any environmental issues of concern regarding the proposed project?

- any suggestions for alternatives or to improve the proposed project?

- any direct business, financial, personal or other interest which you may have in the approval or refusal of the application?
