
Merensky-Uchoba 132kV Power Line Second Route Deviation

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

Notification of a Registration Process

to be taken in terms of

Gazette Notice Nr 2313, 27 July 2022:

Standard for the Development and Expansion of Power Lines and Substations within
identified Geographical Areas

April 2023



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Appendix - DFFE Screening Tool Report

1. BACKGROUND

Landscape Dynamics Environmental Consultants was appointed by **Eskom Holdings SOC Limited**, care of the **Eskom Limpopo Operating Unit** to apply for the Registration of the proposed **Merensky-Uchoba 132kV Power Line Second Route Deviation**.

Project name: Merensky-Uchoba 132kV Power Line Second Route Deviation

Applicant: Eskom Holdings SOC Limited, care of the Eskom Limpopo Operating Unit

The decision-making authority for this Registration process is the National Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE).

2. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this Background Information Document (BID) is to announce the project to identified stakeholders and Interested & Affected Parties (IAPs).

3. LOCALITY

The Merensky-Uchoba 132kV Deviation Power Line runs mostly along the R555 and is situated south of the Steelpoort River close to the town of Steelpoort within the Fetakgomo Tubatse Local Municipality, Limpopo Province.

4. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

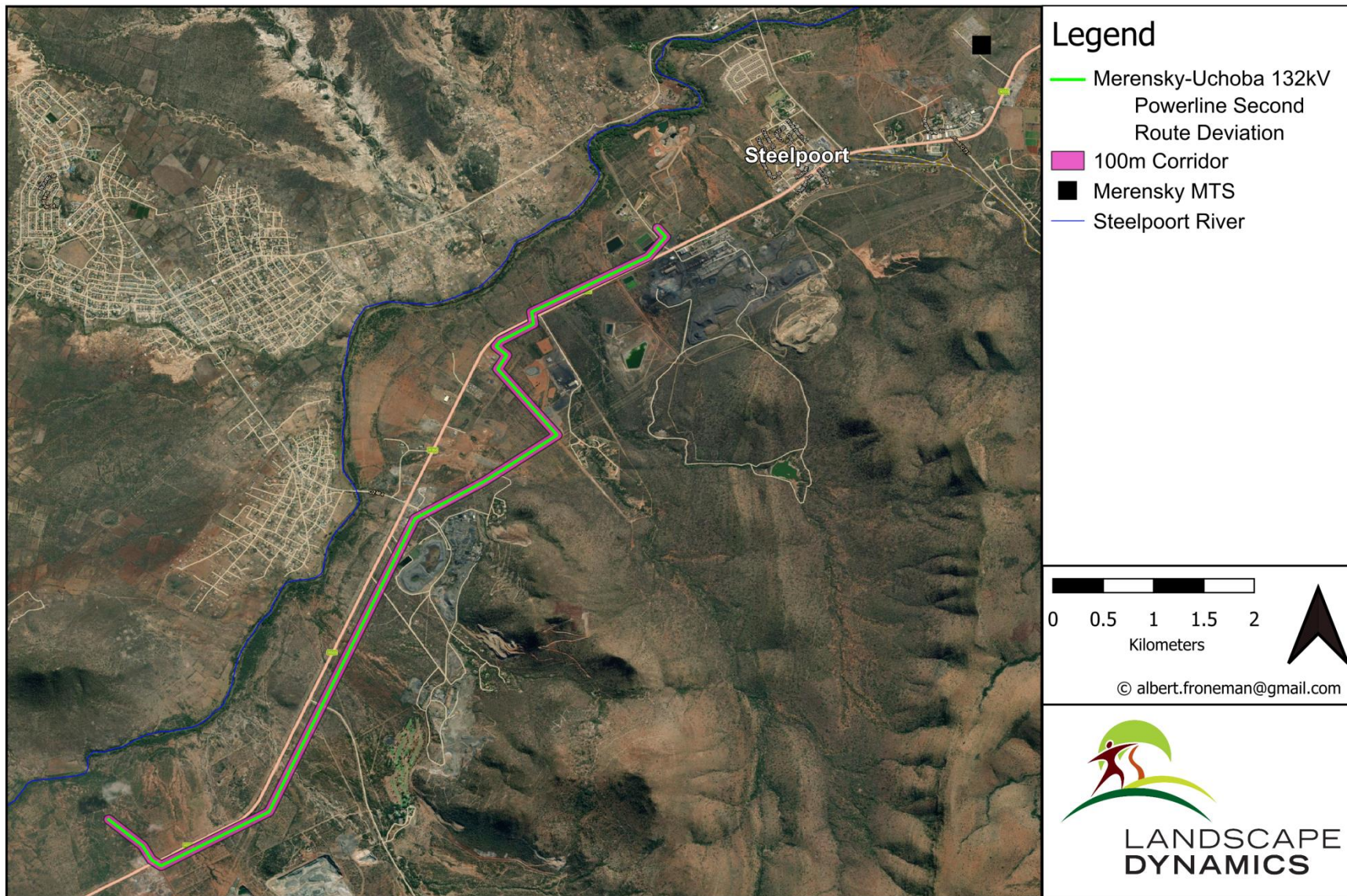
Environmental Authorisation was issued on 10 November 2020 for the Merensky-Uchoba 132kV Powerline Project. This project involved an approximately 18km powerline from the existing Merensky Substation to connect to the Merensky-Jane Furse-Uchoba Powerline T-Off. Eskom now requires deviation of a section of the authorised route to accommodate site-specific problems encountered. This deviation is now called the **Merensky-Uchoba 132kV Power Line Second Route Deviation**.

The project components are the following:

- An approximately 10,6km route is applicable
- A 100m corridor width was investigated and assessed. The servitude width required for the purpose of the powerline within this corridor will be 31m.
- The 132kv Overhead Power Line will have a capacity of 132kV and monopole steel pylons will be used.
- Existing access roads to the powerline will be used. A new approximately 6m wide access road will be developed for construction, maintenance and inspection purposes within the servitude area along the powerline, but outside the identified High and Very High Sensitive Areas.

It is requested that the *corridor* be registered in terms of the Standard and not the servitude only. This enables reasonable adjustments within the corridor during the final design phase of this project. *Note that only the required 31m wide servitude will eventually be registered within the route corridor and not the entire corridor.*

Merensky-Uchoba 132kV Powerline Second Deviation



Proposed route deviation with a 100m corridor which was investigated and assessed specialists

5. ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY REPORT

The Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) and specialists must identify a proposed route within a preliminary corridor. Initial servitude negotiations must be undertaken in conjunction to ensure that the route is not fatally flawed in terms of servitude access.

The EAP must compile an **Environmental Sensitivity Report (ESR)**, with specialist input, to document the process to identify the proposed route and the outcome of the initial servitude negotiations.

The **Environmental Sensitivity Report (ESR)** will be distributed during May 2023 for a 30-day commenting period (excluding public holidays).

6. LEGAL CONTEXT

The Registration process is being done according to the stipulations as contained in *Government Notice Nr 2313, 27 July 2022: Standard for the Development and Expansion of Power Lines and Substations within identified Geographical Areas*, promulgated on 27 July 2022.

Registration according to the above-mentioned document must be followed when the following is applicable to the proposed power line development:

- More than 50% of the power line must fall within a Strategic Transmission Corridor (STC) as identified in Government Gazette No 41445 of 16 February 2018 and Government Gazette No 44504 of 29 April 2021;
- The power line pylons must all be placed in areas that have been identified as being Low and Medium environmental sensitivity.

In the case of the **Merensky-Uchoba 132kV Power Line Second Route Deviation** the Standard is applicable because the following applies:

- The power line is $\pm 10,6$ km in length of which $\pm 5,5$ km falls within the International STC, which equates to more than the required 50%; and
- The specialists appointed for this project all confirmed that the power line pylons / power line will be placed within areas of Low and Medium environmental sensitivity (details in this regard will be made available in the Environmental Sensitivity Report).



7. PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The following information is provided in order to explain the Registration process that needs to be followed as well as the proposed time frame in which this will take place.

Merensky-Uchoba 132kV Power Line Second Route Deviation						
	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23
Kick-off meeting						
Compilation of IAP Register and Notification of project via newspaper and emails						
Site investigation (specialists)						
Submission of specialists' reports and Review						
Compilation of Environmental Sensitivity Report (ESR)						
Submission to Client for review and signature						
Received reviewed report back from client						
Distribution of ESR to IAPs, 30-day commenting period (excl public holidays)						
Compilation of Final ESR						
Submission of Final ESR to public for notification purposes						
Submission of Final ESR to DFFE for registration						
Issuing of Registration Number - DFFE has 30-days to approve or decline						
Notification to IAPs of their right to appeal (20-day appeal period applies)						
Construction may commence						

8. SCREENING TOOL REPORT AND SPECIALIST STUDIES

Environmental Sensitivities

The DFFE Screening Tool Report attached as an appendix to this report identified certain environmental sensitivities within the proposed powerline route and, based on these results specialist studies had been recommended. These identified sensitivities are indicative only and must be verified on site by a suitably qualified person (the EAP or a specialist) before the need of the recommended specialist assessments can be confirmed.

The following table is applicable to the Merensky-Deviation 132kV power line and route corridor:

Theme	Very High sensitivity	High sensitivity	Medium sensitivity	Low sensitivity
Agriculture Theme		X		
Animal Species Theme		X		
Aquatic Biodiversity Theme				X
Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Theme		X		
Civil Aviation Theme		X		
Defence Theme				X
Palaeontology Theme			X	
Plant Species Theme			X	
Terrestrial Biodiversity Theme	X			

Specialist assessments identified

Based on the selected classification and the environmental sensitivities of the proposed development footprint, a list of specialist assessments have been identified by the Screening Tool for inclusion in the assessment report. It is the responsibility of the EAP to confirm this list and to motivate the reason for not including any of the identified specialist studies where applicable including the provision of photographic evidence of the site situation.

The 12x Impact Assessments as mentioned below were identified in the Screening Tool Report. A motivation is provided, where applicable, next to each study as to why the recommendation is not required.

All specialist studies as undertaken were done according to the applicable Protocol as stipulated in the Screening Tool Report.

Based on past experience of the EAPs, as well as site verifications conducted, the following specialists were appointed to undertake applicable studies for this project:

- Ecologist (vegetation and aquatic studies)
- Avifauna specialist
- Archaeologist
- Palaeontologist

Impact Assessment	Motivation
Agricultural Impact Assessment	<p>An Agricultural Impact Assessment and input from an agricultural specialist is not required for this specific project due to the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Site Verification as undertaken by the EAP revealed that the agricultural activities within this area is minimal (some old abandoned agricultural fields are present in a small section of the proposed route corridor). Small scale (subsistence) farming activities within the route corridor is mostly related to grazing by cattle and goats and can continue undisturbed within the power line servitude. The land is pre-dominantly used for mining purposes.• There are no irrigation activities within the proposed corridor or within the macro area – normally power lines are rerouted to circuit any irrigated fields (spill irrigation) which is not applicable to this project.• A change of land use is not going to take place. No loss of agricultural land will occur, because agricultural activities can continue underneath the powerlines.• The major part of the directly affected properties belong to mining companies• Authorisation for the 18km Merensky-Uchoba 132kV power line was obtained in 2020 and the Department of Agriculture was provided with the opportunity to comment. No objection from this Department was received. The deviation route (this project) is in close vicinity to the 18km authorised route within the same and even more degraded environment. The Department of Agriculture will also receive a copy of the Draft ESR for comment.

Landscape / Visual Impact Assessment	<p>A Visual Impact Assessment and input from a visual specialist is not required for this specific project due to the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Deviation Route as proposed is in the vicinity of the already authorised Merensky-Uchoba 132kV Power Line project (authorised in 2020) and the visual aspects of the line was satisfactorily address at that time (no specific mitigation was proposed); • The area is in general highly disturbed with roads, various other industrial activities and mines and associated infrastructure; • The deviation will take place for most part of the route parallel to an existing Eskom corridor and the R555. The addition of monopole steel structures associated with this deviation project is insignificant compared to the much large transmission pylon structures. • The EAP concludes with confidence that minimal/no significant additional visual impact will occur as a result of the deviation project.
Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment	<p>An <i>Archaeological Impact Assessment</i> was undertaken, the results which will be discussed in the Environmental Sensitivity Report which will be distributed for public comment.</p>
Palaeontology Impact Assessment	<p>A <i>Palaeontological Impact Assessment</i> was undertaken, the results which will be discussed in the Environmental Sensitivity Report which will be distributed for public comment.</p>
Terrestrial Biodiversity Impact Assessment	<p>A <i>Terrestrial Ecological Assessment</i> was undertaken, the results which will be discussed in the Environmental Sensitivity Report which will be distributed for public comment.</p>
Aquatic Biodiversity Impact Assessment	<p>An <i>Aquatic Impact Assessment</i> was undertaken, the results which will be discussed in the Environmental Sensitivity Report which will be distributed for public comment.</p>
Avian Impact Assessment	<p>An <i>Avian Assessment</i> was undertaken, the results which will be discussed in the Environmental Sensitivity Report which will be distributed for public comment.</p>
Civil Aviation Assessment	<p>The SA Civil Aviation Authority was notified of this project and will be provided with an opportunity to comment during the distribution of the Environmental Sensitivity Report. Further actions will be based on their instructions.</p>

RFI Assessment	<p>RFI falls within the mandate of the Department of Higher Education, Science and Technology in terms of the Astronomy Geographic Advantage Act.</p> <p>Based on previous experience with numerous Eskom power line projects over the last 24 years, the EAPs are confident that a RFI Assessment will not impact on the viability of this power line project and such an assessment is therefore not required.</p>
Geotechnical Assessment	<p>The applicant has site-specific geotechnical investigations which they undertake during the design phase of the project (after the Registration of the power line). Furthermore, the final design of the foundations are done by engineers strictly according to generally acceptable as well as Eskom-specific engineering standards and norms, taking the site-specific geotechnical constraints and recommendations into account.</p> <p>The EAP can therefore with confidence state that a geotechnical study during the registration stages of the project will not impact on the viability of the project and is therefore not required as part of the studies for Environmental Authorisation.</p>
Plant Species Assessment	<p>This component is addressed under the Terrestrial Ecological Assessment as mentioned above.</p>
Animal Species Assessment	<p>This component is addressed under the Terrestrial Ecological Assessment as mentioned above.</p>

9. CONTACT DETAILS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

You can contact Landscape Dynamics Environmental Consultants as follows should you require discussion and/or want to register as a stakeholder and/or supply comment by using the form on the following page:

Contact persons: Annelize Erasmus and Susanna Nel
info@landscapedynamics.co.za
 Tel 082 566 4530 / 082 888 4060

Registration Form

Interested and Affected Parties

Should you wish to be registered as an Interested & Affected Party, please email the information below to info@landscapedynamics.co.za

Name	
Telephone Number(s)	
Email	
How can we reach you if you do not have an email address (fax / postal address)?	
Interest in the project and/or comment	