

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)  
FOR THE PROPOSED ESKOM WISANI BRIDGE PROJECT

**PROPOSED BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT**

APRIL 2013

**BACKGROUND**

Eskom Distribution Mpumalanga Operating Unit, Land Development (Eskom) plans to construct a pedestrian bridge for the Thulamahashe community (near the Wisani Primary School) to provide safe passage over the tributary of the Mutlumuvi/Sand river in the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality in the Mpumalanga Province. Eskom appointed **Texture Environmental Consultants** as the independent environmental assessment practitioner (EAP) to undertake the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposed project. The EIA will conform to the National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998 and to the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations published in GN R543/2010 - R546/2010 of 18 June in terms of Section 24(5) of the Act.

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT (BID)?**

This Background Information Document (BID) provides Interested and Affected parties (I&APs) with background information about the proposed project and the BA process to be undertaken in order to enable them to:

- Determine if they are interested in and/or affected by the proposed project;
- Better understand the project in order to enable them to provide comment; and
- Understand the environmental authorisation process so that they are able to participate effectively.

You are therefore invited to register as an I&AP using the attached Comments and Registration form if you deem yourself an I&AP and wish to partake in the process.

**WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF THIS PROJECT?**

The proposed project entails the construction of a pedestrian bridge for the Thulamahashe community near the Wisani Primary School to provide safe passage over the tributary of the Mutlumuvi/Sand river in the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality.

A Basic Assessment (BA) process for this proposed pedestrian bridge is currently being undertaken by Texture Environmental Consultants.

To date, two **locations??** have been identified for further investigation. The proposed layout and best **location for the bridge** will be determined through environmental and specialist studies as well as public opinion.

The full scope of work includes:

- The construction of a new pedestrian bridge over the tributary of the mutlumuvi/sand river in Thulamahashe.

**WHERE IS THE PROJECT LOCATED?**

Two alternative **locations** will be considered for the pedestrian bridge.

**The proposed location alternative 1 for the bridge is**

**The proposed location alternative 2 forthe bridge is**

Both locations are in the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality in the Mpumalanga Province.

The preliminary **location alternatives** for the proposed pedestrian bridge are set out in the Location Map below.

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### WHY AN EIA?

The EIA is a process created by legislation which is used to ensure that the potential negative impacts that may occur due to the proposed development are avoided or mitigated. A Basic Assessment (BA) is applied to activities that are considered less likely to have significant environmental impacts and, therefore, unlikely to require a full-blown and detailed Scoping and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

Three listing notices have been published in conjunction with the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (published in GN R543/2010 of 18 June in terms of section 24(5) of the National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998 (the Act)). The three listing notices (GN R544/2010 - GN R546/2010) set out the activities which require environmental authorisation before they can proceed.

Listing notice one (GN R544/2010) stipulates the activities requiring a BA. These are typically activities that have the potential to impact negatively on the environment but due to the nature and scale of such activities, these impacts are generally known.

Listing notice three (GN R546/2010) contains activities that will only require an environmental authorisation through a BA process if the activity is undertaken in one of the specified geographical areas indicated in that listing notice.

A Basic Assessment (BA) is a more concise analysis of the environmental impacts of the proposed activity than a Scoping and EIA. However, a BA still requires public notice and participation, consideration of the potential environmental impacts of the activity, assessment of possible mitigation measures, and an assessment of whether there are any significant issues or impacts that might require further investigation.

The Basic Assessment Report (BAR) must provide the National Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) with sufficient information to consider the Application for Environmental Authorisation (BA Process) and to reach a decision. If DEA is however unable to decide the Application based on the BAR alone, the DEA may request an Applicant to subject the Application to the more thorough Scoping and EIA process.

The listed activities for the proposed Wisani Bridge project are the following:

Listed Activity	Activity/Project Description
<p><u>GN R544/2010 Item 11</u> The construction of: (iii) bridges where such construction occurs within a watercourse or within 32 metres of a watercourse, measured from the edge of a watercourse.</p>	Construction of a pedestrian bridge
<p><u>GN R544/2010 Item 13</u> The construction of facilities or infrastructure for the storage, or for the storage and handling, of a dangerous goods, where such storage occurs in containers with a combined capacity of 80 but not exceeding 500 cubic metres.</p>	Dangerous goods to be stored at construction site – to be confirmed
<p><u>GN R544/2010 Item 18</u> The infilling or depositing of any material of more than 5 cubic metres into, or the dredging, excavation, removal</p>	Construction of a pedestrian bridge that will cross a watercourse

or moving of soil, sand, shells, shell grit, pebbles or rock from (i) a watercourse.	
<u>GN R544/2010 Item 22</u> The construction of a road, outside urban areas, (i) with a reserve wider than 13, 5 metres or, (ii) where no reserve exists where the road is wider than 8 metres. (activity to be confirmed)	Construction of road to reach bridge – to be confirmed
<u>GN R546/2010 Item 12</u> The clearance of an area of 300 square metres or more of vegetation where 75% or more of the vegetative cover constitutes indigenous vegetation (activity to be confirmed)	Indigenous vegetation might need to be removed.

## WHAT DOES THE BA PROCESS ENTAIL?

The BA can be divided into the following phases:

### Application and initial notification

During this phase application for environmental authorisation for the commencement of the activity is made to DEA. Once DEA acknowledges receipt of the BA application (within 14 days), an initial notification process takes place whereby the public is informed of the proposed development through inter alia, newspaper adverts, notification letters and on site advertisements.

### Public Participation Process (PPP) Phase

The purpose of this phase is:

- To identify interested and affected parties (I&APs) and relevant authorities
- The opening and maintaining of a register of all I&APs and key stakeholders on the database (on-going)
- To identify potential environmental impacts through investigation and PPP; and
- To describe and investigate the alternatives that may be considered.

### BA phase

This phase inter alia includes:

- Advertising the BA process and availability of the BID (local press)
- Consultation with and dissemination of information to I&APs through the BID, one-on-one consultation, public open days/focus group meetings/key stakeholder workshops
- Inviting I&AP comment and input on the draft BAR (40-day comment period)
- Recording all comments, issues and concerns raised by I&APs in an Comments and Response Report for inclusion in the final BAR.

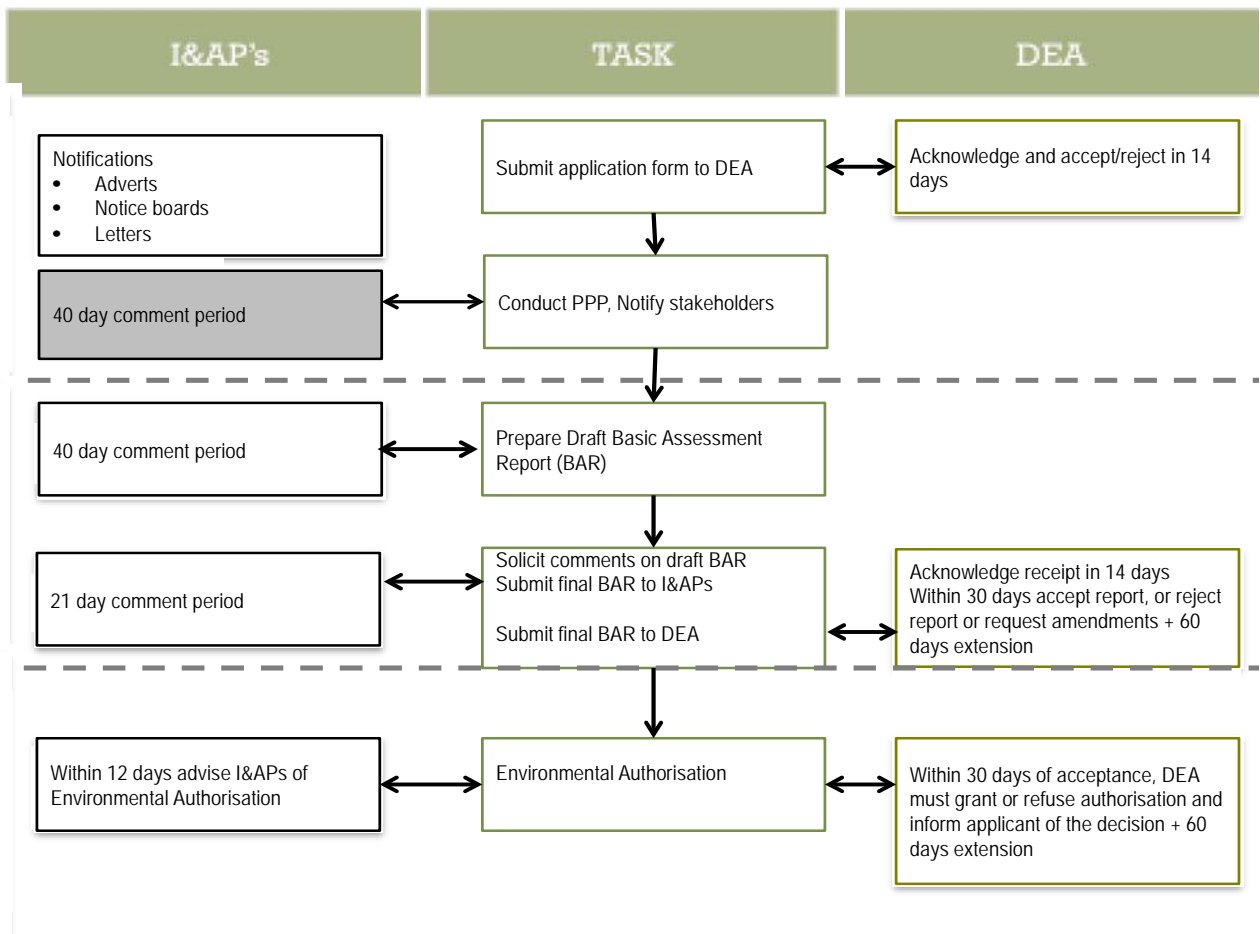
Where necessary, mitigation measures are recommended to reduce the significance of potential impacts. Once the Final BAR has been submitted to DEA, DEA will consider the Application.

## ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORISATION

An Environmental Authorisation (EA) (in terms of section 36 - 37 of the Act) will be issued to Eskom once DEA has made a decision regarding the proposed development. This decision is based on inter alia, information received in the PPP phase.

The BA process is represented diagrammatically in Schedule 1 below:

Schedule 1: BA PROCESS



**WHAT IS THE PROGRAMME FOR THE BA?**

The following preliminary programme is envisaged for the BA:

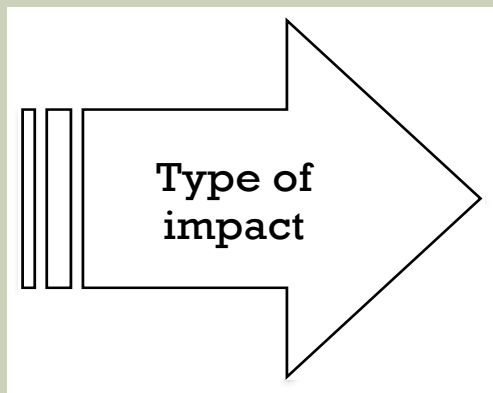
Application Phase	PPP Phase	DEA review & decision-making	Environmental Authorisation
April 2013	April to July 2013??	August 2013 to January 2014??	January 2014??

## WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROJECT?

A pedestrian bridge may create a number of environmental impacts. A number of potential environmental issues have already been identified and are listed here to assist I&APs to better understand the investigations to be undertaken as part of the environmental assessment process. The preliminary list of potential environmental impacts includes:

### What are the potential impacts associated with the development?

Distribution lines may create a number of environmental impacts.  
Potential environmental issues:



- ◆ **BIOPHYSICAL**
  - ◆ Fauna and Flora
  - ◆ Avifauna (Birds)
  - ◆ Land capability and agricultural areas
  - ◆ Visual
  - ◆ Waste / Pollution
  - ◆ Surface Water
- ◆ **SOCIO-ECONOMIC**
  - ◆ Impacts on existing infrastructure
- ◆ **SOCIO-CULTURAL**
  - ◆ Archaeological and palaeontological sites

### R ASB KAN JY REGMAAK IN TABEL?

All significant issues identified will be collated into a Comments and Responses Report and will be included in the Draft and Final BAR.

## SPECIALISTS

The BA project team will identify potential issues and assess these impacts in terms of their significance in accordance with the guidelines for BA published by DEA. Specialist studies will be conducted to assess the significance of all impacts identified.

The specialist project team is represented diagrammatically in Schedule 2 below:

R ASB KAN JY REGMAAK IN TABEL?

## Specialists/Subject matter experts

The EIA project team will assess these impacts in terms of their significance. Specialist studies will be conducted to **assess the significance** of all impacts identified.

The diagram consists of four white rectangular boxes arranged in a cross pattern on a light green background. The top box is labeled 'Ecological (Fauna and Flora) Impact Assessment'. The bottom box is labeled 'Heritage & Palaeontological Impact Assessment'. The left box is labeled 'GIS'. The right box is labeled 'Bird Impact Assessment'.

## AUTHORISING AUTHORITY

As Eskom is a State Owned Company, authorisation has to be granted by the National DEA in consultation with the provincial environmental authorities.

An environmental authorisation will be issued by DEA based on the information provided in the Final BAR.

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION?

Public participation (PP) is a joint effort between stakeholders, the Applicant, technical specialists and decision-makers who work together to produce better decisions than they would have done had they acted independently. The public participation process (PPP) aims to inform a wide range of I&APs about the proposed project and the environmental impact assessment process. It is a tool to allow the public to exchange information and to express their views and concerns about the proposed development.

All contributions from I&APs will be fully documented, evaluated and responded to in the BA.

The public participation process (PPP) provides opportunities for I&APs to be involved right from the outset of the BA.

The PPP includes the following steps to ensure effective public participation:

Step 1: Register I&APs and key stakeholders on a database (on-going)

Step 2: Advertise the BA process and availability of the BID (local and regional press)

Step 3: Consultation with and dissemination of information to I&APs through the BID, one-on-one consultation, public meetings/public open days/focus group meetings/key stakeholder workshops during the BA phase

Step 4: Invite I&AP comment and input on the draft BAR (40-day comment period)

Step 5: Record all comments, issues and concerns raised by I&APs in an Issues and Response Report for inclusion in the final BAR.

## GETTING INVOLVED

You can get involved in the BA by:

- Registering as an I&AP using the attached Comments and Registration Form and returning it to the public participation consultant by post, fax or email using the details provided below;
- Examining the information provided in this BID or completing the attached Comments and Registration Form and returning it to the public participation consultant by post, fax or email using the details provided below;
- Attending the meetings that will be held during the BA so that you can obtain further information, interact with the project team members and raise issues and concerns. Should you register as an I&AP you will be invited to attend these meetings. Details of the meetings will also be advertised in local and regional newspapers;
- Contacting the public participation consultant by post, fax or email should you have a query, wish to make a comment or require further information; and
- Reviewing and commenting on the draft BAR within the 40-day review periods provided. If you register as an I&AP you will automatically receive any further information that is distributed as part of this BA and be invited to public meetings. Should you wish to comment on the draft reports that will be made available for public review it is important that you take note of the 40-day review period and the deadlines for submission of comments. Comments can be submitted in writing via post, fax or email, using either the Comment Form provided or your own format, to Ria Pretorius: [Texture Environmental Consultants](#) using the contact details below.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OFFICE CONTACT DETAILS :

Ria Pretorius

[Texture Environmental Consultants](#)

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