

# **BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT & INVITATION TO COMMENT**

## **PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF A SEWAGE TREATMENT PACKAGE PLANT AT HEALDTOWN COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL, FORT BEAUFORT, EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA**

### **BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT:**

BKS (Pty) Limited is proposing the establishment and operation of a sewage treatment package plant at Healdtown College, Fort Beaufort. Please refer to Figure 1 for a locality plan. Such construction will aid the management of sewage and help eliminate the health and pollution hazards posed by raw sewage entering the nearby river.

Coastal & Environmental Services (CES) has been appointed by BKS (Pty) Ltd to undertake a Basic Assessment (BA) for the proposed project, and to apply for approval from the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA), for its construction and operation, as required by South Africa's environmental and waste legislation. Details of the relevant laws, and an overview of the environmental impact assessment process, are provided on the next page. As part of this project, a water use registration will also be applied for from Department of Water Affairs.

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

The school previously dealt with sewage by employing a system of septic tanks; and more recently a series of sewage treatment ponds situated on the property. Due to vandalism, neglect and old age, it is now necessary to construct an entirely new system at the school to manage sewage and to eliminate the environmental risks posed by raw sewage entering the river. A new gravity reticulation system is proposed with sewage flowing to a convenient point for treatment in a package plant. This eliminates the need for evaporation ponds, which are unsuitable due to their close proximity to residential houses.

### **BENEFITS:**

According to the project proponent, this project will be beneficial for the following reasons:-

#### **Environmental Health and Safety**

The proposed construction of the sewage treatment package plant will ensure sewage and other liquid waste originating from the school is dealt with in a responsible and environmental safe manner. The treated effluent will either be discharged into the nearby river, used to irrigate playing fields or pumped into evaporation ponds. These alternatives will be assessed in the environmental process.

#### **Social**

This sewage treatment package plant is part of a larger project to refurbish the school which will serve the rural community and adult education.

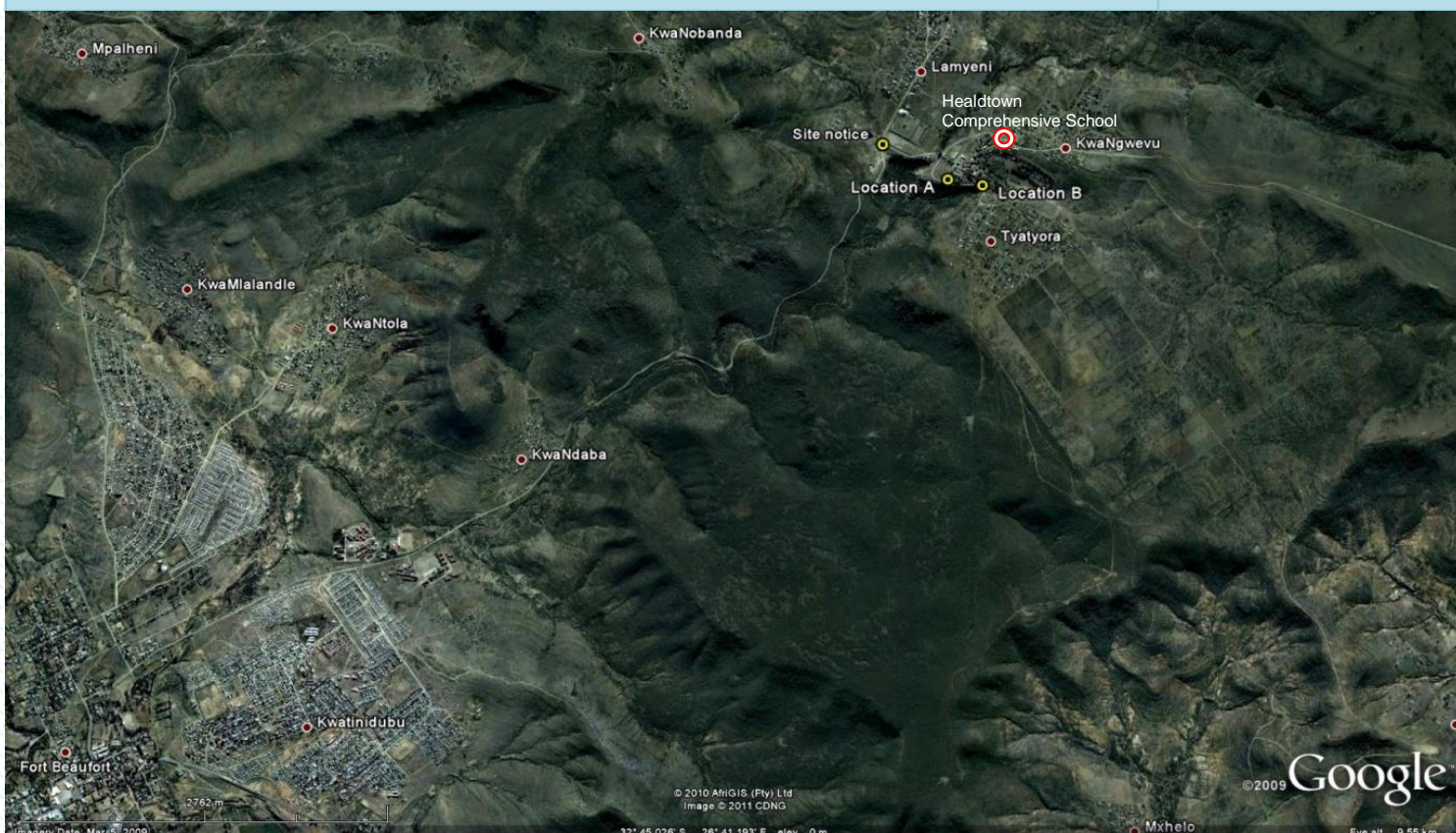
### **AIM OF THIS DOCUMENT**

The aim of this Background Information Document (BID) is to provide people affected by and interested in the proposed project with information about this project, the process being followed and to provide them with an opportunity to be involved in the Basic Environmental Impact Assessment process.



### **Return address for comments:**

Ms Lara Crous  
P.O. Box 934  
Grahamstown, 6140  
Tel: 046 622 2364  
Fax: 046 622 6564  
Email:  
l.crous@cesnet.co.za



**Figure 1: Location of the STPP at Healdtown Comprehensive School, Fort Beaufort. Alternative locations (A&B) are also shown**

## **RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

Under section 19(1) of the National Environmental Management: Waste Act (Act No 59 of 2008) a List of Waste Management activities which have, or are likely to have a detrimental effect on the environment were published in GN 718 dated 3 July 2009.

These listed Waste Management Activities fall into two categories – A and B – in terms of Items 3 and 4 respectively of GN 718, as follows -  
*A person who wishes to commence, undertake or conduct an activity listed under this Category, must conduct –*

- a basic assessment process, (Item 3 – Category A;) or
- an environmental impact assessment process (Item 4 – Category B)

*as stipulated in the environmental impact assessment regulations made under section 24(5) of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) as part of a waste management licence application.*

For the proposed establishment and operation of the sewage treatment package plant, the relevant Listed Activity is found in Sub-items (11) and (18) of Item 3 of GN 718, as follows –

**Treatment of waste** (11) *The treatment of effluent, wastewater or sewage with an annual throughput capacity of more than 2000 cubic metres but less than 15 000 cubic metres.*

**Construction of facilities and associated structures and infrastructure** (18) *The construction of facilities or activities listed in Category A of this Schedule (not in isolation to associated activity),*

*-where “construction” means the building, erection, establishment, alteration or expansion of a facility, structure or infrastructure that is necessary for the undertaking of a listed activity (CES emphasis).*

In addition, according to the National Water Act, 1998 (Act No. 36 of 1998), a **water use registration** will need to be completed by the Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) for Healdtown Comprehensive School.

Accordingly, in terms of the NEM: Waste Act, the proposed sewage treatment package plant requires a **Basic Assessment** as defined in the NEMA regulations. Consequently all proposed activities must be included in the basic assessment. In addition to a record of decision from the environmental authority responsible for authorising the project, commencement of the package plant will also require a waste management licence contemplated in s20(b) of the NEM: Waste Act.

According to s43(2) of the NEM: Waste Act, the national Department of Environmental Affairs will be responsible for the environmental authorisation and for the waste management licence.

**Environmental Authorisation phase:** The final basic assessment report is submitted to the DEA who, after considering the report, will issue an Environmental Authorisation either allowing the project to continue under certain conditions, or requiring additional work to be undertaken.

## **SPECIALIST STUDIES**

**Ecological Impact Assessment:** The site is already disturbed due to the development of the Healdtown Comprehensive School and surrounding residential developments. Therefore, our botanical specialist will accompany the aquatic specialist to site and undertake an assessment which will be incorporated into the basic assessment report. Appropriate measures to mitigate negative impacts, if any, will be proposed and incorporated into the report.

**Aquatic Impact Assessment:** An aquatic study will be undertaken as part of the basic assessment process. The study will interrogate the various wastewater disposal options as part of the impact assessment and determine which is the most suitable option from an aquatic perspective. The assessment will consider potential water and soil contamination due to treatment work failure and mismanagement and provide recommendations regarding ongoing treatment works performance monitoring.

## **POTENTIAL ISSUES FOR INVESTIGATION**

### **Ecological Issues**

- Loss of indigenous vegetation and habitat for fauna
- Impact on indigenous fauna
- Impact of drainage patterns and water resources
- Loss of topsoil and soil erosion
- Cumulative impacts of the development on the natural resources

The ecological specialist will identify any sensitive areas which can then be avoided and/or mitigated by the development. The location of any species of special concern will be identified, and the location noted in order to inform the mitigation and management measures.

### **Socio-economic Issues**

- Visual and aesthetic impacts
- Loss of ‘Sense of Place’
- Pollution (air, noise and water)
- Development within the context of existing plans

### **Aquatic Issues**

- Pollution of aquatic environment (plants and fauna)
- Sedimentation of watercourses
- Impact on downstream users
- Cumulative impacts from ongoing leaks

## Approach to this Basic Assessment

The process required for the proposed project is a Basic Environmental Assessment. This process serves primarily to inform the public and relevant authorities about the proposed project and to determine any impacts. Should all impacts and issues be adequately addressed in the report, it will serve as the final document. However, if not, the

**WE ARE  
HERE**

**Review of previous studies**



**Background Information Document and notification of the proposed project to all identified IAPs**



**Preparation of Basic Environmental Assessment**



**Release of the Draft Report to IAPs for comment**



**Record of decision or terms of reference for EIA**

## How can you be involved?

A Public Participation Process (PPP) is being conducted as part of the Basic Assessment. The aim of the PPP is to allow everyone who is interested in, or likely to be affected by, the proposed development to provide input into the process.

*The Public Participation Process will include:*

- Site notice erected at the proposed site of development.
- Letters of notification to competent authority, local municipality and adjacent landowners.
- Advertisement in the *Daily Dispatch*.
- Circulation of the BID (this document) to all I&APs identified during the initial consultation process.