

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT AND INVITATION TO REGISTER

**A component of the Basic Environmental Impact Assessment for the Proposed Development
of a Cemetery on the Muslim Cemetery, on Falkirk Street, Newcastle Municipality
DC25/0011/2012: KZN/EIA/0000732/2012
JUNE 2012**

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1. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to provide background information on the proposed development and extension of the Private Muslim Cemetery, Newcastle Municipality and the Basic Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process being undertaken. Furthermore this document serves to enable interested and/or affected parties (I&AP) an opportunity to register as stakeholders in the public participation process and provide comment on the proposed development.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Udidi Environmental, Planning and Development Consultants have been appointed by the Newcastle Municipality to manage the environmental authorization process for the extension and development of the Muslim Cemetery. The existing cemetery serving the Muslim community in Newcastle is nearing capacity and there is an urgent need for additional burial space in this area. In terms of the EIA Regulations published in Government Notices No. 386 and No.387, of 2006 in terms of Section 24 (5) of the National Environmental Management Act (Act no 107 of 1998), this project requires authorization from the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs (DAEA). In order to obtain authorization for all aspects of this project, environmental studies are required to be undertaken in accordance with the EIA Regulations, public involvement being the crucial component of it.

3. PROJECT SITE DESCRIPTION

Location and Land Use

This proposed site is situated on Municipal owned land adjacent to the existing Muslim Cemetery on Firlkirk Street Erf Re/1A Newcastle Municipality. This site is approximately 1136 hectares and is currently being used as an illegal dumping site as it is surrounded by light industrial activities.

The central Co-ordinates for this site are:

South: 27°45'25.14"S

East: 29°56'57.05"E



Figure 1: Location of Proposed Development

Vegetation

Since the proposed site is currently being used as an illegal dumping site, this then inhibits the growth of vegetation; therefore the land is covered with bare soil coupled with a few scatterings of shrubs, wattle, weeds and some trees.

Topography and Geology

Generally flat to shallow terrain associated with very little runoff dominates this study area. Therefore it is classified as lowlands, with moderate relief which is underlain by sandstone bedrock.

Drainage and Hydrology

The Low Drakensburg escarpment, that forms the north-western and northern boundaries of Newcastle, has in some parts been stripped by erosion. The upper part of the escarpment is underlain by dolerite dykes and sills, which are remnants of the feeder pipes through which the magma that formed basalts layers were flowed. Below the dolerite flows are successive layers of sedimentary rocks of the Stromberg, Beaufort and Ecca groups. The rock units have been discussed below.

Climate

Newcastle lies in the summer rainfall of the country. The average rainfall approximately ranges between 410mm to 500mm per annum. Temperature can range from lows of 9C in winter to highs of 30C in summer. Rain is unpredictable and unreliable and is mostly influenced by moist air moving in from the Indian Ocean in the east and south east.

4. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

The proposed development is primarily that of the extension of a cemetery site, which may be coupled with an access road if necessary and other related infrastructure.

The following informants were considered upon formulation of the development proposal: cadastral boundaries; topographical, hydrological and geotechnical opportunities and constraints (slope); existing infrastructure; adjacent development; and economic feasibility.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORISATION PROCESS

The establishment a cemetery is a listed activity in need of a basic environmental assessment as detailed in the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (Government Notices R385 and R386) promulgated in terms of Chapter 5 of the National Environmental Management Act 1998 (No. 107 of 1998), and requires provincial authorisation from the Department of Agricultural and Environmental Affairs (DAEA). As such Uddi Environmental, Planning and Development Consultants has been commissioned to undertake a basic environmental assessment for the proposed development. These regulations identify various activities, which require environmental authorization and list procedures for assessing potential associated environmental impacts.

All issues and comments raised by I&AP during public consultation in the impact assessment will be documented in the Basic Assessment Report to be submitted to the DAEA.

6. KEY ISSUES

Potential Biophysical Issues:

- a. Excavation may be a problem due to the presence of certain rock types.
- b. Contamination of ground and surface water sources.
- c. Some of the natural vegetation may be disturbed during construction.
- d. Loss of biodiversity.

Potential Socio-economic Issues:

- a. The high potential cost factor relating to the excavation and to the size of suitable land available.

7. INTERESTED AND AFFECTED PARTIES REGISTRATION

Should you wish to register as an interested and Affected Party, or simply to receive any future reports and correspondence, please do not hesitate to contact the Environmental Consultants, Udidi, at the contact details below.

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