

Appendix C3
Background Information Letter



9 May 2022

Dear Stakeholder and Interested & Affected Party,

**SWITCHING SUBSTATION AND 132KV POWER LINE FROM THE AUTHORISED ORKNEY SOLAR FARM
SUBSTATION TO THE EXISTING VAAL REEFS TEN SUBSTATION, NORTH WEST PROVINCE
(DFFE Ref. No: To be Issued)**

NOTICE OF BASIC ASSESSMENT AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

Genesis Eco-Energy Developments (Pty) Ltd proposes the construction and operation of grid connection infrastructure consisting of a Switching Substation and a 132kV power line between authorised Orkney Solar Farm Substation (DFFE Ref: 14/12/16/3/3/2/954) and the existing Vaal Reefs Ten Substation. The proposed grid connection infrastructure will be located 15km south west from the town of Orkney and within jurisdiction of the City of Matlosana Local Municipality, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality in the North West Province. The grid connection corridor is proposed between the authorised Orkney Solar Farm Substation (coordinates 27°1'40.82"S, 26°34'13.16"E) to the existing Vaal Reefs Ten Substation, situated at the Tau Lekoa Mine.

The nature and extent of the grid connection corridor, as well as the potential environmental impacts associated with the construction, operation, and decommissioning phases of the infrastructure of this nature are explored in detail in this Basic Assessment (BA) Report. Site specific environmental issues and constraints within the grid connection corridor are considered within independent specialist studies in order to test the environmental suitability of the corridor for the development of the grid connection infrastructure. A 300m wide corridor is considered in this BA process.

The Public Participation Process provides the public with an opportunity to understand and comment on the project. The details of the project, including the respective farm portions affected by the proposed project are as follows:

The grid connection infrastructure will include a substation on portion 21 of the Farm Wolvehuis 114, and a 132kV power line within a 300m wide (both sides of the R502) and 7.3km long corridor. The corridor extends between the authorised Orkney Solar farm and the Vaal Reefs Ten Substation. The 300m wide corridor will allow for the optimisation of the infrastructure to accommodate identified environmental sensitivities.

The grid connection corridor (300m wide corridor) will include:

- » 132kV Switching substation
- » 132kV power line
- » Access roads to substation sites and service tracks (up to 4m wide) where no existing roads are available

The 100MW Orkney Solar Farm (DFFE Ref: 14/12/16/3/3/2/954) was authorised in 2016 and is located within Remaining Extent of Portion 7 and the Remaining Extent of Portion 21 of the Farm Wolvehuis 114 north west of the Vaal River and approximately 15km south west from the town of Orkney in the North West Province.

Details of the grid connection corridor within which the grid connection infrastructure will be developed are included in **Table 1.1**. **Figure 1.1** provides a locality map of the grid connection corridor, as well as the positions of the authorised Orkney Solar Farm, substation, as well as the existing Vaal Reefs Ten Substation.

Grid Corridor Affected Properties
<p>The grid connection corridor traverses the following affected properties, namely:</p> <p>Switching Substation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Portion 21 of the Farm Wolvehuis 114 <p>Grid line corridor¹:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Portion 8 of the Farm Wolvehuis 114 » Portion 9 of the Farm Wolvehuis 114 » Portion 20 of the Farm Wolvehuis 114 » Portion 21 of the Farm Wolvehuis 114 » Portion 22 of the Farm Wolvehuis 114 » Portion 11 of the Farm Goedgenoeg 433 » Portion 12 of the Farm Goedgenoeg 433 » Portion 15 of the Farm Goedgenoeg 433 » Portion 17 of the Farm Goedgenoeg 433 » Portion 24 of the Farm Goedgenoeg 433 » Portion 27 of the Farm Goedgenoeg 433 » Portion 31 of the Farm Goedgenoeg 433 » Portion 33 of the Farm Goedgenoeg 433 » Portion 47 of the Farm Goedgenoeg 433 » Portion 53 of the Farm Goedgenoeg 433 » Portion 60 of the Farm Goedgenoeg 433 » Portion 61 of the Farm Goedgenoeg 433 » Portion 62 of the Farm Goedgenoeg 433 » Portion 63 of the Farm Goedgenoeg 433 » Portion 64 of the Farm Goedgenoeg 433 » Portion 65 of the Farm Goedgenoeg 433 » Portion 81 of the Farm Goedgenoeg 433

¹ The 300m wide grid connection corridor traverses limited sections of the affected properties. This is a comprehensive listing of these properties.

» Portion 89 of the Farm Goedgenoeg 433

Based on the nature and extent of the proposed project, the nature of the affected area, and experience of the consultants on similar projects, several potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed project have been identified at this stage. Site-specific social and environmental specialist studies have been undertaken for the identified corridor to delineate areas of potential sensitivity, assess impacts associated with the project and make recommendations regarding avoidance, management and mitigation of impacts. Specialist studies considered the following:

- » Impacts on biodiversity, including terrestrial flora and fauna, freshwater ecology, and avifauna
- » Impacts on visual landscape.
- » Impacts on heritage resources, including the archaeology and paleontology.

The specialist studies have been informed by existing information, field observations and input from the public participation process. As an Interested and Affected Party (I&AP), your input is considered as an important part of the process, and we encourage your involvement.

BASIC ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations, 2014 (as amended) published in terms of Section 24(5) of the National Environmental Management Act (No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA), the development and operation of the proposed project requires Environmental Authorisation (EA) from DFFE the Competent Authority in consultation with the North West Department of Rural, Environmental and Agricultural Development.

In terms of Section 24(5) of the NEMA, as read with the EIA Regulations 2014, as amended, (GN R 324 and 327)), a BA Process is required to be undertaken in support of the application for EA for the project. The application is required to be supported by comprehensive, independent environmental studies undertaken in accordance with the EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended.

The proponent has appointed Savannah Environmental, as the independent Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP), to undertake the BA for the project to identify and assess all potential environmental impacts associated with the project and recommend appropriate mitigation measures in the Environmental Management Programme (EMPr). As part of the environmental studies, Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) will be actively involved through the public involvement process being undertaken by Savannah Environmental.

You and/or the organization / company, which you represent, have been identified as a stakeholder for the proposed project as described above. The nature and extent of the project is explored in and is also available for download from the Savannah Environmental website: (<https://savannahsa.com/public-documents/grid-infrastructure/>)

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

The Public Participation Process (PPP) will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of Regulations 39 to 44 of the EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended, (GN R326). The aim of the PPP is primarily to ensure that:

- » information containing all relevant facts in respect of the proposed project is made available to potential stakeholders and I&APs;
- » participation by I&APs is facilitated in such a manner that all potential stakeholders and I&APs are provided with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed project; and
- » comments received from stakeholders and I&APs are recorded and incorporated into the BA process.

The restrictions enforced in terms of Government Gazette 43096 which placed the country in a national state of disaster limiting the movement and gathering of people to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus has placed some limitations on how public consultation can be conducted as part of a BA process. The consultation process for the project has been designed considering these limitations, and the implementation is in line with our public participation (PP) plan. Project related documents are available on our website as per the link provided above.

Alternative means of undertaking consultation have been designed to ensure that I&APs are afforded sufficient opportunity to raise comments on the project by WhatsApp / SMS / fax / telephone calls or e-mails (contact details provided below). Our website provides any person with interest in the project, access to project related information and enabling the public participation process to be undertaken in line with Regulations 41 to 44 of the EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended. The project related information on our website allows for the sharing of details regarding the project and consultation documentation, including project maps, presentations, and posters regarding the project, as well as all reports available for review.

The benefits of the having the project related information available on our website include:

- » Ability to create a dedicated project-specific project page to enable easy access to project-related information.
- » Ability to reach a wider audience, allowing more widespread consultation for project related information.
- » Allowing stakeholders and I&APs the opportunity to engage on a project without leaving their office or home.
- » Enabling stakeholders and I&APs to register their interest in a project (for inclusion on the project database), and automatically gaining access to comprehensive project documentation.
- » Enabling the EAP to maintain a complete database of I&APs through maintaining a record of persons registering on the website.
- » Enabling the EAP and stakeholders/I&APs to meet virtually, if requested.
- » Provides a resilient solution to a public consultation process.

Where I&APs do not have the applicable facilities or access to internet, provision has been made to facilitate the consultation process through limited one-on-one consultation where sanitary conditions, in line with COVID-19 restrictions, can be maintained, as well as consulting with the Ward Councillor, the relevant ward committee members, community representatives and local community forum members.

AVAILABILITY OF BASIC ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR REVIEW AND COMMENT

As a registered I&AP, you are hereby notified that the BA Report and associated documentation for the project is available for your review and comment from **Monday 09 May 2022** until **Wednesday 08 June 2022**.

In complying with the terms of Government Gazette 43096, the BA Report has been made available on the Savannah Environmental website: (<https://savannahsa.com/public-documents/grid-infrastructure/>).

Please submit your written comments on the BA Report by **Wednesday 08 June 2022** via our online stakeholder engagement platform (link provided above) or:

- » Telephone: 011 656 3237
- » Mobile: 060 978 8396 (including *please call me*)
- » Fax: 086 684 0547
- » Post: PO Box 148, Sunninghill, 2157
- » E-mail: publicprocess@savannahsa.com

All comments can be addressed to Nondumiso Bulunga at Savannah Environmental.

All comments received during the 30-day review and comment period will be recorded and included in the Final BA Report for submission to the DFFE in line with Regulation 44 of the EIA Regulations, 2014, as amended (GN R326).

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require additional information and/or clarification regarding the project. Our team welcomes your participation and looks forward to your involvement throughout this process.

Kind regards

Nondumiso Bulunga

Email: publicprocess@savannahsa.com