



environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Chief Directorate: Integrated Environmental Authorisations

PRE-APPLICATION MEETING MINUTES FOR THE PROPOSED EQUIANO CABLE SYSTEM

Date: 25 April 2019

Time: 11h00 – 12h00

VENUE: DEA – Pretoria

ATTENDEES:

| NAME | ORGANISATION | REFERENCE IN MINUTES |
|-----------------------|--|----------------------|
| Sindiswa Dlomo | DEA | SD |
| Thulisile Nyalunga | DEA | TN |
| Zesipho Makhosayafana | DEA | ZM |
| Jacques van der Walt | Openserve | JW |
| Richard Vermeulen | Openserve | RV |
| Giles Churchill | ACER (Africa) Environmental Consultants | GC |
| APOLOGIES | | |
| Jamie Merrett | ASN | JM |

1. Opening/introduction/ Purpose of the pre-app meeting

- TN welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions of all attendees were made.
- TN requested that GC chair the meeting and lead the discussions with regards to the project.
- GC thanked TN and outlined the purpose of the pre-application meeting.

2. Apologies

- GC made apologies for JM from ASN who was going to join the meeting via telecom. Due to technical difficulties JM could not join the meeting.

3. Project Description

- GC provided a brief description of the project as outlined below:
 - ❖ Openserve, a division of Telkom SA SOC Limited, intends to install a submarine telecommunications cable, called the Equiano Cable System, to link South Africa with key international telecommunications hubs in West Africa (Nigeria) and Europe (Portugal). As the designated Landing Partner of the Equiano Cable System in South Africa, Openserve has the required licenses to operate this system in South Africa and aims to secure local permits to land the Equiano Cable System at Melkbosstrand, Western Cape.
 - ❖ The main cable trunk will be located approximately 200 to 500 km from the shore line in international waters. Branch cables will run from the main trunk to the shore line through territorial waters to the landing site in each country. South Africa will be the southern-most point of the cable (end station). The final route of the marine portion of the cable will be identified based on a combination of engineering, environmental and economic factors; however, the general alignment of the Equiano Cable System will follow the SAT-2 cable alignment which was taken out of service in 2013.
 - ❖ The Equiano Cable System will not require the construction of a Beach Man Hole (BMH) or Cable Landing Station (CLS) as the current SAT-2 BMH and CLS operated by Openserve and Telkom will be used. Therefore, the only activities to be undertaken during the installation and operation of the Equiano Cable System are the following:
 - Laying of the cable in the offshore environment including cable burial to a water depth of 1,500 m.
 - In shallower waters where hard substrates are encountered and cable burial is not possible, the cable will be anchored to the sea bed to prevent cable movement. Given that the Equiano cable will follow the alignment of the now decommissioned SAT-2 cable, existing anchor sites will be used (where possible).
 - Excavations within the intertidal zone to bury the cable before being anchored into the existing SAT-2 BMH on Melkbosstrand Beach.
 - Installation of the onshore cable section between the BMH and the CLS site in Melkbosstrand. Existing sleeves will be used to run the cable from the beach to the CLS, i.e. no construction will be required for the onshore cable alignment.

4. Need and the desirability of the proposed development

- GC provided details on the need and desirability of the project as outlined below:
 - ❖ Submarine telecommunications cables are important for international telecommunications networks, transporting almost 100% of transoceanic internet traffic throughout the world (www.iscpc.org). This is significant because it is widely recognised that access to affordable international bandwidth is key to economic development in every country.

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- ❖ Openserve, a division of Telkom SA SOC Limited, proposes to install a submarine telecommunications cable, called the Equiano Cable System, to link South Africa and the West Coast of Africa with key international telecommunications hubs in Europe.
 - ❖ Improvement in Africa's information technology infrastructure via telecommunications cables is expected to remove one of the current key inhibitors to development in Africa and support economic growth and opportunities on the continent.
 - ❖ In an African and local context, the cable will support the objectives set out by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and provide a means of fulfilling the South African Government's requirements in terms of digital television broadcasting.
 - ❖ Alcatel Submarine Networks (ASN) has been appointed as the supplier and installer of the Equiano Cable System connecting Africa and Europe.
 - ❖ Openserve is the designated Landing Partner of the Equiano Cable System in South Africa and has the required licenses to operate international telecommunications infrastructure in the country.

5. Identified listed activities

- GC requested SD, TN and ZM to confirm that the identified listed activities as per the current regulations were applicable to the project.
- SD and TN stated that Activity 26 of Listing Notice 2 (No. R. 325 of 2017) as identified by ACER was not applicable to the project.
- SD stated that Activity 18 of Listing Notice 1 (No. R. 327 of 2017) might not be applicable to the project. GC responded saying that ACER would rather have this activity included as, during rehabilitation, this activity may be triggered.
- ZM pointed out to GC that the identified listed activity (Activity 19 of Listing Notice 1 (No. R. 327 of 2017)) was incorrect and should be listed activity 19A of Listing Notice 1 (No. R. 327 of 2017).
- Agreement was reached by all parties that the following identified listed activities were triggered by the proposed development as outlined below:
 - ❖ Activity 15 of Listing Notice 1 (No. R. 327 of 2017).
 - ❖ Activity 17 of Listing Notice 1 (No. R. 327 of 2017).
 - ❖ Activity 18 of Listing Notice 1 (No. R. 327 of 2017).
 - ❖ Activity 19A of Listing Notice 1 (No. R. 327 of 2017).
 - ❖ Activity 14 of Listing Notice 2 (No. R. 325 of 2017).

6. Identified interested and affected parties

- GC stated that the following key stakeholders have been identified to date:
 - ❖ Surrounding residents in Melkbosstrand.
 - ❖ Offshore mining concession holders.
 - ❖ South African Deep Sea Trawling Industry.
 - ❖ SAHRA.
 - ❖ Cape Nature.
 - ❖ City of Cape Town.
 - ❖ Eskom – Koeberg.
 - ❖ DWS.
 - ❖ Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning.
 - ❖ DAFF.
 - ❖ Department of Public Works.
 - ❖ General Public.

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- SD requested that GC also engage with the DEA: Oceans and Coast division.
 - GC stated that one on one meetings would be held with most of the key stakeholders identified above during the EIA process if required.

7. Public participation process

- GC stated that the public participation to be undertaken would meet the requirements of the current environmental regulations and that the following would be undertaken during the EIA process:
 - ❖ Advertise the project (Provincial newspapers English and local newspaper English and Afrikaans).
 - ❖ Community meetings (if required).
 - ❖ Project notification letters to Key Stakeholders (project notification stage).
 - ❖ Maintenance of project database (I&APs who register).
 - ❖ On site notice (English and Afrikaans).
 - ❖ One on One meetings with Cape Nature, City of Cape Town, Department of Public Works, mining concession holders, Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning.
- GC stated that a public meeting will be held if the need arises.

8. Project approach

- GC stated that a full Environmental Impact Assessment process would be followed.
- GC stated that the assessment of alternatives for this development was not applicable as the Equiano Cable System would make use of the existing SAT-2 beach man hole and offshore cable alignment for which a registered servitude exists. As such, the assessment will not assess the following in terms of alternatives:
 - ❖ No alternative landing sites will be considered (the Equiano Cable System will be tied into the existing SAT-2 Beach Man Hole).
 - ❖ No alternative onshore alignments will be considered (the onshore alignment of the Equiano Cable System will be placed into existing pipe sleeves used for the SAT-2 cable which are already installed).
 - ❖ No alternative site for the Cable Landing Station will be considered as the cable will terminate in the existing Cable Landing Station in Melkbosstrand which is operated by Telkom and Openserve.
 - ❖ No alternative offshore cable alignments will be considered as the cable will follow the alignment of the SAT-2 cable. This cable has an existing registered servitude and has been selected to limit both impacts on the fishing industry and offshore mining and exploration concession holders.
- SD and TN inquired if there were any technology alternatives which were going to be considered in the assessment. JW responded saying that the technology used to install the cable has not changed since the installation of the SAT-2 cable and that the proposed methods used to install the cable makes use of the best technology available.
- GC stated that there were no technology alternatives available to assess in the EIA process.
- SD asked what was going to happen to the SAT-2 cable when the Equiano Cable System is installed. JW stated that in shallower waters it was likely that the SAT-2 Cable would be recovered but in deeper waters it would be left in situ as per international standards.
- GC stated that prior to installation of the cable a detailed survey would be undertaken of the proposed offshore alignment to identify any debris or obstacles which could impact on the cable. In addition to this, the survey would assess the seabed in terms of suitability for cable burial in water depths less than 1,500 m.

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- TN asked how debris would be removed if it was encountered and what would happen with the debris. JW and GC responded saying that a pre-lay grapnel run would be undertaken where the ship drags a hook/anchor to snag any debris such as old fishing nets which is then removed and disposed of as per best practice.
 - SD asked if when undertaking the survey, do they remove any sediment from the sea bed. JW stated that as the proposed cable alignment follows the SAT-2 cable alignment most of the seabed substrate has already been tested and it is unlikely that sea bed samples will be required for the installation of the Equiano Cable System. JW stated that probing of the sea bed would likely be undertaken just to confirm findings from previous surveys.

9. Proposed Specialist Studies

- GC stated that based on findings from a recently completed EIA process for another marine telecommunications cable which was landed in Van Riebeeckstrand and based on a recent visit to site the following specialist studies are anticipated to be required for the environmental impact assessment.
 - ❖ Heritage Assessment.
 - ❖ Vegetation Assessment including an Ecological Assessment.
 - ❖ Wetland Delineation and Functional Assessment.
 - ❖ Coastal Dune Dynamics Assessment.
 - ❖ Fisheries Assessment.
- GC indicated that ACER had undertaken the screening assessment using the DEA environmental screening tool which had identified additional specialist studies including the following; Visual Assessment, Hydrology Assessment, Socio-Economic Assessment, Aquatic Biodiversity Assessment. GC stated that in ACER's opinion these specialist studies were not required and would not add any benefit to the environmental impact assessment to be undertaken.
- TN queried why GC thought the Socio-economic Assessment was not required. GC responded by stating that the onshore infrastructure had already been constructed and that impacts associated with the proposed development would only involve a 2-3 week construction period when the cable makes landfall and ties into the existing beach man hole. GC stated that in addition to the above, the socio-economic benefits to the county are known and the need to appoint a specialist to assess socio-economic impacts was not required.
- Following a discussion around specialist studies GC asked SD, TN and ZM if they agreed with the proposed specialist studies put forward by ACER. SD responded saying that she was satisfied with the proposed specialist studies and that they would cover the anticipated impacts associated with the proposed development.

10. Discussion

- GC once again requested SD to confirm that the DEA was satisfied that the environmental impact assessment would not be assessing any project alternatives as stipulated in the regulations. SD confirmed that this was permissible if ACER clearly explains in the scoping report why alternatives were not considered in the assessment.

11. Closure

- GC thanked everyone for making their time available to meet and to discuss the proposed development and thanked SD, TN and ZM for their input and guidance.
- TN thanked everyone for attending and then closed the meeting.