

Solar EIA Public Participation Meeting notes – 13 March 2025

Q1: Concern was raised about participation- there are not enough people in attendance to allow for decent public participation. A lot of community members are not aware of the meeting; why were notices and communication of the public participation not sent out to the community well in advance?

A1: Percy explained that there are no specific requirements around the number of participants needed for public participation.

He also explained that we did advertise via the Hopefield Council, but word was not communicated well to the public of Hopefield. Got lost via the grapevine somehow. We were also not aware that there is a Hopefield Facebook page (Nicola gave the name of the group to Percy) but we will make use of this page for future communication regarding meetings.

Q2: Why did we purchase land in an agricultural zone to use it for industrial purposes? Why are we not putting our entire plant in the Saldanha industrial zone? Concerned about project splitting which is illegal (Nicola who asked this question, was informed about project splitting by her lawyer).

A2: Blair explained that it's two different companies executing each project.

Q3: If we plan on using ocean water, why are we building our plant so far from the ocean and why are we not using Saldanha grey water? Community was told that when heavy industries come in, they consume a lot of water and that they are supposed to use Saldanha grey water, not ground water. The community is concerned that we plan on using ground water.

A3: Blair explained that we plan on treating the grey water in Saldanha so that we can use it for our plant. Which raised the next question:

Q4: They (the community) have not heard of or seen any plans about a water treatment plant? Where will it be built?

A4: Blair explained that we are looking into using the existing municipality water treatment plant in Saldanha. We will restore the plant so that it can be utilized optimally (which again benefits the local community as well).

NOTE: They want our plans around water usage in writing.

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Q5: There are concerns about the safety of hydrogen plants:

- The plant's water use is intensive
- Ammonia is very dangerous
- Hydrogen is dangerous and not green or clean.

Note: The community does not understand the concept of Green Hydrogen and how it works and that it's clean energy. Very uneducated on this topic.

NOTE: Need to put the process in writing for them in an easy-to-understand format.

Q6: What is the timeframe to start construction seeing as you have already bought the ground? (Question was raised in concern of and around job creation). The people of Hopefield are eager for jobs.

NOTE: Community asked that we send them the estimated timelines for the project.

Q7: As Hopefield is the host town- do the people of Hopefield take priority to apply for and consideration for the jobs created by the project?

A7: Percy explained that if they (the people of Hopefield) possess the skill, then yes, they will get preference. If they do not possess the skills we need, we will have to source the positions from Saldanha and Langebaan or Cape Town. We will however have programmes to upskill the people of Hopefield so that they are able to apply for similar vacant positions in the future.

Q8: Can we share the presentation with everyone in attendance?

A8: Percy said that the presentation will be emailed to everyone who put their names down on the registration list.

Q9: Can the community get copies of the EIA's and all other relevant reports and studies? We are to send it to everyone who put their emails on the mailing list.

A9: Percy said that it will be emailed to everyone who put their names down on the registration list. It will also be available for viewing on our website.

Q10: Will there be follow-up and progress meetings held as we move along with the project?

A10: Percy confirmed that there will be ongoing follow-up / update meetings.

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Q11: Why would people object against a project like this?

A11: A lack of knowledge and understanding of the project. People are not fully aware of the benefits and opportunities that spawn from a project like this and how it could uplift a community.

Q12: We are the 3rd company coming to Hopefield with development projects, there were 2 previous developments companies who made promises to the community, but the community never reaped any benefits and left with empty promises. The community said yes to the development of the relevant projects, but then along the line they, the host, were pushed out, forgotten about and left with no benefits from the project.

NOTE: The community want some form of reassurance from us that we won't do the same, that we will follow through with what we promise. They want surety of employment.

Q13: How will households in Hopefield benefit from the solar panels? (The gent who asked the question was actually asking whether we will, at our own cost, install solar panels, in each and every household.)

A13: Blair explained that our goal is to try and stabilize the grid to reduce loadshedding via battery systems and solar with the end goal of alleviating and reducing loadshedding stress on the local households.

Q14: Have we started with our application for rezoning from agricultural to industrial use?

NOTE: Send this info via email as well.