

Environmental groups appeal Richards Bay gas-to-power plant

Environmental groups GroundWork and South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA), filed the appeal against the Department of Environmental Affairs's decision to grant environmental authorisation, halting the proposed construction of the Richards Bay Combined Cycle Power Plant (CCPP) and associated infrastructure within the City of uMhlatuze



The Pembroke power station in Wales, similar to the one planned for Richards Bay

AN appeal has been lodged against the decision to grant environmental authorisation for a planned gas-to-power plant in Richards Bay.

Environmental groups GroundWork and South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA), filed the appeal against the Department of Environmental Affairs's decision to grant environmental authorisation, halting the proposed construction of the Richards Bay

Combined Cycle Power Plant (CCPP) and associated infrastructure within the City of uMhlathuze.

Eskom proposed to develop a power plant and associated infrastructures with a generating capacity of up to 3 000 megawatts, with the proposed project site in the Richards Bay Industrial Development Zone Phase 1D in Alton.

The facility is expected to have a maximum capacity of 3 000 megawatts to operate with natural gas as the main fuel source and diesel as back-up source.

The power utility said this is in response to the need for a supply of clean and modern forms of electricity at an affordable price.

‘The purpose of the project is to reduce transmission losses from generation facilities supplying KwaZulu-Natal, by having a generation centre in KZN,’ Eskom said in its application.

The project’s purpose is to help reduce Eskom’s carbon footprint per unit of electricity produced, as power plants using natural gas emit approximately half the carbon of coal-fired power plants, while also using considerably less water.

GroundWork and SDCEA argue that the construction will cause more harm than good.

‘The construction of the RB CCPP project in the area already occupied by polluting industries will exacerbate the pollution problem.

‘Eskom, just like any other polluting industry, has a responsibility to reduce ambient air pollution. The RB CCPP should not contribute to any pollutions levels in the Richards Bay area, not even anywhere else,’ the groups said in their appeal.

Environmental activist and co-ordinator of SDCEA, Desmond D’Sa, said the country should be moving away from the use of fossil fuels.

‘We should be working together to deal with the current climate crisis and not adding to it.

‘Refineries not only cause harm to the environment but are a major health risk to people in surrounding areas.

‘There was also no public consultation. The law allows for meaningful public participation in a language those affected will understand,’ D’Sa said.

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