

DRAFT PART 2 REPORT- TOURISM & URBAN DEVELOPMENT

ASSESSMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS

*The Proposed Northern-Alignment Power Line Project,
Western Cape, Northern Cape and Free State Provinces
Aries-Helios Section*



Commissioner Salt Pan image by Rehan Opperman

Prepared for Mokgope Consulting

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Submitted by

African Development Economic Consultants (pty) Ltd (ADEC)

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INTRODUCTION

ADEC has assessed the socio-economic impacts of the proposed 883km, 765kV power line upgrade between the Juno substation in Western Cape Province and the Perseus substation in the Free State. These impacts form one component of an overall Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process for the project. The following report focuses on tourism and urban development impacts within the **Aries-Helios section** of the project.

ADEC identified the possible “Impact Area” and nodes associated with the proposed power line and upgrades; and assessed existing demographic and economic conditions; and business, tourism, and agro-industrial base within the Impact Area and nodes. In Part II of this Socio-Economic Impact Assessment, ADEC analysed and forecasted the impacts of the proposed projects on tourism and urban development within the Impact Area. This **Part II Report** summarises findings from this ***tourism and urban development impact assessment***.

A previous Part I Report summarised findings on the project’s impacts on agriculture, the primary economic activity in the region. Additional analysis of socio-economic impacts related to health and environment will be determined following the Scoping Phase as possible, based on information provided by other members of the consulting team. All of these impacts, along with the Part II impacts on tourism and urban development, are assessed and described for each of the four sections of the power line.

Again, this Phase II Report presents findings from assessment of project impacts on the tourism sector and on urban development within the ***Aries-Helios Impact Area***. A previous report presented findings from analyses of impacts on the agricultural sector.

Section 1. EXISTING TOURISM BASE

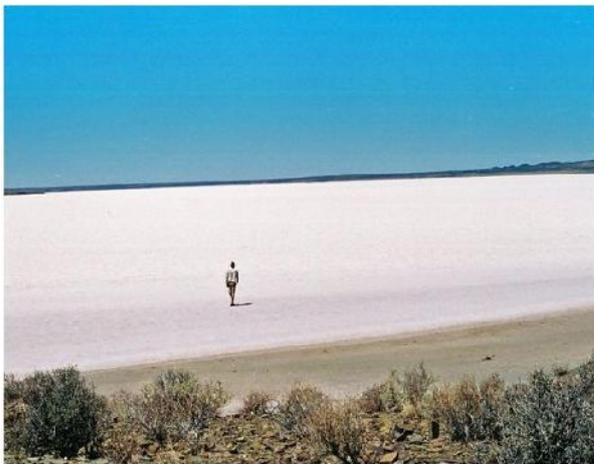
This section presents information on the existing tourism base within the region through which the proposed power line will pass. This assessment focuses on natural assets that form the core of the tourism base and are most susceptible to environmental impacts. This tourism base may comprise of national parks, nature reserves, and other natural tourism assets along the power line corridor. The assets are inventoried and described in terms of location, use, and existing and planned conservation activities. This baseline assessment led to the identification of possible “impact areas” for natural tourism assets that would be affected by the proposed power line and infrastructure upgrades.

The **Aries-Helios Section** of the power line passes primarily through the Kenhardt and Calvinia magisterial districts. Existing tourism conditions in the Aries-Helios section are summarized below.

Key Assets

Compared with other portions of the power line corridor, the Aries-Helios Section has relatively few designated or marketed natural tourism assets. The area is characterized by dry, rocky terrain with limited unique flora or fauna in natural environments. There are no national parks, nature reserves, or other significant state-designated nature-based tourism sites located within this area. The area does have several interesting but isolated natural features, such as salt pans located in the south-western portion of this section of the corridor. However, these features and the area in general have not been marketed as a significant destination for tourism.

Salt Pans



The Namaqualand area in Northern Cape is characterized by its arid climate and salt pans that have formed over significant regions. All three alternatives of the Aries-Helios Section of the power line will pass through one such region and in particular, will cross the (dry) Salt River and practically encircle the Commissioners Salt Pan (-30.3°, 19.85°). The power line would also be located relatively close

(within five kilometers) from the Dwagga Salt Pan, situated just to the north and west of Corridors 2 and 3.¹

The area's salt pans are not yet actively marketed as a tourism destination, in the way that Botswana has promoted Makgadikgadi and the Kalahari Salt Pans or Limpopo has marketed the Soutpansberg Mountains. The only Northern Cape salt pan that has attracted significant numbers of visitors over the years is the Verneuk Pan, which due to its history as a test track for race cars, has become a setting for feature films and has attracted automobile testing.

Employment Base

Based on an assessment of the existing tourism base in this area, there does not appear to be significant employment generated directly or indirectly by tourism. As such, the existing tourism economy within this section of the corridor is negligible.

Summary

A high-level review of existing tourism assets within this section of the corridor suggests that there are few, if any, specific sites marketed or designated as tourism attractions. Because the area does not have significant tourism attractions, and is located in an isolated region without significant tourism through traffic, it can be assumed that there is a negligible tourism economy in this section of the corridor.

¹ Commissioner Salt Pan image by Rehan Opperman.

Section 2. TOURISM IMPACTS

The impacts of the proposed power line project on tourism in the Aries-Helios section of the Impact Area are presented herein. The impacts were determined based on factors such as the possible interruption of view-sheds and participation in recreational activities due to the placement of power lines directly through or near natural areas. These “interruptions” or disruptions in tourism were translated into impacts on attendance, expenditures, and associated business activities; which in turn translate into an impact on employment and income within the local communities.

The Aries - Helios section would stretch 175km from the Aries substation near Kenhardt in the Northern Cape to Helios substation near Loeriesfontein, also in the Northern Cape. As noted previously, this section would pass through two magisterial districts, namely Calvinia and Kenhardt. The impacts of this corridor on tourism activity is summarised below.

Possible Physical Impacts

The construction and operation of power lines through the corridor will establish a visual presence for the power infrastructure in an area that otherwise lacks major visible utility infrastructure. That being said, the lack of nature-based tourism attractions and other forms of tourism activity or travel corridors through this section suggests that the imposition of new power lines would have limited or no effect on existing tourism activity. Further, the lack of unique natural assets (other than salt pans located near the immediate corridors) suggests that future tourism opportunities may be limited and therefore not interrupted by the imposition of power lines in this area.

Commissioners Salt Pan

As noted previously, the three power line alternatives are slated to cross the (dry) Salt River and practically encircle the Commissioners Salt Pan. Alternative 1 would pass along the southern edge of the pan, whilst Alternatives 2 and 3 would pass along the northern edge. Again, as noted previously, there is limited existing tourism activity around Commissioners Salt Pan, with the area lacking organized tour operators, lodging, retail, transport, annual events and other activities.

However, there is the possibility of potential *future* tourism to the region’s salt pans, including Commissioners Salt Pan. This possibility is heightened by the success of marketing efforts for similar pans in Botswana and Limpopo, and due to activity at other Northern Cape pans. Images of the Commissioners Pan suggest a stunningly beautiful and serene landscape marked by the pure white pan shimmering against the deep blue sky, as captured in the image shown earlier in this report. The presence of power lines on either side of the pan is likely to disrupt the natural serenity of the place and impact on its future marketability for nature-based and film industry

tourism. However, the lines are less likely to have an impact on the potential for adventure tourism.

Employment & Earnings

Since there is limited if no recorded tourism activity in this section of the corridor, and the area lacks significant unique natural attractions, it has been determined that there would be limited or no effect on existing tourism activity. Without such effect, there would be no impact on the existing tourism economy, in terms of employment, earnings, or business activity.

That being said, the presence of the power lines could have an impact on the future tourism development *potential* of the Commissioners Salt Pan and other pans in the southwestern portion of the Aries Helios section. That potential could only be determined through more detailed market analysis, which would provide the basis for assessing any possible future economic impact from disruption caused by the power line.

Caveats

A caveat is noted that, without direct in-person field reconnaissance for each tourism site, it is not possible to state with certainty that (or how) the intervention of power lines would disrupt tourism activities at the specific locations. The visual impact assessments were gathered via simulated access through *Google Earth* and through research into the tourism attractions and marketing for the area. Further, as noted above, more detailed market analysis would be required to forecast the potential for tourism at key sites such as the Commissioners Salt Pan, in order to determine whether the power line may detract from the area's untapped tourism potential. Without such analysis, the impacts can only be stated in relation to existing tourism activity, which is limited.

Section 3. URBAN SETTLEMENT ECONOMIC BASE

The Aries-Helios section has several small settlements situated around farmsteads, which also serve as railway sidings along an existing national railway line. The railway line extends within the proposed power line corridor from Helios sub-station to Aries sub-station near Kenhardt. None of these settlements has significant urban infrastructure, and they mainly serve as farmsteads. The several settlements near the power line corridor are described below.

Commissioners Pan

Commissioners Pan (30°18'0" N & 19°55'0" E) is a farmstead located to the northeast of Helios sub-station, along Alternative Corridor Route 2. Alternative Corridor Route 3 would extend just north of this settlement whilst Corridor 1 would extend far south of this site. This site is situated in Namakwa District Municipality, Northern Cape Province.

Specific data on the local population and household base in this area is not immediately available. Overall population in the area is estimated at less than one hundred, based on satellite images. Commissioners Pan is a small farmstead and there appears to be very little active agricultural activity in the surrounding area due to the topography and arid conditions along this section of the proposed power line.

Halfweg

Halfweg (Halfway) is a small settlement situated roughly mid-way along the Helio–Aries Section of the power line corridor. An air strip and railway siding are located in the area. These assets are situated between the Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 corridors. The site is located relatively far away from Alternative Corridor Route 1.

Demographic Base

Data and information on population and the household base for Halfweg are not immediately available. However, the population is estimated to be no more than a few hundred people. The employment base for Halfweg is also estimated to be very small, based on the apparent lack of economic activity.

Land Use & Economic Activity

This small community has perhaps +/-30 to 50 formal residential uses and has access to a landing strip (ICAO code: FAHI) and a railway siding. Halfweg is named as such because it is located half-way along the Sishen-Saldanha Railway Line. The site hosts crew changes for the train engineer

and assistants en route. As such, Halfweg serves as a small rail and air transport service node. However, there is insufficient scheduled air and rail activity to suggest this location serves as an important employment hub in this isolated area. Many Halfweg residents likely work in agricultural activities in the surrounding area.

Granaatboskolk

Granaatboskolk (S 30° 1' 33" E 19° 50' 37') is a farmstead, also known as Khai-Ma Farm. Some features of the area include wind mills and salt pans, located near Dwaggas.

*Granaatboskolk windmills
(Image: Rehan Opperman)*

The settlement is situated relatively far from the three corridors, and is especially distant from Alternative Route 3. Granaatboskolk is included here for discussion purposes because it is located within the general impact area, but it is not in the direct path of the power line.



Kareeboschkolk.

Kareeboschkolk (29.9666667 S20.4 E2236667) is a farm located to the south-east of the power line corridor, specifically to the south-east of Alternative Corridor 1, which is closest to the settlement. Kareeboschkolk is primarily a farmstead. Given the small size of the settlement, economic activity is likely to be small scale and agriculture-based.

Sous

Sous is also located just outside of the power line corridor, specifically to the north-west of the combined route just east of Helios. Sous is really not much more than a crossroads along the rail line, lacking housing settlement.

Section 4. URBAN SETTLEMENT ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Impacts on the economy in settlements within the power line corridor were determined as they relate to land use and economic activities. Examples of the types of impacts that could occur may include the use of otherwise marketable residential or industrial land for power line construction, the visual impact of power lines on the marketability of private housing, or the impacts of power lines on local heritage sites otherwise suitable for tourism development. Impacts on the broader region, particularly on agricultural activity, are discussed in the Part 1 Report. The economic impacts of the power line alternatives on urban settlements within the Aries-Helios section are described below.

Halfweg

Halfweg is one of the only settlements within this section of the corridor having observable existing economic activity. This community has several small but notable infrastructure assets, namely an airstrip and a railway siding. There is also a small residential community with perhaps +/-30 to 50 homes and +/- one hundred residents, oriented to the farming activity in the broader region (covered in the Part 1 Report).

The addition of power lines through the area is likely to have a positive impact on the area's economic base over the long term, if those lines bring additional power supply to the area. Additional power supply, coupled with the availability of rail and air transport accessibility, could help secure a stronger place for Halfweg as a small transport and logistics node. However, without any information on the possibility of additional power for local distribution, it is impossible to determine whether there would be any economic benefits from the presence of the power lines.

So long as the power lines do not cross directly over or within +/-250m of the small residential settlement, there are not likely to be significant negative impacts on residential property values as there are no competing locations for housing in the surrounding area. Thus, the *competitive* market context for housing here would remain generally the same because all housing is assumed to be equally affected.

Other Settlements

The only other settlement situated directly within this section of the corridor is Commissioners Pan. This site, along with settlements just outside of the corridor including Sous, Kareeboschkalk, and Granaatboskalk, consist mainly of small farmsteads and generally lack urban infrastructure.

Caveats

As noted above, without information on any changes in the local distribution of power from the new power lines, it is impossible to determine whether or not there would be any positive impact from access to power. Similarly, without visual contact with the existing residential and other land uses on the ground, it is challenging to determine whether there would be any direct impact on land use, such as on the use or value of property within these areas. That being said, an understanding of the existing situation has been established and assumptions applied based on standard market economics.