

## **Nuclear power timetable sketched**

Site preparation planned to begin in 2011

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Eskom has outlined tentative dates for a renewed roll-out of nuclear power stations, proposing to start preparing the first of three sites as early as January 2011.

This is the first time the utility has put a time frame on its nuclear build programme since it canned its nuclear bidding round in December, citing prohibitive costs.

The government subsequently insisted that it remained committed to the nuclear programme, but planned to seek a nuclear technology partner rather than go the route of commercial procurement. The bidders in the aborted process were Areva and Westinghouse.

Eskom's timeline is outlined in a revised plan of study for the environmental impact assessment of three nuclear plants, which opened for public comment yesterday.

The revised plan seeks, in line with regulations due to be promulgated under the National Environmental Management Act, to combine Eskom's application for environmental authorisation on all three sites.

For Nuclear-1, Eskom proposes that site access and terrace preparation kick off at the start of 2011, with construction beginning in July 2012 and commercial operation mooted for July 2018. The second plant is planned to be operational by July 2020 and the third by July 2022. Each nuclear facility would generate a maximum of 4 000 megawatts.

Eskom plans to construct the power stations at Duynefontein, which is at the existing Koeberg nuclear site along the west coast; then at Bantamsklip, in the Overberg region near Pearly Beach; and finally at Thyspunt, near St Francis Bay in the Eastern Cape.

Eskom spokesman Fani Zulu said yesterday that the proposed dates were designed to give a sense of "the kind of high-level timelines we're working on". They were not cast in stone.

Asked whether Eskom believed that the cost would be manageable within the time frames, he said: "When we decided not to proceed [with the nuclear bids], the government ... said it would drive a process that would lead to financing."

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