

Finding on Thyspunt slammed by experts

The announcement by Eskom that the Council for Geoscience has confirmed that there is nothing preventing the development of a nuclear plant at Thyspunt near Oyster Bay has been slammed by academics, who say there are serious risks which were not taken into consideration.



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African Earth Observatory Network's National Research Foundation A-rated scientist and geologist, Professor Maarten de Wit, said the reports were not thorough enough.

He said a master's student had picked up that the potential for disaster was an imminent one when considering historical geological and geomorphological data which De Wit claimed was not fully reviewed in the Eskom and GCS reports.

Stakeholder meeting

The foundation for the establishment of a project steering committee for the proposed nuclear plant at Thyspunt was laid when executive members of the Kouga Municipality and Eskom met government stakeholders in Jeffreys Bay after a number of engagements between relevant parties.

Eskom nuclear new build programme director, Loyiso Tyabashe, said Eskom was mindful of the importance of complying with all regulatory requirements and had followed the right process in engaging key stakeholders in preparation for the

project.

"The people of Kouga remain the primary stakeholders in this project and we are pleased to see them taking their rightful place," he said.

This followed a statement by CGS, which confirmed there was nothing in the geology, bedrock topography or seismology of the proposed site that disqualified it for the construction of a nuclear plant.

"Based on the extensive geoscientific database established for the Thyspunt locality and surrounding region, as well as a significant body of research undertaken to date, we are confident that the site geology is well understood and that all potential major geological hazards have been identified and considered," CGS spokeswoman, Mahlatse Mononela said.

"As documented in the scientific literature, the seismic hazard analysis assessed all credible seismic sources and scenarios."

She said that over the past two decades the CGS had undertaken a number of geoscientific investigations that assessed the suitability of several coastal locations for the development of critical infrastructure such as nuclear power plants.

The research had included seismic monitoring, geological mapping and specialised neotectonic studies to assess hazards of a geological nature.

Reports miss the point

However, De Wit said the statement by Eskom and the CGS was a knee-jerk reaction and their seismic reports completely missed the point.

"We really need to think about sea levels and potential tsunamis," he said, adding that there was not enough fossil earthquake data available to clear the site for nuclear development.

"They are taking a hell of a chance to put a nuclear power plant there," he said.

However, Eskom said it had comprehensively studied the seismic and tsunami risks at the Thyspunt site.

All results had been accepted by the international scientific community.

Eskom has assured the Kouga council that it will communicate if there are developments that affect the status of the proposed nuclear plant.

"As we stand, Eskom is awaiting the outcome of the environmental impact assessment and a determination by the National Energy Regulator of South Africa," Tyabashe said.

Source: *Herald*