

No delay for PE waterfront plan

The relocation of the manganese ore dump and fuel tank farm to Ngqura will not delay the impending development of phase one of the Port Elizabeth waterfront.



This is according to Rajesh Dana, Transnet port manager.

"Phase one of the waterfront will not be impeded by the liquid bulk " the tank farm " or the manganese operation," he said.

"Phase one envisages further development of Transnet-owned land in and around the Baakens River precinct which integrates with Mandela Bay Development Agency developments.

"It also envisages the development of the land behind and adjacent to the yacht club and deep sea angling club."

Feasibility studies would be completed by the end of the year.

Tenders

"We will then be in a position to approach the market for proposals for the development of phase one by June next year, subject to obtaining necessary governance approvals.

"We aim to award the tender in June 2019, with the breaking of ground soon thereafter."

In a separate process, the aim is that the new fuel tank farm site at Ngqura will be ready in September 2019 to start receiving supplies.

"We will then give fuel suppliers four months to run down their stocks in Port Elizabeth and by 2020 we will be in a position to start deconstruction of the PE tank farm facility and rehabilitation of the site."

For the transfer of the manganese to Ngqura, the target was either 2023 or 2024 and studies were under way to firm up this date.

While the manganese dump at Port Elizabeth Harbour comprised some 5.1 million tons of ore, the eventual capacity of the one at Ngqura would be 24 million tons.

Dust from the existing dumpsite has long been a problem for residents of adjacent Humewood and yacht club members.

Open vs enclosed facility

Asked about this and the possibility that a similar facility at Ngqura could harm endangered African penguin colonies " and why TNPA had opted for an open facility instead of an enclosed one, Ngqura Port Manager Tandi Lebakeng said: "Various designs were considered, including a covered structure. The most feasible option was an open stockyard with strict mitigation measures to prevent dust that is in compliance with the regulatory requirements, and approved as part of the environmental impact assessment process."

Besides recycled water sprinklers and dust extractors, surfactants or chemical dust suppressors would be employed.

"All the critical operations where dust is normally created are in an enclosed structure," she said.

The protection of the penguins and their habitat was part of Transnet's plan to encourage marine tourism at Ngqura including "possible boat tours to the islands to experience pristine ocean".

SANParks Marine Coordinator Ane Oosthuizen said that with African penguin numbers declining steeply the new manganese dump site posed a serious concern.

"We are worried the dust will reach Jahleel [the island 500m off Ngqura] and St Croix [the biggest colony] and be breathed in by the birds and place further pressure on an already endangered species."

Leading penguin researcher Dr Lorien Pichegru, of NMU, said the planned major upscaling of the new site was a great concern.

"The possible impact is huge. You can clean the boats that get so filthy here in the harbour, but you would never be able to clean the islands and this pollution will very likely affect the birds."

Source: Herald