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Company assists in development of 260 MW power station at Boikarabelo project

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Environmental and social solutions company Digby Wells Environmental has been involved in the Boikarabelo coal mine project since its exploration stages and recently undertook the environmental authorisation processes for a proposed 260 MW power station for the Limpopo-based project.

The Boikarabelo power station will be constructed within the actual mining area.

An application was made to the national Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) for the construction of a 260 MW power station that will be developed in phases. A 60 MW power station will be built first and will supply power to the mine.

If proved viable, the power station could be upgraded to 260 MW and fed into the national grid.

The development is at a preliminary stage, with an integrated environmental licence application having been submitted to the DEA.

The Boikarabelo project is located in the Waterberg region, which hosts one of South Africa's largest remaining coal resources.

The proposed mine has probable reserves of 745-million tons, a measured resource of 1.1-billion tons and an indicated resource of 551.7-million tons, Creamer Media's *Research Channel Africa* reports.

The project could boast a life-of-mine of up to 100 years and production for this mine is scheduled to begin in 2014.

Construction of Boikarabelo was expected to start in 2011 but, as a result of permitting delays, the construction process has been postponed until all permits are in place.

The first authorisation Digby Wells undertook for the Boikarabelo project was the mining right application, which was submitted to the Department of Mineral Resources.

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The client, coal junior Resource Generation (Resgen), was notified that the application had been received by the department in April 2011.

Further Digby Wells undertook the preparation and submission of applications for the mine's waste licence, in terms of the National Environmental Management Waste Act; integrated water use licence, in terms of the National Water Act; and permits for protected species and archaeological permits, in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act.

"We are now in the final stages of all the permit applications and are waiting on the final records of decision, after which the construction of the mine can be initiated," says Digby Wells environmental management services manager **Louise Nicolai**.

An archaeological study was carried out at the project site and extensive tree counting and mapping were undertaken to obtain permits to remove protected tree species.

"Unfortunately, the majority of tree species in the area cannot be successfully relocated; therefore, a nursery will be established to grow new seedlings which will be planted in the project area," says Nicolai.

"We are only going to clear the minimal area needed for infrastructure development to protect the natural environment," explains Nicolai.

Resgen has also bought a number of properties that surround the mining area. The idea is to concentrate the mine's environmental footprint and to create a commercial game farm around the mine.

The primary long-term aim is to create an integrated self-sustaining nature-based tourism industry around the Resgen project area. This will be focussed on mutual partnerships and integrated planning.

The ultimate goal is to ensure Resgen functions in a beneficial manner with the existing nature-based tourism industry through strategic partnerships with other mines and game farming industries in the area.

This will ensure mining has a more sustainable future, leaving a legacy of conservation and socioeconomic upliftment through implementation of integrated and mutually beneficial development initiatives.