

# Petroline responds to gripes

LOWVELDER - FRIDAY 25 JANUARY 2005  
■ Desiree Rorke

NELSPRUIT - Petroline this week acknowledged concerns raised by residents about a proposed fuel depot on the N4 in Alkmaar, simultaneously stressing the importance of this development.

"The proposal to construct a liquid-fuel pipeline from Maputo to Kendal, with storage facilities in Nelspruit and Kendal, forms a very important part of South Africa's strategic planning to alleviate petroleum-fuel shortages that the country currently experiences due to refining capacity and import harbour constraints," Petroline spokesman Alfonso Niemand told *Lowvelder*.

According to Niemand these shortages will get worse in future as a result of natural market growth, which is why the National Energy Regulator of South Africa (Nersa) granted Petroline a licence for the fuel pipeline and storage depot projects, also supported by the minister of minerals and energy.

"The port of Maputo is becoming an increasingly important route for South Africa as can be seen by increasing traffic volumes to and from the port. The same applies to petroleum products and huge traffic increases of petroleum trucks from Maputo to South Africa inland can be expected unless the pipeline is constructed as soon as possible," he said.

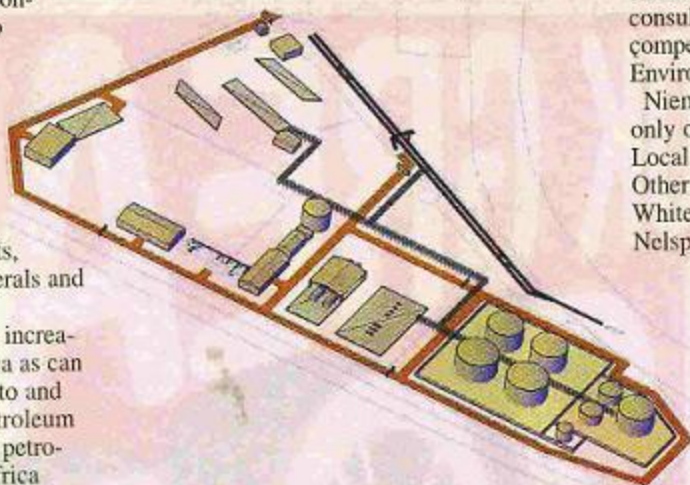
He said that Petroline encourages people who may be affected by these projects to exercise their rights as allowed for in the National Environmental Management Act (Nema).

"The many persons who have commented on the project proposals, some in favour and some against, is a clear indication to us that South African environmental legislation is indeed working for all, and we welcome the interest shown by all affected parties. The company is

committed to following the prescribed environmental legislation.

In surprising response to allegations that the Alkmaar community was not adequately notified of the projects, the company stated that they had followed every step as required by legislation, by means of newspaper advertisements, site notices, letters and telephone calls. In addition, public information days were held between July 24 and 26, 2007 in Nelspruit and Witbank.

According to Niemand the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposed fuel



depot at Alkmaar started with a public information session held at Alkmaar on October 27, 2007. The purpose being to introduce the depot proposal to interested parties and to give them an opportunity to ask questions and gather information. They also had an opportunity to submit their comments in writing to the EIA consultants.

"It is regrettable that some people who attended the meeting did not give Petroline a chance to present the facts about the proposed depot," said Niemand.

As far as the pipeline was concerned, he said that it would be located up to two metres underground and would not be visible, except for markers indicating the pipeline route. Normal activities will be able to continue over the pipeline once completed.

The depots will be designed to incorporate the latest safety features and will operate similarly to many European fuel depots situated next to large rivers.

"What the company has on the table so far are mere proposals, subject to assessments of environmental impacts by the independent environmental assessment practitioners SRK consultants. The final decision lies with the competent authority, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (Deat)."

Niemand says that the Alkmaar site was the only one which was approved by the Mbombela Local Municipality for a future fuel depot. Other sites considered included Rocky's Drift, White River, Kruger Mpumalanga Airport and Nelspruit Airfield.

Niemand furthermore stated that the company was of the opinion that the environmental legislation made adequate provision for the protection of the rights of interested or affected parties.

"Firstly people have the right of submitting written comments on the proposal and draft environmental scoping and EIA reports. Secondly, people may appeal against any decision taken by Deat."

They reiterated its invitation to all interested parties to make proposals on how the anticipated impacts of the pipeline and depot could be avoided or mitigated in a constructive manner.

"If the locality of the pipeline or depots. Needs to be changed, it will be done if sound environmental grounds exists to motivate such a change, but that decision lies with Deat, not with Petroline," he concluded.