

Bhisho office park project put on ice

Water pipes must come first

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PLANS for the construction of the multibillion-rand Bhisho office park precinct have been delayed due to lack of bulk water and sanitation infrastructure in the area.

This caused Buffalo City Metro (BCM) to delay approving plans to build the mega office park, said the national Water and Sanitation Department's Eastern Cape head, Portia Makhanya.

Makhanya was speaking at her department's workshop in their King William's Town provincial office on Wednesday.

She told the gathering that 38 housing development projects across the province had to be halted due to a lack of bulk water and sanitation infrastructure in those areas.

Makhanya said this was because there was "no integrated planning" between housing developers, municipalities and the Water and Sanitation Department.

She said integrated planning was crucial to housing development plans and all stakeholders needed to be on the same page.

"You will find instances where people will just plan to construct houses somewhere, while such plans have not been thoroughly shared with other relevant stakeholders such as the municipalities, which are responsible for the supply of bulk infrastructure," she said.

Makhanya said in the case of the Bhisho office park: "They were told that they cannot start development without bulk being in place."

The development is the project of the provincial roads and public works department.

The department's spokesman, Mphumzi Zuzile, yesterday said that plans for bulk water and sanitation infrastructure for the project had been included during the project's feasibility study.

Zuzile said BCM was upgrading bulk water and sanitation infrastructure in the Zwelitsha, King William's Town and Bhisho

area, and the office park for the precinct would be accommodated by these upgrades.

He said a tender for the construction of the park had already been issued and those interested had until next month to submit bids.

BCM's infrastructure portfolio head, Nedo Kumbaca, yesterday said the R400-million infrastructure development project, known as the greater King William's Town wastewater treatment works, was on the go and would help supply bulk services "in a sustainable way to King and Bhisho".

He said the office park was part of these infrastructure developments and upgrades, and would reap the benefit of them.

Kumbaca said that the upgrade would also have "an impact on the future housing developments in the area".

The precinct will accommodate provincial government departments currently housed outside the administration capital of Bhisho.

These departments have offices in East London and King William's Town and include the departments of economic development and environment affairs, rural development and agrarian reform, social development, transport, human settlements, safety and liaison, and sport, recreation arts and culture.

Earlier this year, roads and public works MEC Thandiswa Marawu told the Dispatch: "It is envisaged that each million rand spent during construction of the precinct is expected to generate an additional R102-million in business for downstream companies and service providers, while also creating R450 000 in new business in the wider economy".

Marawu said the precinct, when up and running, would directly increase Buffalo City Metro's gross domestic product by R408-million, while the construction phase would create 4 774 man-year job opportunities. —

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