

Greenies pick up steam in battle against coal power stations

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File photo.

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A climate change impact assessment study has to be undertaken before environmental approval is granted to operate a coal-fired power station.

This is the view of groundWork, an environmental group that has gone to court to set aside the environmental approval given by the Department of Environmental Affairs to Kuyasa Mining and KiPower to build a coal-fired power station in Mpumalanga.

groundWork relied on a judgment passed in March this year, which set aside the minister's environmental authorisation for a 1200MW coal-fired station near Lephalale in Limpopo.

In that judgment, the court said the minister -- before granting authorisation -- had to consider the climate change impact assessment of the plant.

groundWork filed an application in August to set aside a 2015 authorisation granted by the minister for the construction of a 600MW coal-fired power station and related infrastructure at Victor Khanye Municipality.

The minister has not indicated whether or not she will oppose the application.

Initially, Kuyasa Mining and KiPower indicated they would not oppose groundWork's application.

However, it changed its position late last month and indicated it would oppose the application.

Nicole Loser, an attorney at the Centre for Environmental Rights, which represents groundWork, said Kuyasa had offered to undertake the climate change impact assessment study.

"But the climate change impact assessment study for the station must be done before authorisation is granted," Loser said.

She said the study should look at how much greenhouse gases the station will emit, whether the proposed power station will have enough water to sustain it for its lifespan and also consider the water quality in the area.

groundWork said the technology proposed by KiPower and Kuyasa would result in unacceptably high greenhouse emissions.

groundWork, Earthlife Africa Johannesburg and the Centre for Environmental Rights are part of the Life After Coal/Impilo Ngaphandle Kwamalahle campaign.

The campaign aims to discourage investment in new coal-fired power stations and mines, and enable a transition to renewable energy systems.

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