PHASE 1 CULTURAL HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT For the

THE PROPOSED SKYWALK PROJECT- GOD'S WINDOW

Prepared for:

Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) (applying on behalf of the MTPA)

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FOCUS

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STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL

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I, Mamoluoane Seliane, in my capacity as a specialist consultant, hereby declare that I -

- Act as an independent consultant;
- Do not have any financial interest in the undertaking of the activity, other than remuneration for the work performed in terms of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998); and following the provisions of the National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act No. 25 of 1999).
- Have and will not have vested interest in the proposed activity proceeding;
- Have no, and will not engage in, conflicting interests in the undertaking of the activity;
- Undertake to disclose, to the competent authority, any material information that has or may have the potential to influence the decision of the competent authority or the objectivity of any report, plan or document required in terms of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998); and/or the National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act No. 25 of 1999).
- Will provide the competent authority with access to all information at my disposal regarding the application, whether such information is favourable to the applicant or not;
- Based on information provided to me by the project proponent, and in addition to information obtained during the course of this study, have presented the results and conclusion within the associated document to the best of my professional judgement; and
- Undertake to have my work peer reviewed on a regular basis by a competent specialist in the field of study for which I am registered.

23 August 2013

Mamoluoane Seliane Heritage Specialist Accredited by ASAPA Reg. No. 255 Date

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of the cultural heritage survey (Phase I Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA), in accordance with the National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act No. 25 of 1999) was to locate, identify, document and assess sites of cultural heritage and archaeological significance that may occur within the proposed study area for the construction of the Skywalk at God's Window. An assessment of the impact of the proposed construction of the skywalk on such resources will be provided. Where the impact is negative, alternatives and/ or mitigation plans will be considered.

The Phase I HIA revealed no heritage resources of significance within the proposed study area for the skywalk construction. However, there was a remembrance cross for a dead person at one of the viewing points. The staff on duty at the God's Window thought that it could be where ashes had been scattered as no suicidal event had occurred at the site recently (2012). This cross has low heritage significance as there are no human remains associated with it. It is therefore, recommended from a heritage point of view that the proposed God's Window skywalk project, proceed with acceptance of the conditions stated in Section 8 of this report.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ESA Early Stone Age GPS Geographic Positioning System HIA Heritage Impact Assessment		
HIA Heritage Impact Assessment		
IDC Industrial Development Corporation (Pty) Ltd		
LIA Late Iron Age		
LSA Later Stone Age		
MIA Middle Iron Age		
MPTA Mpumalanga Parks and Tourism Agency		
MSA Middle Stone Age	Middle Stone Age	
NEMA National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 10)7 of 1998)	
NHRA National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act No. 25 of 1999)))	
SAHRA South African Heritage Resources Agency		
SAHRIS South African Heritage Resources Information System		
SEF Strategic Environmental Focus (Pty) Ltd		

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1. INTRODUCTION

The proposed construction of the Skywalk is proposed by the Mpumalanga Parks and Tourism Agency (MPTA) and will take place at God's Window. God's Window is one of the famous tourist destinations within Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve, near Graskop Mpumalanga.

The study area of the proposed project covers approximately 5 hectares (ha) (Figure 1). It is anticipated that the proposed skywalk would boost the economy of the Mpumalanga Province through growing tourist numbers visiting the region. This initiative is also planned to enhance visitors' experience.

Strategic Environmental Focus (Pty) Ltd (SEF) was commissioned by Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) to undertake a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) of the proposed footprint for the construction of the skywalk. This HIA was carried out in terms of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998), (NEMA), and it is based on the requirements of the National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act No 25 of 1999) (NHRA). This HIA is a specialist study that forms part of the Scoping and Environmental Impact Reporting (S&EIR) process for application of the environmental authorisation for the proposed development.

According to Section 3 (2) of the NHRA, the heritage resources of South Africa include:

"a. places, buildings, structures and equipment of cultural significance;

- b. places to which oral traditions are attached or which are associated with living heritage;
- c. historical settlements and townscapes;
- d. landscapes and natural features of cultural significance;
- e. geological sites of scientific or cultural importance;
- f. archaeological and palaeontological sites;
- g. graves and burial grounds, including
 - i. ancestral graves;
 - ii. royal graves and graves of traditional leaders;
 - iii. graves of victims of conflict;
 - iv. graves of individuals designated by the Minister by notice in the Gazette;
 - v. historical graves and cemeteries; and
 - vi. other human remains which are not covered in terms of the Human Tissue Act, 1983 (Act No. 65 of 1983);

h. sites of significance relating to the history of slavery in South Africa;

i. movable objects, including-

- *i.* objects recovered from the soil or waters of South Africa, including archaeological and palaeontological objects and material, meteorites and rare geological specimens;
- ii. objects to which oral traditions are attached or which are associated with living heritage;
- iii. ethnographic art and objects;
- iv. military objects;
- v. objects of decorative or fine art;
- vi. objects of scientific or technological interest; and
- vii. books, records, documents, photographic positives and negatives, graphic, film or video material or sound recordings, excluding those that are public records as defined in section 1(xiv) of the National Archives of South Africa Act, 1996 (Act No. 43 of 1996)."

In terms of Section 3 (3) of the NHRA, a place or object is to be considered part of the national estate if it has cultural significance or other special value because of:

"a. its importance in the community, or pattern of South Africa's history;

- b. its possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of South Africa's natural or cultural heritage;
- c. its potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of South Africa's natural or cultural heritage;
- d. its importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class of South Africa's natural or cultural places or objects;
- e. its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group;
- f. its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period;
- g. its strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;
- h. its strong or special association with the life or work of a person, group or organisation of importance in the history of South Africa; and
- i. sites of significance relating to the history of slavery in South Africa."

The aim of the investigation was to identify, verify and analyse heritage resources and to recommend how to manage them within the context of the proposed construction of the skywalk.

The objectives of the investigation were:

- Identifying and analysing heritage places, objects, buildings, structures, graves etc.;
- Assessing broad cultural significance of identified sites, places, buildings, structures, graves and objects within the study area;
- Surveying and mapping of significance/sensitivity issues and opportunity/constraint issues;
- Reviewing of the general compatibility of the proposed skywalk and associated activities with heritage policy planning frameworks;
- Undertaking a preliminary assessment of the acceptability of the proposed skywalk from a heritage perspective;
- Identifying the need for alternatives, if necessary; and
- Recommending appropriate initial management measures to conserve significant heritage elements and reduce the impact on heritage resources.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO THE PROJECT

Strategic Environmental Focus (Pty) Ltd (SEF) has been appointed by the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) on behalf of the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) (the applicant) to undertake the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposed Skywalk. As part of the EIA, SEF has further been tasked to undertake a Phase 1 Heritage Impact Assessment for the project.

Consultant:Ms Mamoluoane SelianeType of development:Construction of a Skywalk at God's WindowRezoning or subdivision:N/ATerms of referencePhase 1 HIALegislative requirements:The HIA was carried out in terms of the National
Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No.
107 of 1998), (NEMA), and following the
requirements of the National Heritage Resources
Act, 1999 (Act No. 25 of 1999) (NHRA).

Table 1 Background Information

2.1 Details of the study area

The proposed skywalk project- God's Window will be located on Farms De Houtbosch 503 KT and Portion 2 of Farm Lisbon 531 KT within the Thaba Chweu Local Municipality (TCM), in the Ehlanzeni District Municipality near Graskop and Pilgrim's Towns. God's Window is located on the ridge of the Blyde River Canyon, Mpumalanga. God's Window is located on the Panorama Route in the Blyde River Canyon in Mpumalanga, in Northeast South Africa. The site is situated around 95km north of Nelspruit which is the largest town in the area. The project site lies 5km north of Graskop, which together with Sabie and Hazyview, forms a triangle of key towns along the tourist route (refer to the Locality Map in Figure 1).

The study site is located to the east of Johannesburg (400km) and Pretoria (360km), near to Kruger National Park. The N4 motorway links both cities to Mpumalanga. The site of God's Window sits on land owned by a collection of local communities e.g. Pilgrim's Rest Development Trust, Moletele Communal Property Association, SetIhare Communal Property Association and Mahubahuba Bokone Communal Property Association.

The Skywalk is proposed at God's Window to compliment visitor experience. God's Window is one of the sites with scenic beauty within the Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve.

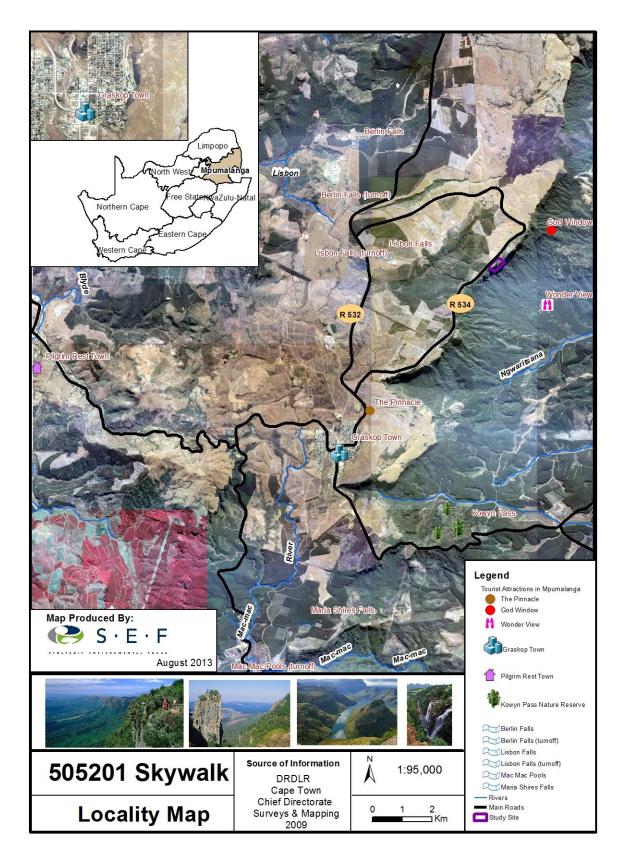


Figure 1: Location of the study area



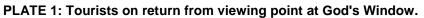
Figure 2: Skywalk Location



Figure 3: Proposed Skywalk Concept

2.1.2. Current Land-use

The proposed study area for the construction of the skywalk is currently an existing tourist destination (Plate 1).





2.2 Locational Data

- Province: Mpumalanga;
- District Municipality: Ehlanzeni;
- Local Municipality: Thaba Chweu;
- General Coordinates: 24°52'37.52"S 30°53'18.22"E

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF THE SURVEY

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Details of the site visit

The site visit for the proposed skywalk at God's Window was conducted on the 30 and 31 July 2013. The survey was undertaken by means of walking throughout accessible parts of the site to:

- Search for, locate and identify objects and structures of heritage and/or archaeological significance in accordance with accepted archaeological practices; and
- Document all heritage/ archaeological sites, objects and structures according to minimum standards and procedures accepted by the archaeological profession.

3.1.2 Literature Review

A brief literature review pertaining to the prehistory of the Mpumalanga Province was undertaken.

3.2 Restrictions to the survey

3.2.1 Visibility

Visibility for the most part of the footprint was not good (Plate 2). The site was thickly forested and access in most parts was impossible. This resulted in difficulty in the identification of heritage resources.

Plate 2: Typical vegetation on site.



3.2.2 Disturbance

There is no disturbance of any potential archaeological stratigraphy noted.

3.3 Details of the equipment used in the survey

- Geographic Positioning System (GPS): Garmin eTrek Camo; and
- Digital cameras: Canon Powershot A460.

All readings were taken using the GPS. Accuracy was to a margin of error of 4 m.

4. BRIEF ARCHAEOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THE MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

The Mpumalanga Province has a rich landscape which has provided people with resources for utilization and exploitation for more than 1, 7 million years. Archaeological evidence indicates that people were initially attracted to the region by its diverse and abundant plants and animals and later on by the exploitation of the rich variety of minerals such as ochre, copper and iron, which is a practice that can be traced back thousands of years (Esterhuysen and Smith, 2007). These minerals were used for the manufacture of tools and implements, ornaments and ochre had many uses such as as an ingredient in rock art painting. These minerals were also traded locally for cattle, wives, land as well as beyond borders for tobacco, liquor and other goods.

4.1 The Stone Age

The Stone Age of Southern Africa has been divided into, the Early Stone Age (ESA) dating from about 2.5 million years ago to 250 000 years ago, the Middle Stone Age (MSA) dating from 250 000 and 25 000 years ago and the Later Stone Age (LSA) which dates from about 25 000 and 2 000 years ago (Esterhuysen and Smith 2007; Mitchell, 2000).

The ESA of Mpumalanga has not been thoroughly researched but the available data has enabled archaeologists to make interpretations based on evidence from other parts of South Africa that are more extensively studied. The ESA is a period during which human ancestors began the usage of stone tools. The stone tools from this earlier period consist of simply modified tools such as hand axes, scraping tools as well as choppers. These tools were, among other things, used to chop and butcher meat, de-skin animals and probably to smash animal bones to obtain bone marrow. Most ESA sites are open air tool scatters. However, these sites were not found on the footprint of the mine as visibility was not good for the identification of tools.

The MSA stone tools are, in general, smaller than those of the ESA. A variety of MSA tools include blades, flakes, scrapers and pointed tools that may have been hafted onto shafts or handles and used as spearheads. No MSA tools were discovered at the site of the footprint of the mine due to vegetation cover.

The LSA tools are even smaller than those of the MSA and display rapid stylist change, particularly in the last 10 000 years. During this time, the hunting apparatus was improved and new technology was employed to make more effective tools. These included 'link-shaft arrows constructed with a poisoned bone tip, a link and shaft that fell away on impact, leaving the poison tip imbedded in the animal. Other innovations included bored stones, used as digging-stick weights to aid in uprooting tubers and roots; small stone tools, often less than 25 mm in length, used for cutting meat and scraping hides; polished bone tools such as needles; twine made from plant fibre or leather; tortoiseshell bowls; fishing equipment, including hooks and sinkers; bone tools with decoration; high frequencies of ostrich eggshell beads and an increase in ornaments and artwork.' (Esterhuysen and Smith, 2007, p 10).

Along with the marked social transformation and technological innovation of the LSA people is the associated Rock Art panels that occur on cave walls or rock faces. Rock Art can be in the form of rock paintings or rock engravings, depending on the geology of a region. No Stone Age or rock art sites (cave or rock shelter sites) were found within the footprint of the proposed skywalk project.

4.2 The Iron Age

A farming way of life was introduced to southern Africa about 2 000 years ago by Bantu-speaking people coming from the north. They brought with them crops such as sorghum, millet, ground beans and cow peas to be cultivated for the first time in this part of the world (Huffman, 2007, Mitchell, 2000). Domestic animals such as cattle, sheep and goats were also part of the newly introduced farming way of life.

Unlike the hunter-gatherers and herders who lived in temporary camps and led a nomadic way of life, farming necessitated sedentary life styles (Huffman, 2007). Some features of the permanent settlements of these early mixed farming communities are houses, raised grain bins, underground storage pits and stock enclosures. An important feature of this time period was that they also made their own iron implements, hence the name Iron Age (Huffman, 2007). The Iron Age has been divided into three periods, namely the Early Iron Age (EIA Period) (AD 200 – 900), the Middle Iron Age (MIA) (AD 900 – 1300) and the Late Iron Age (LIA) (AD 1300 – 1820) (Huffman, 2007).

4.3 The Historic Period

The proposed skywalk project at God's Window is within the popular Panorama Region along the Blyde River Canyon. The Panorama Route is arguably one of the most beautiful and the most popular travel destinations in the country. This is due to its fantastic natural scenic views combined with the pre-colonial, colonial and post colonial histories that shaped the region over the years.

The most spectacular is the view of the Blyde River Canyon. The Canyon stretches for approximately 33km from Bourke's Luck's Potholes and ends at the Three Rondavels, which are named after founder of the Mapulana Tribe, Chief Maripe's three wives Maseroto, Mogaladikwe and Magabolle. The Blyde River Canyon is the 3rd largest canyon in the world. Unlike the Fish River Canyon in Namibia and the Grand Canyon in America, it is filled with lush vegetation and wildlife. Furthermore, it is the largest most vegetated and green canyon in the world. The potholes are amazing rock formations shaped by erosion processes over thousands of years. It is believed that these formations, which developed at the confluence of the gigantic Blyde and Treur Rivers were the result of flow regimes when the two rivers carried masses of sand and debris with them.

Apart from the natural heritage landscapes in the vicinity of the study area, there exist works of man which have characterised the Pilgrim's Rest Village which lies about 20km or so the west of the study area. The history of the Pilgrim's Rest gold fields dates back to ancient times. The first gold rush in South Africa took place in 1873 when payable gold was discovered on the farm Geelhoutboom near the town of Sabie on the Mpumalanga escarpment. A few months later rich

gold deposits in Pilgrim's Creek, a tributary of the Blyde River, close to where the village of Pilgrim's Rest now stands, were discovered. This triggered the first major gold rush in South Africa. Pilgrim's Rest was declared a gold field on 22 September 1873. By 1874/75 Pilgrim's Rest had become the social and commercial centre for the diggings then undertaken at the Upper, Middle and Lower Camps. By 1896 many of the tents had been replaced by more permanent buildings. The conservation of Pilgrim's Rest as a cultural and historic asset began in 1974 when the provincial government purchased the village. In 1986 the village of Pilgrim's Rest and the farm Ponieskrantz, on which the village is situated, was declared a National Monument. Today, historical studies continue to work towards the further restoration of the village to increasingly provide a better insight into the history of the area.

5. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA HERITAGE

5.1 Description of the materials observed

The investigation revealed no heritage resources of significance on the footprint of the proposed skywalk at God's Window (refer to Table 2).

Identified heritage resources		
Category, according to NHRA	Identification/Description	
Formal protections (NHRA)		
National heritage site (Section 27)	None	
Provincial heritage site (Section 27)	None	
Provisional protection (Section 29)	None	
Place listed in heritage register (Section 30)	None	
General protections (NHRA)		
Structures older than 60 years (Section 34)	None	
Archaeological site or material (Section 35)	None	
Palaeontological site or material (Section 35)	None	
Graves or burial grounds (Section 36)	None	
Public monuments or memorials (Section 37)	None	
Other		
Any other heritage resources (describe)	None	
	1	

Table 2: Table detailing identified heritage resources and NHRA status.

5.2 Summary of the findings

No heritage resources of significance were identified on site and thus no further permitting processes are required. However, there was a remembrance cross for a deceased person at one of the viewing points (Plate 3). The staff on duty at the God's Window thought that it could be where ashes had been scattered as no suicidal event had occurred at the site recently (2012). This cross has low heritage significance as there is no human remains associated with it.

Plate 3: Remembrance cross for a deceased individual.



6. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This section does not apply as no heritage resources of significance were identified on site.

7. PREVIOUS WORK IN THE AREA

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the heritage status/potential of the region within which the proposed God's Window Skywalk study area exists. This way, the significance of identified heritage resources can be evaluated at a regional level and not site level which provides a narrow view about the occurrence and importance of regional signatures for example.

The review involves the investigation of the South African Heritage Resources Information System (SAHRIS), which has documented information and developmental reports and authority comments thereof for various projects in the country. Several Phase I HIA reports for projects

previously undertaken in and around Graskop were investigated and no archaeological or other cultural heritage resources (Van Wyk, 2008 and Van der Walt, 2003) of significance have been found along a proposed new Injaka pipeline route from Injaka Dam to the Injaka Regional Water Treatment Works (Injaka 267 KU) – map sheet 2431 CC Bosbokrand as well as the footprint for the proposed Acornhoek service station respectively.

However, Roodt (2002, 1999) discovered grave sites within the proposed pipeline routes for Marite pipeline in Bosbokrand and that along Bushbuckridge, Dwarsloop and Zoeknog respectively. Van Wyk (2008) identified a stone foundation associated with gold mining on Blyde Plantation (Lisbon 531KT), Komatiland Forest. The study area for the proposed Skywalk at God's Window is thickly vegetated and forested. Some parts of the site are characterised by deep cliff faces. This resulted in difficulty in the identification of heritage resources.

8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the proposed skywalk at God's Window proceed from a heritage point of view as no heritage resources were identified on the footprint of the proposed development, with acceptance of the following conditions:

Construction activities should be limited to the proposed footprint for the construction of the skywalk. If the size of the footprint is increased at a later stage, a heritage specialist should be consulted in order to assess how the increase in the size of the will affect heritage resources.

9. RISK PREVENTATIVE MEASURES ASSSOCIATIED WITH CONTRUCTION

Archaeological material, by its very nature, occurs below ground. The developer should therefore keep in mind that archaeological sites might be exposed during the construction phase. If anything is noticed, work in that area should be stopped and the occurrence should immediately be reported to the South African Heritage Resources Agency Cape Town (SAHRA) at 021 462 4502 or a museum, preferably one at which an archaeologist is available. The find should then be investigated and evaluated by the archaeologist, who will provide recommendations on when construction activities in the area where the discovery was made can resume.

10. CONCLUSION

The Phase 1 HIA survey and desktop investigation for the proposed skywalk at God's Window revealed no cultural heritage resources of significance. Therefore from a heritage point of view, the proposed Skywalk development and associated activities can proceed.

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