

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT

as part of the

BASIC ASSESSMENT PROCESS

for the

PROPOSED ESIBHUKUDWENI ACCESS ROAD AND CAUSEWAY, WARD 6, NDWEDWE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, ILEMBE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

1. Introduction

The Ndwedwe Municipality has proposed the upgrade of Esibhukudweni Access Road and Causeway, located in Ward 6 of the Ndwedwe Local Municipality, Ilembe District Municipality. The road upgrade and causeway aims to allow local residents to have improved, formalised access to their homes, schools, shops and the extended road network. The project is located in Ward 6 of the Ndwedwe Local Municipality.

Before construction of the road upgrade and causeway may commence, an environmental authorisation is required from the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs (DAEA), in compliance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations of 2010. In order to obtain this authorisation a Basic Assessment is currently being undertaken by Enviroedge cc.

2. The Project

The project involves the upgrade and construction of Esibhukudweni Access Road and Causeway in Ward 6. The project involves the construction of a 1.6km, 6m wide gravel road complete with storm water drainage and a watercourse crossing/causeway. The proposed access road and associated water course crossing will provide a formal link for local homes to the R 614 road. An access road currently exists and consists of an eroded dirt access road. The current road conditions are susceptible to erosion which makes access problematic for the local residents. The proposed road upgrade will include 1 non perennial watercourse crossings of the KwaBiyela River.

The proposed road upgrade and causeway is 1.6km in length and at a width of 6m. The starting point is at: 29°22'15.80"S; 30°53'7.10"E, and end point is at: 29°22'15.00"S; 30°53'48.20"E, and it has been designed to align with the existing dirt access road. The watercourse crossing will be situated at: 29°22'25.42"S; 30°53'40.99"E. The road start point is located 1.7km south-west of Newspaper. Please refer to Map 1: Esibhukudweni Access Road and Causeway Site Plan.



Figure 1. Image showing study area of proposed Esibhukudweni Access Road and Causeway. (Source, Google Earth)

3. Environmental and Social Description

Climate: Rainfall in the study area occurs predominantly during the summer months, with some rain in the winter. Mist is common in the area, and is an important factor in providing additional moisture, frost is very infrequent. The annual precipitation ranges from 700mm -1 200mm with an average annual temperature of 17.2°C.

Topography and Drainage: The study area is located along a north-easterly ridgeline, with a steep valley associated with the KwaJila River to the north-west in Matulini, an extended valley to the north from KwaGcwense gently sloping to the north east along the banks of the Pambela River. To the east, Dalibho and Nsuze are located and numerous drainage lines are present draining in a generally easterly direction toward the Sambaba River. To the south, a steep valley system drains into the Kwabiyela River, which turns north-east to traverse the lower end of the steep valley of the study area. The study area is located at the head of this valley drainage line, which extends down in a south-easterly direction forming a tributary of the KwaBiyela River. From this confluence point the KwaBiyela continues in an easterly direction.

The proposed Esibhukudweni Access Road and Causeway, will form a loop linking back to the R 614, the main road through the study area running in a generally east-west sense. The D 1523 road tees off from the R 614 to the north-east. There is a high point of 843m to the south-east of the site, 901m to the south and 924m to the north-west.

The proposed Esibhukudweni Access Road and Causeway includes the upgrade of the existing dirt tracks and a causeway crossing over a watercourse and it has been designed to align with the existing road tracks. The proposed road upgrade will include 1 non-perennial watercourse crossing which forms part of the KwaBiyela River system. Please see topographical map attached.

Geology and Soils: The study area falls within the Ordovician Natal Group sandstones which carry shallow, nutrient-poor, skeletal, sandy soils freely drained and including Glenrosa and Mispah forms.

Vegetation: The local vegetation is defined predominantly as KwaZulu-Natal Sandstone Sourveld (SVs 5), (Mucina and Rutherford, 2006). The vegetation cover is short species-rich grassland with scattered low shrubs and woody shrublets. A feature of the vegetation is Proteaceae trees and shrubs.

The EKZNW Terrestrial Systematic Conservation Plan, TSCP (2010) indicates that the entire study area site and surrounds form part of a Biodiversity Priority Area 1. The following species are listed *Leucospermum gerrardii* – Pincushion protea (endangered species), *Euonyma lymneaeformis* – Cone-shaped snail, *Senecio exuberans* – Senecio (endangered species), *Eremidium erectus* - the KwaZulu-Natal-endemic erect-cercus wingless grasshopper, *Odontomelus eshowe* - savanna-woodland grasshoppers flightless species, *Doratogonus cristulatus* – Millipede (least concern), *D. natalensis* - Natal Black millipede (vulnerable), *D. peregrinus* - millipede, and *Sheldonia burnupi* – Burnup's tail-wagger snail.

It must, however, be noted that a large percentage of the study area is under cultivation and previously disturbed, with only a few small patches of vegetation remaining, which will impact on current species diversity within the study area.

Culture and Heritage: The presence of features of cultural or historical importance is currently unknown. There are, however, two churches located within close proximity of the study area and a school.

National and District Roads: The proposed road upgrade and causeway links into the existing R 614 main road. It is likely to have an impact on this main road at the two intersection points, however, It is not likely to impact any provincial or national road.

Utilities: All relevant government departments or parastatals will be consulted as part of the Public Participation Process.

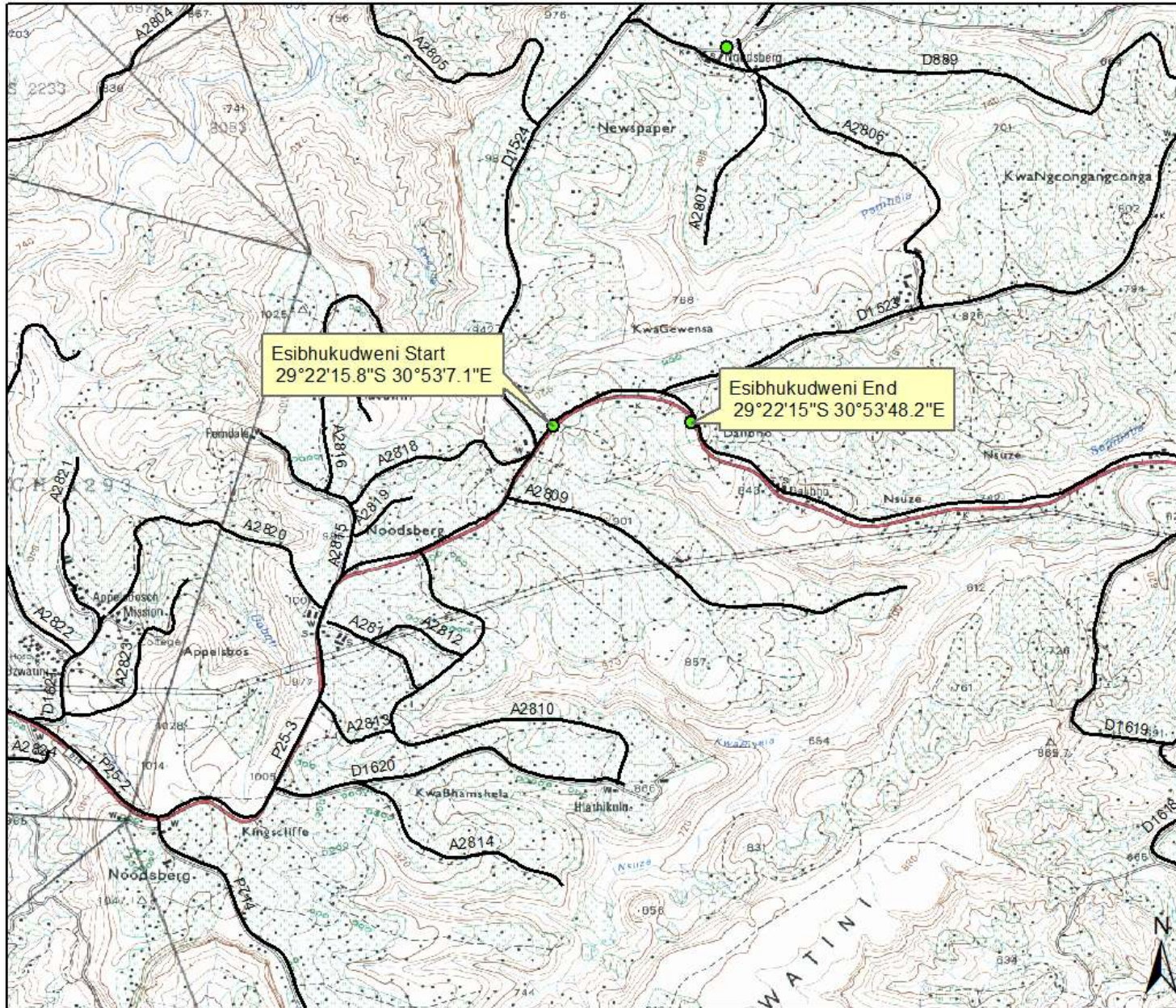
4. Public Consultation

Members of the public have the right to be consulted during the Public Participation Process. If you would like to be part of this process please register with the environmental consultant using the contacts below.

Consultants: Enviroedge cc.
Contact: Karin Samouilhan

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Legend

— Roads

Project:
Esibhukudweni Road

Title:
Locality Plan

Scale 1:50 000



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Figure 2. Locality Plan