

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT**  
as part of the  
**BASIC ASSESSMENT PROCESS**  
for the  
**PROPOSED MCATHU BRIDGE UPGRADE, WARD 8, NDWEDWE LOCAL  
MUNICIPALITY, ILEMBE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY**

### **1. Introduction**

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The Ndwedwe Municipality has proposed the upgrade of the Mcathu Bridge, located in Ward 8 of the Ndwedwe Local Municipality, Ilembe District Municipality. The bridge upgrade 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 8 of the Ndwedwe Local Municipality.

Before construction of the bridge 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**

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The project involves the construction of an improved and upgraded bridge over a non-perennial tributary of the Tongati River. The existing bridge would be replaced and upgraded. The bridge provides the only link for the local residents and surrounding areas and is utilised for the nearby school and community. The bridge upgrade has been designed to align with the existing dirt access road.

The proposed bridge is 15m in length and it is located 3.1km north-east of Abejuti at 29°25'44.3"S 30°59'16.3"E, and it has been designed to align with the existing dirt access road. Please refer to Map 1: Mcathu Bridge Upgrade Site Plan.



**Figure 1. Image showing study area of proposed Mcathu Bridge Upgrade. (Source, Google Earth)**

### **3. Environmental and Social Description**

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**Climate:** Rainfall in the study area occurs predominantly during the summer months, with some rain in winter and occasional droughts are a climatic hazard. Frost is recorded in this area

occasionally. The annual precipitation ranges from 700mm -1 100mm with an average annual temperature of 17.9°C.

**Topography and Drainage:** The site lies within a low lying flood plain area, and the proposed bridge upgrade crosses the KwaManzaduma River, a tributary of the Tongati River, running from north-east to south-west before linking into the Tongati River. The Tongati River lies to the west of the proposed Mcathu Bridge upgrade site, and it meanders through a valley and the flood plain formed in the valley base, flowing from north-west to south-east.

There is a high point of 488m to the north-west of the study site and the proposed site is situated at 394masl.

**Geology and Soils:** Within the study area, there are acid, leached, heavy soils derived from Karoo Supergroup sediments (including significant Dwyka tillites), and intrusive Karoo dolerites. Glenrosa and Mispah soils also occur.

**Vegetation:** The local vegetation is defined predominantly as Ngongoni Veld (SVs 4), (Mucina and Rutherford, 2006). The dense tall grassland vegetation is dominated by unpalatable, wiry Ngongoni grass (*Aristida junciformis*), and wooded areas are found in valleys. The ecological sensitivity of the local vegetation is likely to be low due to existing clearing, anthropogenic activities and habitation. The EKZNW Terrestrial Systematic Conservation Plan, TSCP (2010) indicates a Biodiversity Priority Area 3 for the entire study area and surrounds, with species listed including: *Edouardia conulus*, the Conical Bark Snail KwaZulu-Natal-endemic (scarce), *Eounyma lymnaeiformis*, the Lymnaeid Awl Snail (local common), *Doratogonus cristulatus* Black Millipede KwaZulu-Natal-endemic (Least concern), *Doratogonus natalensis* Natal Black Millipede KwaZulu-Natal-endemic (Vulnerable), *Doratogonus peregrinus* Wandering Black Millipede KwaZulu-Natal-endemic. Alien invasive species noted on site include *Senna didymobotrya* (Peanut Butter bush). The site lies within a low lying flood plain area of a tributary of the Tongati River, and within the riverway there are hygrophilous plant species such as *Cyperus sp* and *Typha sp.* present. The area around the bridge has been cleared and there is predominantly a mix of veld grass that occurs. The vegetation within the waterway on the upper side is dense.

**Culture and Heritage:** The presence of features of cultural or historical importance is currently unknown.

**National and District Roads:** The proposed Mcathu Bridge upgrade is located on the D 863 road and it has been designed to align with the existing dirt access roads. The A 3842 branches off the D 863 in a south-easterly direction, to the south west of the study area. A school and Rich Vale are located to the north-east. The proposed Mcathu Bridge is likely to have an impact on the D 836 road with the improved access, 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**

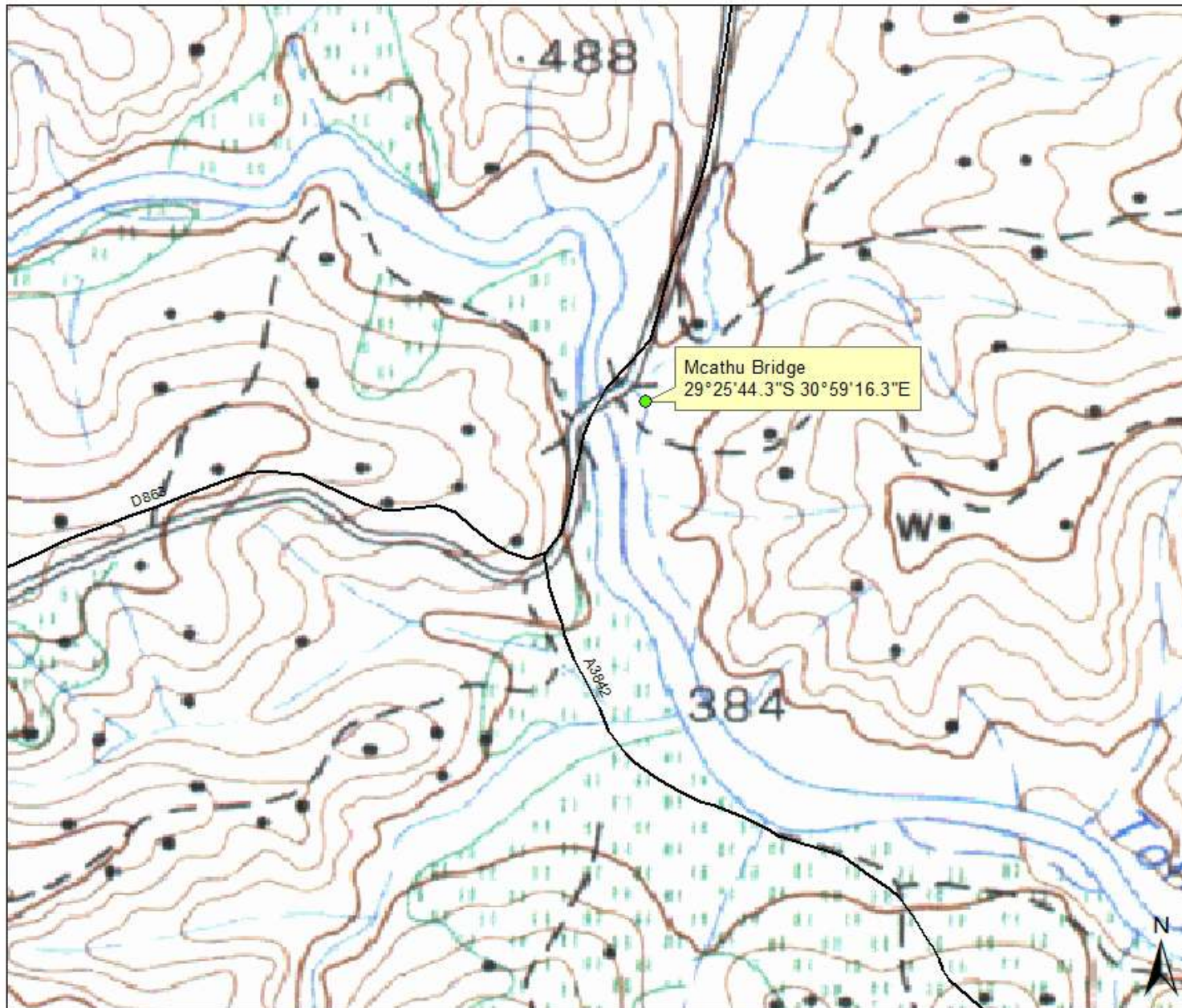
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Members of the public have the right to be consulted during the Public Participation Process. If you would like to be part of this process please register with the environmental consultant using the contacts below.

**Consultants: Enviroedge cc.**

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**Legend**

— Roads

Project:  
Mcathu Bridge

Title:  
Topographical Plan

Scale 1:10 534

0 115 230 460



Meters



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Figure 2. Locality Plan